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In This Issue . . .

We revisit the Psalms. After nearly thirty years of proclaiming and listening to the texts of the three-year Lectionary for Mass, surveys have found that the selections from the gospel stories have placed themselves firmly in the hearts of most Catholics. Proclamation in English and other vernacular languages has really made a difference in our familiarity with these texts.

But the largest part of the Bible—the Jewish Scriptures or First Testament—is still not well-known to many Catholics. Part of the reason is that the stories selected for proclamation are too brief; additionally, the focus of most of our homilies is on the texts from the Christian Scriptures (the “New” or “Second” Testament); also, the most difficult problem of all, the mindset or worldview expressed in the Jewish Scriptures may be too foreign to be grasped by a modern Christian.

To enter into the Scriptures at all requires study and effort; it also requires love, a willingness to let the words change us. But the key element we need for a correct interpretation of the Bible goes beyond even knowledge and love: It is found in the call to live the Scriptures. The New York Times or Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians may be studied; they might even be “loved” by some readers. But we must live the Scriptures.

The psalms are the musician’s prayer. The cantor, who is the proper minister for the psalm texts, is called to be the psalm in the community. In this issue we invite every musician to the task of studying the psalms, of loving the psalms, and, most importantly, of living the psalms.

This is a task that can only be done one psalm at a time. It’s not a complicated task; it just takes time and commitment. We offer a special invitation to those members who are married to read—and find your “bliss” in—Rev. Francis P. Sullivan’s translation of Psalm 128. This psalm may be your way “into” loving and living the psalms you sing.

Psalm 128

For a man who loves, who follows God, it is bliss
to eat food his hands grow, in peace, in happiness,
to see his woman make their home a fruitful vine,
to see his children crowd at meals like olive shoots—a vision, lasting, from God, for a man who loves, who follows God!

Let it be, for you, from Sion’s God, bliss, from Jerusalem, lifelong bliss, from your children’s children lifelong bliss, and peace from God above!


VCF
Contents

Readers' Response  5  

FOR CLERGY & MUSICIANS: HISTORY
What Is—and What Isn't—“Church Music”? A Search for Definitions
BY HELMUT HUCKE  10

FOR MUSICIANS: ORGAN STUDY AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
"Pray for a Good Harvest, But Keep on Hoeing"
BY TED RIEFER  16

The Psalms
Singing, Praying, Preaching

The Bible: God's Musical Score
BY STEPHEN J. LAMPE  19

Praying the Psalms: A Christian Approach
BY LUCIEN DEISS, C.S.SP.  22

Preaching the Psalms
BY JAN MICHAEL JONCAS  29

The Psalms: A Three-Thousand-Year-Old Dialogue with God
BY PATRICIA DATCHUCK SÁNCHEZ  35

Advent Psalms, Year B  36  
Reviews  43  
DMMD: Professional Concerns  39  
Hotline  49

Cover: Psalm 130, "Out of the Depths," Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, Jerusalem.
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Questions of Style and Balance

In the following paragraphs, I wish to initiate a dialogue regarding the direction of musical styles in the American Catholic Church. It is my experience that a substantial alteration of musical liturgical style, regardless of direction, is not a healthy change, unless such change is pursued in common by all members of a parish community (including the pastor). The following paragraphs detail one example of such change, by most estimates, has gone awry. I seek only to shed light on the issue and, if possible, to gain some insight for myself as to whether the resultant discord was justified or not.

I was the director for a large parish community in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati from 1980 through 1994. Though part-time, I directed a 20-30 member choir, assembled a variety of instrumentalists for regular use during liturgical events, and worked with an occasional children’s group as well. I planned all music for the various services and published regular cantor and accompanist schedules . . . Since leaving this position, I have continued to provide music for weddings and have substituted for local keyboard players as the need has arisen. Though I am no longer directly affiliated with a parish, I have decided to continue membership in the National Association of Pastoral Musicians.

Before addressing the reasons for my departure in 1994, I should first summarize my background and musical style, since those are the main issues of this letter.

I am a keyboardist and sometime composer. I am not professionally trained as a musician, but I had in 1990 nearly 8 years of regular musical involvement and direction behind me . . . [M]y initial training in a progressive university music ministry setting . . . left me inspired with the benefit of a dramatic and uplifting liturgy. The music we provided embraced not only the catchy tunes of the 1980s-90s, but also the more traditional English hymns and Latin refrains of our past. A high point in my liturgical career was the 1991 NPM Convention in Pittsburgh. There, I learned that I shared this powerful musical spirit with many across the United States. What an affirmation!

The pastor who hired me in 1990 sought specifically the type of director who “did” the type of music I favored. It was a great match . . . Though I was part-time, I was very adequately compensated for my efforts, and this pastor was satisfied with my work . . . Toward the end of my involvement with this parish, the pastor who originally hired me was transferred to another parish . . . [S]everal months later, a new administrator was selected.

Almost immediately, I became aware of the dramatic differences in musical and liturgical style between the former pastor and the new one. The new pastor came from a parish with a full-time music director and was adamant that I spend even more time with the music program than I had been accustomed to . . . [W]ith less than six months left on my contract, I was also told that, since more was expected of me in the future, he would base his decision to extend another year’s contract to me on my willingness to accede to these expectations. In effect, I was being placed on probation after having successfully served the musical needs of the parish for more than three and a half years.

After discussing the matter with my wife, I decided . . . that I would not seek contract renewal . . . Besides, my wife and I had [previously] decided that I should seek a reduction in the demands placed on me by my position with the church.

Perhaps as an indication of the considerable differences that existed between the musical preferences of the pastor and myself, I was not invited to assist with the selection process of the new full-time director. In fact, I was only made aware of my replacement’s name once the selection was made, a few weeks prior to my departure. The end of my contract came, and I left quietly.

I have, for several years now, maintained a manner of silence on what has transpired since. The likelihood of my being branded a “sour grape” was ever a possibility . . . I therefore wish to emphasize that I write these thoughts not in retribution for some supposed [personal] wrong . . . but rather to explore the greater meaning behind the dissatisfaction of the parish with the present music program . . .

. . . [I]t was only later that I learned of . . . the discontent with the parish’s new music program . . . [T]he pastor wished to emphasize a return to simple melodies, predominantly chant in nature, and harmonically austere. Naturally, the new director embraced this same school of thought and, thus, change became inevitable . . . Nearly every member of this parish that I happen to meet reminds me of the sad condition of the music program. In fact, I have not heard one positive comment [about this change].

It is this change of musical direction and the toll it has taken on the liturgical life of this parish that I question . . . My first question: Is there, in fact, a guided and determined change of musical style going on in the American Catholic Church, or is the particular musical program at this parish (and others like it) a liturgical oddity? When asked what is wrong with the spirited selections by Haas, Haugen, and other contemporary Christian music composers, the new director has responded . . . that one is not supposed to be entertained by church music. [But] is music that entertains the spirit a sign of human excess in the realm of holy matters, or is it a necessary evolution of the sacred rituals . . .?

. . . I have always maintained that the goal of music ministry is to involve an individual’s voice, heart, mind, and soul in the liturgical event at hand, and to emphasize those scriptural and traditional elements of prayer in the form of song. [D]uring the years in which I was actively involved in music ministry, I
found that, once a proper musical balance is struck between the sensational and the reserved, between the highs and the lows, and between the traditional and the contemporary, then most members of a congregation will be touched by the unique power of music in religious celebrations...

My second question: Who is at fault [in the parish's disappointment]? Is the previous musical director (me) to blame for fueling the fires of contemporary musical enjoyment, or are the new director and pastor to blame for attempting a change which is not to the liking of the parish? More specifically, is the pastor furthering some...aim of the Church's magisterium by promoting a change to musical austerity, or is this a personal agenda which, from the views of all who have expressed an opinion to me, is failing?

Have I been duped by the powerful new melodies and rich harmonies of contemporary composers...or am I effectively furthering the mission of the Church by reaching out to the people of today, young and old alike, in ways that help them understand and live God's will expressed in the Scriptures and traditions of the Church?

While it is obvious that there are at least two schools of thought on this matter, is it also true that there is only one magisterially approved approach to pastoral music?...

While it is proper and just that the Church in the persons of its ordained ministers should guide the faithful on their journey home to God, I believe that they should do so without undue alienation and controversial change. The turmoil experienced (and the lessons learned) from the changes wrought by Vatican II should underscore the need for communication, coordination, and consensus in changes to the environment for and character of the communal expressions of our faith...

For my part, I would appreciate some dialogue on these thorny questions so that, if necessary, I can adjust my emphasis should a future opportunity in music ministry arise. If I can help it, I would prefer not to set up another parish for musical failure.

John Edelmann
Franklin, OH

How Very Catholic! How Very Misguided!

After reading the "Beautiful Music" issue of Pastoral Music (June-July 1996) I thought to myself, "How very Catholic!" Then I thought, "How very misguided!" Drawing on the Catholic heritage I share with the writers, I'd like to focus attention on three misconceptions.

1) Liturgy is an art. Maybe it is an art like the arts of raising a family or running for public office. But it is not a fine art, like poetry or music. It is a complex of transactions, among which, of course, the fine arts may or may not come into play. To try to bend the fine arts to the essentially different undertaking of liturgy will in the end denature and destroy them. Liturgy might be a kind of framework for fine art, that is, after a blessing, and before going on with the blessed ordinariness of liturgy, we might stop for a while and make room for the arts in the deepest sense of the term. This is like [the way in which] the kids' going to bed can be enriched with bedtime stories—and some of them, told with love and charm, can be fine art.

2) Having the right ideas will lead to good church music. No, it won't. Serious training in music will. As winning was for Vince Lombardi, so serious musical training in theory and performance is not just the best thing [for church music], it is the only thing. Many Catholics...love to have the right ideas, to cite the pertinent texts—just as Catholics did in 1900 or 1950. (The old concern that the rite be valid is still with us, just in a slightly veiled version.) Ideas cannot take the place of lively, discriminating, professionally certifiable musicianship, just as fruity-bouquet lingo cannot take the place of real wine.

3) Vatican II began a revival of Catholic church music. What if, maybe, it was the end of such a revival? What if Vatican II was the end of a discernible period in Catholicism, with the airing of the tensions that this period had generated, but with no great success in shaping a future? In this note I offer only themes and suggestions...but I wonder if Vatican II will come to be seen as the point at which old-time Catholicism confronted a vastly increased world population and global interdependence, a world in which data can be delivered ever more quickly, but where in-depth education is often lacking.

So, if the days are evil, how do we redeem the time? By love, the unique expression of which is the desire for quality. By serious purpose in liturgy, expressing itself in the cherishing of well-crafted music, past and contemporary. In that connection, Romano Guardini's artistic pessimism was quite possibly colored by the breakdown of German society in 1918. We need not follow his path.

Joseph Fitzer
Lafayette, LA

Responses Welcome

We welcome the comments and reflections of our readers. Address your responses to: Editor, Pastoral Music, at one of the following addresses. By postal service: 225 Sheridan Street, NW, Washington, DC 20011-1492. By fax: (202) 723-2262. By e-mail: NPM3ING@aol.com. All communications are subject to editing for length.

Pastoral Music • August-September 1996


Members Update

In Collaboration for Youth

At the urging of NPM’s Section for Youth, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians has become a collaborating member of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM). Will Sousea introduced us at the Fourteenth Annual Membership Meeting of the NFCYM, which took place in San Antonio, TX, January 24-27, 1996. Tom Tomaszek made the presentation, and without any need for clarification, NPM was affirmed as a collaborating member.

Coming in ‘97: Honors Choir

Even as we're wrapping up this year's Regional Conventions (two of the four are completed as we go to press, and two remain—Denver and Stamford), plans are underway for the 1997 National Convention in Indianapolis, IN (July 8-12). Part of what's beginning to take shape is a plan to form an NPM Honors Choir, for which people will be asked to submit audition tapes this fall. We are also planning to continue the national choir festival...watch for announcements in coming issues!

Meetings & Reports

Report from the East

Jonathan Tan, an NPM member in Singapore, sent us this e-mail report about liturgical developments in Singapore and Malaysia.

In Singapore, the liturgy is mainly in English, using ICEL texts (we also use the ICET version of the Lord's Prayer, which was not adopted by the NCCB). The music is predominantly by the St. Louis Jesuits, some of the older 1960s music from FEL (by Sebastian Temple, Ray Repp, Joe Wise, and others), music from WLP (especially compositions by Pastoral Music • August-September 1996

Lucien Deiss and the 1950s/1960s “old favorites” such as “To Jesus Christ Our Sovereign King”), and music by the St. Thomas More Group (Chris Walker, Paul Inwood, Stephen Dean, Bernadette Farrell, etc.). For some strange reason, music published by GIA (e.g., compositions by Haugen and Haas) has never caught on in Singapore.

There are a few parishes catering to the Chinese-speaking and Tamil-speaking Catholics that use Chinese and Tamil translations from Hong Kong and India, respectively. I am not sure about the Chinese liturgies and liturgical music, as I never attended any Chinese Masses.

Inculculation and the use of Asian music is right at the bottom of priorities for the current archbishop, who is a traditionalist. Because of his outlook, everyone sticks to liturgical music from the West, and this will cause problems in the future, because Christianity will continue to be identified with the West. As a result, we have no indigenous liturgical music for English texts and no Catholic Asian hymnals in English to speak of.

In contrast, the bishops of Malaysia are very sympathetic to inculturation and the development of an indigenous liturgy and liturgical music. The liturgies in Malaysia are mainly conducted in the Malay and English languages. While the musical situation of English-language liturgies is somewhat the same as in Singapore (i.e., widespread use of liturgical music from the West), I understand that there is a growing collection of indigenous liturgical music written in Malay in the local folk styles and rhythms for use with the Malay liturgies.

Malaysia is still lagging behind Indonesia, which has a very well-developed corpus of indigenous liturgical music written in Bahasa Indonesia (which, for all intents and purposes, is the same as the Malay language used in Malaysia). So, many churches in Malaysia use locally written music as well as music from Indonesia for the liturgies in the Malay language. (I have not been to Malaysia for a long time, so what I write here is not from personal experience, but based on reports from people who have attended such liturgies.)

The Methodists are quietly making strides in introducing hymnals in Asian formats. In fact, one of my close friends in Singapore, Swee Hong Lim, a Methodist with a master's degree in sacred music from Southern Methodist University, has composed and published many anthems and hymns written in English but using music composed in the Asian indigenous folk style. Another Methodist I know, Daud Kosasih, is an Indonesian who writes hymns and anthems in an indigenous Indonesian style. He's a graduate of the Asian Institute of Liturgy and Music in Manila.

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Benedictine Ordo . . . for Women

The Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses (CAPB) has published *A Calendar for American Benedictine Women* which includes patronal saints and anniversaries that are particular to Benedictine women’s history. This calendar is to be used to prepare local ordos for the various Benedictine women’s houses in the U.S. The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar (#51-54) presume that such local calendars will be prepared for nations, regions, religious communities, and even dioceses, and appropriate celebrations will be inserted into local versions of the general calendar for the entire Roman Rite. Priority in including particular celebrations in *A Calendar for American Benedictine Women* was given to saints who are monastic, women, or American.

Using the Calendar to create a local ordo can cause problems. Ruth Fox, OSB, liturgist at Sacred Heart Monastery in Richardson, ND, reported in the *Monastic Liturgy Forum Newsletter* 7-8 (Spring 1996) that she had to create “two extra levels of celebration” to accommodate the community’s desire to include as many saints as possible, without misshaping the structure of the general calendar. Here’s an example of some saints whose memorials appear in the Benedictine Calendar for three months (February, July, and November) who are not commemorated in the general calendar for the Roman Rite or the special calendar for the U.S. Catholic Church: Waiburga (Feb. 25); Priscilla, Aquila, and companions (July 8); M. Pia Tegler, foundress (July 28); Hilda of Whitby (Nov. 17); and Mechtilde of Hackeborn (Nov. 19).

Chicago Liturgy Conference

The Office for Divine Worship of the Archdiocese of Chicago is sponsoring a liturgy conference—“Gathered Around the Table: Who Do We Say We Are?”—at Rosary College in River Forest, IL, October 25-26. The program includes three major presentations in English; two major presentations in Spanish; forty different workshops (several in Spanish); prayer and ritual; and exhibits. For more information, contact: Office for Divine Worship, 1800 N. Hermitage Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622-1101. Phone: (312) 486-5153; fax: (312) 486-5158.

Grawemeyer Award 1997

The University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 1997 will be awarded for outstanding achievement by a living composer working in a large musical genre: choral, orchestral, chamber, electronic, song-cycle, dance, opera, musical theater, and the like. The 1997 award will be granted for a work that received its premiere between January 1, 1992, and December 31, 1996. The amount of the award is $150,000. The deadline for completed entries is January 27, 1997. Contact: Grawemeyer Music Awards Committee, School of Music, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292.

Augsburg-Fortress Catalogue

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For Clergy and Musicians: History

What Is—and What Isn’t—“Church Music”? A Search for Definitions

BY HELMUT HUDE

I am not from an English-speaking country, and my knowledge of that language is weak, so when I wanted to know the origins of the phrases “music for church” or “church music” (the English forms of musica ecclesiastica) my first thought was to consult the prestigious Oxford English Dictionary (OED). I found a definition for “church” and for combinations with “church,” such as church clock, church book, church key, church mouse, church owl, and so on. I found “Church of England,” but I could not find a separate entry on “church music.” In fact, it was not until I looked at the paragraph “in combination: in the sense of church as an institution, ecclesiastical,” that I found, among such entries as “church finances” and “church economics” any references to music and the church: church hymns, church music, church musicians, and church chant. The compilers of the OED obviously consider church music to be something that belongs to the domain of the church as an ecclesiastical institution. Intending no offense to the OED, I must say that this is not a very good definition. Are such compositions as Handel’s Messiah, hymns, or the Missa Papae Marcelli examples of the music of an ecclesiastical institution?

In addition to the term “church music,” English uses another term, “sacred music,” which some European languages leave untranslated from the Latin musica sacra. I looked this term up in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, but there wasn’t a reference for it, so I went back to the OED, which gave this definition: “Sacred music is that which accompanies a sacred text, or which displays a particularly solemn character.” If sacred music is any music that accompanies a sacred text, then the definition is clear, and discussion is at an end. As for its solemn character, I’m not sure how things stand in England or the United States, but on the Continent church musicians are continually finding it necessary to give in to the wishes of young couples who request Mendelssohn’s Wedding March or the march from Lohengrin or the latest hit tune at their wedding. Such music certainly seems to have a “solemn character” to those who request it, but is it therefore “sacred” or “music for church”?

That question brings me to the heart of the problem. What is sacred music or church music, and what isn’t? Is it just music that we sing or play during Mass or the liturgy of the hours? In order to be church music, is it enough for a composition to use a text drawn from the liturgy, or from the Bible, or from devotional literature?

Are the oratorios of Handel sacred music? Is the Brahms Second Symphony? (I once heard the Brahms played—very poorly, and the organist didn’t even have a keyboard reduction—during Mass in a church in Rome. Is that sufficient to make this “music for church”?) Are arias that use substituted “pious” texts therefor church music? Are religious scenes from operas? Or a jazz Mass? What about secular songs that are transformed into hymns?

Searching Official Documents for Definitions

We have to look first at the Church’s official documents to see if, as certain authors suggest, there has always been a canonical description of church music.

The 1967 Instruction Musicam sacram avoided using the term “church music.” Its subtitle, “an instruction on music in the liturgy,” contrasts with the title of the 1958 Instruction on music from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, which addressed “sacred music and the sacred liturgy.” It is surprising, therefore, to find this definition in the 1967 statement: “Music is ‘sacred’ insofar as it is composed for the celebration of divine worship and possesses integrity of form.” This definition doesn’t fit well with the rest of this instruction, but it does refer us back to the 1903 Motu proprio of Pius X, Tra le sollecitudini, which it cites in this connection. However, it differs from the definition offered by Pius X, particularly in three respects.

1) The expression “music composed for the celebration of divine worship” doesn’t appear in Pius X’s Motu proprio. It is a statement that severely limits the sacred music repertoire, for it would exclude the whole body of oratorios as well as the motets of the sixteenth century, composed for the most part not for the liturgy but for private devotions. And it would exclude automatically any music that wasn’t Catholic. Do we have to limit sacred music solely to that which is ad cultum celebrandum creat?

2) The 1903 Motu proprio added a third term to the requirements of hol-
ness and dignity of character (or “beauty”): “universality” (Tra le sollecitudini #2). Pope Pius X wrote: “It must also be universal in this sense, namely, that although each country may use in its ecclesiastical music whatever special forms may belong to its own national style, these forms must be subject to the proper nature of sacred music, so that it may never produce a bad impression on the mind of any stranger who may hear it.” The presuppositions of the Motu proprio are clear. First, it presumes that there is only one Roman Rite liturgy, to which only one kind of church music corresponds. Second, it expresses a notion of music as a universal language for all peoples, which each person understands, whatever the individual’s race or language. This understanding of music developed during the second half of the eighteenth century. It is expressed, for example, in the final movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, presented as a work for all of humanity.

3) The Motu proprio Tra le sollecitudini never envisaged all that we intend by the term “church music,” but only music sung by the choir. That may seem odd to us, but it corresponds well with the notion of a universal music, when it is understood that only music as an art was considered universal, not the “simple” music of the people. Charles Burney, one of the first authors to study the history of music, wrote at great length about Gregorian chant in his General History of Music (3 vols., 1776-89), trying to establish its musical value. Everything he wrote about it, however, showed that he found this attempt strange and difficult. He wrote, for example:

[In chanting ... there was little variety of notes, either as to length or modulatation, for the vocal organs of the new Christians not having been accustomed to a refined and artificial music, could not easily form the semitones, nor execute a variety of passages on which account a change of key seldom happens in Canto Fermo, and words are sung to long notes of nearly equal value. For want of semitones, cadences are made from the flat seventh rising a whole tone, in the same manner as among the Canadians and other savage people. There was no need of great musicians to invent, or superior beings to inspire such melody as this; the priests themselves, who regulated the public worship, might have formed it by mere instinct, as it so much resembles that of a rude and uncivilized people.]

As for hymnody, Johann Mattheson, Handel’s friend, dismissed it with these words: “Any cultured individual would not consider a hymn worthy of the name of music.” Only with the rediscovery of plainchant by the Romantics did people slowly begin to understand and to evaluate “folk” music from a musical perspective. It was only then that the hymn and Gregorian chant, the “folk music” of the Church, came to be included in the notion of sacred music. But for Pius X and his Motu proprio, Gregorian chant and hymnody were not included together as “church music”; it was not until Pius XII and the encyclical Mediator Dei (1947) that all the “folk music” of the Church, seen as more than simply an extension of Gregorian chant, came to be considered “sacred music.”

Returning to the 1967 Instruction Musicam sacram, we find that there is no longer a demand that music for church should be universal. This would have been a demand difficult to square with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, which noted that “in certain parts of the world, especially mission lands, people have their own musical traditions and these play a great part in their religious and social life. Thus ... due importance is to be attached to their music and a suitable place given to it, not only in forming their attitude toward religion, but also in adapting worship to their native genius” (#119).

The qualities of “holiness” and “dignity” (or “integrity of form”) still remained as required elements from the 1903 document that reappear in the 1967 statement.

Here is how Pius X explained the idea of holiness: “Sacred music . . . must be holy, and therefore avoid everything that is secular, both in itself and in the way in which it is performed” (Tra le sollecitudini #2). It is clear that this passage harks back to the Council of Trent. In the documents of the preparatory commission for that Council, dated September 10, 1562, we read that vocal polyphonic music and music for the organ should not contain anything that might be “profane.” The point was not simply to avoid anything that would “tickle” one’s ears, but to assure that each kind of music could express the Word. The aim was that the hearts of those who heard would be inflamed with desire for celestial harmony, and would be led to meditate on the joy of the blessed in heaven.”

There is no such sentiment in the Motu proprio of Pius X. He wrote that the sole effect of the music is “to make the text [of the liturgy] more efficacious, so that the faithful . . . may be more roused to devotion, and better disposed to gather to themselves the fruits of grace which come from the celebration of the sacred mysteries” (TLS #1).

The Council of Trent did not totally reject all the preparatory commission’s comments on church music. The discussions of the bishops-in-council on this point have not been preserved, but the fact that they did not accept the text of the prepared decree as it was presented shows that they were not able to arrive at an agreement with the commission and, even more so, that they could not reach
a fundamental description of church music. They were not even in agreement on the expression “profane.” In the end, they simply prescribed that the chant should contain nothing lascivium aut impurum, intending to guard against setting melodies to offensive texts.

Pius X’s Motu proprio understands the meaning of “profane” (or “secular”) in a wholly different way. He used the expression to refer to an art and a style of musical performance: without doubt, for Pius it referred to the practice of bringing into the church the question-able “virtuosity” of Italian opera at that time. But that is not what we mean by “profane.” One must ask if these writers would have defined “the holy” in such a negative fashion. Would they have said that the holy was automatically “anything which was not profane”? In that case, would any music ever be considered “sacred”?

The 1903 Motu proprio also cited “art” (in 1967, “integrity of form”) as a mark of church music. Music for church “must really be an art” (TLS #2). But what is an art?

Since the end of the eighteenth century, there has been in place an aesthetic for music which has given birth to the notion that art is something that one can recognize in a work which is authentic and self-contained. So, for example, the symphonies of Beethoven as well as his Missa Solemnis would be considered true art.

This is not, however, what the Motu proprio understood as art, because these compositions by Beethoven would certainly not be allowed to serve the liturgy. So it is clear that the Motu proprio intended something else when it used the word “art.” It referred back to an older notion of art, one that had nothing to do with the contemporary music aesthetic. “True art,” in the Motu proprio, designated works composed according to the canons of a particular musical art, that is, a composition that was artistically “correct.”

Our problem with this notion arises from the fact that today we have very few rules for musical art that are universally acceptable. A composition by Britten, for instance, is based on different rules from one by Penderecki, which are different in turn from the rules used by Stockhausen—and that’s without getting involved in popular music, various forms of folk music, and other musical forms. We are equally not able to judge the traditional repertoire of church music by a uniform set of artistic standards. It would be unfair to the music of John Dunstable to apply to his work rules derived from early Palestrina.

However, it is clear that the stylistic model of Palestrina and Roman polyphony in general is at the foundation of the Motu proprio’s understanding of “art,” and this specific model is behind what the Motu proprio has to say about church music. It should be noted that the Motu proprio describes church music not as a musica ecclesiastica but as musica sacra. This term was derived from German Caecilianism, which had itself adopted an understanding of liturgy which it found among the first German Romantics. There, the term musica sacra did not describe church music in general, but a specific “sacred” style of music, a “sacral” style, with Palestrina as its model. The German poet and composer Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann offers us a description of this style: “Palestrina is simple, authentic, innocent, pious, strong, and powerful, without ornament or any musical brio. One part leads to another with a perfect consonance; the strength and hardness of this music pierces the soul with an invincible power and lifts it to heaven.” You will observe that this is not so much a description of Palestrina’s style as it is a total invention. What Hoffmann is talking about is a musical form that is calm, decorous, advancing through solemn harmonies.

Searching for Definitions in the Early Church

Our review of church documents has not given us a clear image of what church music may or may not be. Instead, it has raised additional problems and questions. Is it, then, possible to describe or to define church music? Where exactly do the terms “church music” and “sacred music” come from? And what were their original meanings?

Of course, there has been church music since there has been a church. Early church teachers did not consider all music to be appropriate for worship, but they were not all of one mind on this issue. Some thought that certain kinds of music were not at all appropriate for Christians. Jerome, for instance, said that Christian virgins should not even know what a lyre is. Of course, he was not simply talking about the instrument itself, but a kind of music and a sociological milieu associated with playing the lyre. In a modern parallel, there may be some people who would say that young

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Christian boys and girls should be unaware of the saxophone.

In the discussions on church music in the early centuries, there were questions not only about certain styles of music; some people asked if Christians should make music at all: Isn’t music a vain and superfluous thing that will distract someone and impede the path toward salvation? In his Confessions, St. Augustine gave the classic formulation of this problem. He asked whether, when he heard music in church, he paid more attention to the beautiful melody or to the words. And, if to the former, wasn’t that a sin? He came to the conclusion that it would be better to proclaim the text without musical ornamentation.

This question—is it necessary to give up music at worship or, at least, to reduce it to a minimum?—has reappeared unceasingly in the history of the Western Church. It was a particular concern of the Reformers in the Middle Ages, especially Calvin. For the Catholic Church, the question was settled by the

They did not intend to suggest that the music itself was “holy,” but only that it was in service to a holy thing, the liturgy. (Two centuries later, musica sacra was translated, disparagingly, as “sacristy music.”)

fact that the chant of the Roman Church, Gregorian chant, came to be the chant for the Western Churches; Gregorian chant became the liturgical chant. And so music, and in fact a form of music that was richly developed, came to be understood as an integral part of divine worship.

Authorities in the Middle Ages considered Gregorian chant and church polyphonic music derived from chant to be cantus ecclesiasticus, to be distinguished from cantica saecularia. Note that they spoke about cantus ecclesiasticus, not about musica ecclesiastica. This distinction had nothing to do with the use or non-use of instruments; the reason is to be found in the fact that in medieval thought the term musica included much more than the repertoire or even the sound of music. It also included musicology and the fundamental rules for the cantus. An examination of ecclesiastical chant and secular chant of the period will reveal one music, that is to say, the rules of the art and the philosophical and theological bases for the art were the same in each case.

It was only in the sixteenth century, the time of the Reformation and the Council of Trent, that this one music came to be separated into two categories—church music and that other kind, “worldly” music. Church music was described indifferently as musica ecclesiastica or musica sacra. By sacra they understood this music to be in the realm of the sacrarium, that is, the liturgy. They did not intend to suggest that the music itself was “holy,” but only that it was in service to a holy thing, the liturgy. (Two centuries later, musica sacra was translated, disparagingly, as “sacristy music.”) The term “secular” or “worldly” music wasn’t adopted until the seventeenth century, when it was used with terms like musica civilis, polica, humana, ingenua, gentilis, liberalis, and profana.

Since the sixteenth century, the distinction between a madrigal and a motet has served as the dividing line between church music and that other kind. Thus, in the dedication of his first book of motets, the maestro di cappella of the Court of Mantua, Giaches de Wert, wrote that up to that point he had been occupied chiefly with musica humana (until then, he had only published albums of madrigals); henceforward he would give himself to the service of musica divina. And, in 1581, Tomas Luis de Victoria, in dedicating to Pope Gregory XII his Hymnici totius anni secundum Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae consuetudinem, wrote that since his youth he had specialized “in sacrar et ecclesiasticus praecipuis musicis” (“in sacra music and especially in church music”). In other words, musica humana and musica divina had become two different musical disciplines. There were church musicians, and there were other musicians.

How did such a division happen? There were two reasons for it:

1) With the development of the madrigal, a new musical genre was born, one that the church never came to integrate into its music. Certainly there were “spiritual” madrigals, but the Council of Trent came along to regulate the liturgy and fix the liturgical texts. It wasn’t possible to write a madrigal using these liturgical texts, because the madrigal had its own literary form. So “spiritual” madrigals were not church music or sacred music: they were considered musica spiritualis. So now we have this term, spiritual music, which names a kind of music that is neither secular nor church music.

2) At the beginning of the fifteenth century, especially in Italy, in imitation of the model of “court choirs,” cathedrals and great abbeys adopted the practice of developing “church choirs.” Contrary to the practice of the court choirs, however, these church choirs were exclusively occupied with church music. They had no part in the development of the new musical genre “madrigal,” but only in the development of Masses and motets. So there came to be a race of musicians who regarded with disapproval those other musicians and their madrigals—or was that a look of envy on their faces?

After this period, the madrigal ceased to be a distinct musical genre. The division between church music and madrigal became simply a historical fact. That brings us to the end of our search for the origins of the term “church music,” but it brings us back to the question: What is church music today?

Searching Music History

Our study of church documents and the history of the term “church music” has not led us to adopt any definition that is valid for today and the future. It seems that the concept behind the term has varied over time, and here are some of these concepts:

1) There is the concept of church music as the chant that one can find in the liturgical books. In this sense, church music is specifically Gregorian chant. This concept is invalid, of course, outside the Roman Rite. In Milan, you have to talk about Ambrosian chant, and the church music of the East would be the chants of the various Eastern Churches.

But this was not the concept used in the Middle Ages. The idea that the Graduale Romanum was the chant book of the church at that time is false. Without getting into all the problems concerning tradition and the way chant was performed, or the fact that certain pieces (e.g., the Gloria and the Credo) were introduced into the liturgy at a relatively late date, or that many proper offices were late compositions, we have to say that the basic repertoire at that time, what we might consider “pure” Gregorian chant, had been overlaid with tropes, sequences, and polyphony.

In fact, Gregorian chant didn’t stop
developing until the very end of the Middle Ages. The results of this development are evident in the preliminary documents and the decrees of the Council of Trent, which do not talk about Gregorian chant when they are discussing music. For the Council of Trent, any problems associated with music only concerned the use of contemporary polyphony. Only in the decisions of the twenty-third session of the Council, in matters relating to the formation of the clergy, does one encounter a reference to Gregorian chant. There we read that the clergy ought to be able to understand grammar, the *cantus* and the *complutus ecclesiasticus*, and other useful techniques. After the Council of Trent, Gregorian chant was considered to have as much right to the title of “music” as did the hymn in the estimation of Johann Mattheson. It was only *cantus*, part of the ritual tradition and, as such, part of the requirements for the clerical vocation.

The Council of Trent published no decree dealing with the nature or style of Gregorian chant. It was not until the nineteenth century, in fact, and then only as a result of the movement to centralize liturgical norms under Pius IX, that an “authentic” edition of Gregorian chant was produced—and the issue of “authenticity” had less to do with the chant than it had to do with liturgical law. For the first time, as part of the discussion about the Ratisbon edition and the reform of Solesmes, which led to the *Editio Vaticana* of 1903, an appreciation of the merit and shape of the old melodies came to be expressed.

2) But there has been another understanding of church music at work: church music as the total sum of all that has been composed to this point for the church or for worship—church music as a closed repertoire.

This concept of church music presupposes that we are able to rediscover the ancient music of the church’s musical life: everything that would be part of the popular understanding of music (and of the popular notion of progress). This approach would consider music as a fixed repertoire, and church music as one essential part of this classic repertoire. This approach would also understand the symphony, for instance, as something that happens in a concert hall, a Mass as something that happens in a church, and so a true Mass ought to be celebrated with music... so that worship would then become the backdrop for the performance of this historical music—one element of the musical performance.

3) On the other hand, there is a lot of ancient church music that we would no longer accept as church music without further qualification. The concept of church music as repertoire exists in tension with an understanding of church music as a “sacred” style of music, a concept developed in the second half of the eighteenth century, in which the ideal of church music was music that is warm-hearted, solemn, holy, and sacred, which lifts the soul to God. The source for this idea is to be found in the development of a widespread appreciation for (or desire for) musical culture; it unfolded in parallel with the identification of a particular style of architecture as the “true” architecture for churches. Little by little, church music came to be identified with a “sacred” style of music, and this gave it an aesthetic reason for existing. People considered church music to be a means to evoke pious emotions, just as other forms of music evoked emotions that aren’t usually found at worship.

But the concept of a sacred style brought with it a problematic and not very Christian understanding of worship: worship as the creation of a “holy atmosphere,” especially on Sundays. Music lost its link to the unfolding of the ritual and the liturgical event. *Introit*, *Sanctus*, *Communion*—these chants were no longer differentiated musically; they were reduced to the same sacred style. They had to be holy, that is, they had to “sound holy.” If, for example, a *Kyrie* composed in the eighteenth century seems to function as an overture, by the nineteenth century a *Kyrie* would be written as an exercise in sacred style. It’s a curious thing that many pieces composed for very different occasions seemed so expressive of religious feeling that they were incorporated into church music, when it was conceived of as sacred style.

4) When a musician of the eighteenth century composed a *Kyrie* on the model of a musical overture, he imported a musical model that had developed at the royal court. Church music in the Baroque period was either good court music or an imitation of it. Even the Masses composed by Mozart under commission from the Archbishop of Salzburg were such “representative music,” though they were not outstanding examples of “sacred music.” It was only with the incomplete Mass in C Minor that Mozart broke with the tradition of “representative music.”

In the nineteenth century, the spread of church choirs assisted in democratizing such representative music. The Mozart Masses that had represented Salzburg and its bishop became instruments to represent church choirs and the citizens who sang them; they also served to represent Catholic Church music in general, and the place of the Catholic Church in musical and cultural life. This was especially true for the Catholic Church in the “diapason”: “We Catholics, we have something to offer in the world of music; we have a culture, too.”

5) That raises a point that we cannot underestimate: It is important that the church be represented culturally, and that it is present culturally through its music, but a concept of church music as “representative” in this way is pretty much useless in anything concerning authentic worship. Worship is not an exercise in auto-representation.

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**People considered church music to be a means to evoke pious emotions, just as other forms of music evoked emotions that aren’t usually found at worship.**

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A Function of Liturgy

The liturgical Constitution of Vatican II tells us that church music is “the more holy the more closely it is joined to the liturgical rite” (#112). Here we have a concept of church music as a function of the liturgy. There’s a lot of writing and discussion in recent years about this concept of church music, and it seems to me that there’s also been a lot of misunderstanding on this point, as if church music were only a function of this or that particular rite. In other words, people seem to think that if the rite prescribes music to be used at this or that spot, then music is to be used only as specified. So church music comes to be misunderstood functionally as settings for the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, or other text prescribed for singing.

A proper understanding of this concept of church music is certainly more in
accord with the liturgy than the concepts of church music as sacred style, or repertoire, or simply as the music contained in the liturgical books. A concept of church music as a function of the liturgy doesn’t impose many restrictions, nor does it make music a prisoner of a particular rite. Rather, it offers the church’s musicians an opportunity to help in directing the rite itself. For example, the shape of an entrance song can structure the rite and determine what will follow.

A sung eucharistic prayer is not simply a musical morsel added to a prescribed text; it is something that must be composed as a unity of text and music, a sung liturgy. An instrumental piece might assume the liturgical function of an introduction, and render superfluous a spoken prologue. The musical forms of Masses celebrated with young people might take on a different shape from ordinary rituals, as, in another context, the shape might be different when one performs an outstanding work from long ago.

So the concept of church music as a function of the liturgy does not constitute a restriction, but rather an opening out toward new possibilities, a wider set of dimensions than have been imagined for centuries. We have here only a concept, not yet a definition. There still remain all the questions of style, form, repertoire, as well as the task of examining and discussing the concept itself. What follows is the beginning of the discussion.

Church music is a human work done in the presence of God, a form of human expression. This is a point which has been neglected (or, in some cases, even suppressed) in all of the discussions of church music since the Council of Trent. For example, some publications about church music never stop speaking about organs and organ music in place of speaking about the organism, as if the organs were playing themselves.

Church music is a means of communication. As a matter of fact, what is the concrete effect of church music? What difference does it make to the participants whether they sing this or that particular piece of church music? What difference does it make during the entrance rite whether they sing a text written in this or that style?

Music is a sociological category. Whose music is it? Is church music the music of an educated class or a privileged one? Is it the music of people who are music fans? Or is it folk music? Or popular music? How much do musical interests—or prejudices—determine what music we use in our liturgy? (And that’s without asking about the formation and the musical interests of the person who sits at the organ or directs the choir.) Finally, if we are so uncertain about what does and does not constitute church music, and the dividing line between them, that is not the fault of Vatican II. The contemporary musical scene no longer allows us to make a division between church music and profane music. There is, rather, a division today between “serious” or classical music, on the one hand, and, on the other, “light” music, or music for relaxation, consumer music. The heritage of church music is certainly to be considered a part of classical music, but liturgical music is not totally contained in the categories of “serious” or classical music, especially when during worship people only sing hymns or play the organ.

At the beginning of the 1960s, before the liturgical reform got underway, new and unusual sounds started to appear in liturgies celebrated with young people. Such sounds could in no way be considered part of categories like “serious” or classical music, but they could be described as “rhythmic” music or “church jazz.” In just a short time, these songs found a place in participation aids and hymnals, and they shattered our notion of ecclesiastical music.

At the same time, outside the church, the distinction between classical music and light music was blurring. Light music, especially since the Beatles, has developed new forms which we have to take seriously, a new “pragmatic” kind of music. So the former distinction between classical music and light music no longer holds. And new categories of music are in the process of development. We can speak about functional music, pragmatic music, in which people mix together music from various genres, such as propagandistic music and political music—and perhaps even church music! With these developing notions and these boundaries, the major traits of musical style are no longer so clear. A new concept of church music has evolved. It’s up to us to put our stamp on it, not as a fixed definition, but as a work of creation.

Notes


3. See Tro le sollecitudini (hereafter TLS) #2: “Sacred music . . . must really be an art, since in no other way can it have on the mind of those who hear it that effect which the Church desires in using it in her liturgy the art of sound.”


5. Translator’s Note: Dr. Huckle is using “folk” in a technical way, as in this 1955 definition accepted by the International Folk Music Council: “Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are: (i) continuity that links the present with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community which determines the form or forms in which the music survives.” For a discussion of this definition, see Stanley Sadie, ed., The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan, 1980) 6:693.

6. Translator’s Note: The author describes Mozart’s Masses as “representative” in several senses. The early liturgical compositions were clearly imitations of a kind of standard style. Grove’s Dictionary notes that “the models [for Mozart’s early Masses] were very clear . . . . The tradition was essentially Italian, imported to Austria, and its most famous representative was Hasse.” Stanley Sadie, ed., The New Grove Dictionary 12:688. Mozart’s Masses were “representative” in another sense, as we shall see below: they “represented” the court style of the Archbishop of Salzburg. They were also “representative” in that the choir represented the whole congregation in singing the liturgy. And, later, they served to “represent” some of Catholicism’s most significant contributions to the art of music.
For Musicians: Organ Study at Catholic University

“Pray for a Good Harvest, But Keep on Hoeing”

By Ted Kiefer

There’s a colorful banner hanging on the family room wall in our home which reads “Pray for a good harvest, but keep on hoeing.” I’ve always enjoyed the succinct economy of its message, but more particularly since returning to school to further my studies of the organ.

I am an organist and have been involved with church music for most of my life. When attending NPM Conventions, I take advantage of every meeting, class, and seminar that has anything to do with the organ. I wouldn’t think of missing an organ recital, and I am dismayed when I must choose between two organ events whose schedules conflict. My wife noticed this unquenchable thirst for organ activities and it was she who suggested the possibility of further training in an academic environment.

While perusing the displays at the NPM Convention in Cincinnati last year, I stopped by a booth offering information about programs at The Catholic University of America. I had the good fortune to meet Sister Mary Alice O’Connor, director of CUA’s liturgical music degree program, and from her I learned about Catholic University’s wonderful school of music located in Washington, DC. We discussed the organ department, and I was encouraged to apply since, she assured me, there were other “mature” students at the University.

Praying with a Hand on the Hoe

The following fall I enrolled as a special student working with Dr. Robert Grogan, chair of the Organ Department. His task was to prepare me for the required admission recital. Toward the beginning of this adventure, I walked across the campus to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, which is adjacent to the University. In that beautiful worship space I asked God for strength and, being human, I questioned whether I was doing the right thing. It was then that the message of our family-room banner hit me. It was time to “keep on hoeing.”

Catholic University began offering music courses in 1927. Today, the Benjamin T. Rome School of Music, supported by an outstanding faculty, offers thirty programs directed toward degrees in music and music education. The school’s philosophy is founded on perpetuating the Church’s historical role in uplifting the human spirit through the arts.

It didn’t take long to realize that the organ program at Catholic University is excellent. Expectations are very high and...
the pedagogy is current and scholarly. The centerpiece of the program is a magnificent, three-manual, mechanical action pipe organ in an equally magnificent worship space, St. Vincent’s Chapel.

Dr. Robert Grogan not only chairs the organ department; he also fills the positions of organist and carillonneur at the Basilica of the National Shrine. Robert Gallagher, also on the organ faculty at the University, is organist at St. Matthew’s Cathedral in Washington. These faculty members are performers of international reputation who skillfully develop the musical talent of their students through private instruction and also in organ classes.

At my stage of life, the mid-fifties, it is perhaps more important to "keep on hoeing"—that is, to focus on and enjoy my journey rather than to worry about the harvest, the degree. The benefits of intense practice under the guidance of excellent teachers is uplifting. The ability to learn concert-level repertoire provides an opportunity to perform and to elevate the interest in and impact of good music on congregations.

The Future Is with Those We Train Today

The future of organ music truly rests with those we train. NPM has developed a series of Schools for Organists held throughout the country. The American Guild of Organists (AGO) also has a system of exams to evaluate levels of competence and playing skills. These are steps in the right direction. For those desiring to go a bit further, programs like the ones at Catholic University will help fill the need for competent and capable musicians.

I dearly love the pipe organ and it needs good players. The very destiny of older and irreplaceable instruments is truly in the hands of those who play them. In some cases, electronic replacements are plugged in because there is no one available to play the real thing or anyone with any interest in its musical capabilities.

For the organist, to work toward a degree in performance or liturgy has the power to boost our congregations and to enhance our life’s work. Further, it is a challenge to continued growth. Indeed, we must pray about our musical responsibilities, but to enjoy the rewards of the ultimate harvest, we must also keep on hoeing in the present!
The Psalms
Singing, Praying, Preaching
The Bible: God’s Musical Score

BY STEPHEN J. LAMPE

It is a rare and moving experience when, over time, an image is able to serve as a source of reflection, yet remains constant and ever new. Indeed, it is poetically inspiring when a new image surfaces to serve as a source of reflection. Luis Alonso Schökel, S.J., provided just such an image for a group of students at Rome’s Pontifical Biblical Institute in the 1980s when he compared the Bible to a musical score. Using this image as his starting point, Fr. Alonso Schökel then pushed through the image to speak ultimately of God’s proclaimed word as an expression of God’s music. Allow me to explain.

The biblical text can be appropriated and appreciated at many levels. Stories, parables, psalms, and other popular forms of biblical literature have been expressed in oral form for centuries, to say nothing of their transmission through song, and even through images and stained glass. Any person of faith, even those who are unable to read, can appreciate the comfort and the challenge of God’s word in the biblical text. Truly, the most unlettered person can experience the power of the word of God. Still, much is evident to the scholar which is invisible to the uninformed. Indeed, the more one learns about the text, the more such learning can enhance one’s faith. Like the trained musician who can appreciate the subtleties of a composition, the biblically literate can appreciate the nuance of the text and delight in the dignity which God’s inspiration has bestowed on human speech and word. Such are the fruits of a careful examination of the biblical text.

So too, the most untrained and unmusical of persons can appreciate the power and majesty of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony or the sublime beauty of Randall Thompson’s Alleluia. Nevertheless much is lost upon such an unmusical person, and appreciation of these musical works is enhanced by the ability to examine the score, to note the intricacies and subtleties of the phrasing, balance, timbre, musical key, and much more.

Still, the ability to appropriate music or the biblical word at unsophisticated and even at relatively sophisticated levels may be surpassed by a yet more profound experience. “When,” Fr. Alonso Schökel went on to ask his students, “is a musical score most perfectly expressing the music that was created by the composing artist?” Not when it is bound in a book, but rather when it is performed for others to hear and experience. So too, when is the Bible most revelatory as God’s word? When it is proclaimed in the liturgical assembly and becomes the subject of the community’s reflection. Of course, this is not to deny the value of study and private reading of the biblical text. However, God’s word in the Bible is most truly what it is called to be when it is proclaimed and reflected on in the context of an assembled community of believers celebrating the Church’s sacramental life.

The Image’s Implications

While all images when applied too literally can be found wanting, the image of the Bible as a musical score has profound implications for biblical scholars and ministers of the word alike. It recognizes that God’s word can be encountered on many levels, but it affirms that the most significant of such encounters is that which occurs in the Church’s liturgy. In the community of believers which gathers to celebrate word and sacrament, the word of God finds its most natural and fruitful environment.

For the biblical scholar, this recognition implies that the academic study of the biblical texts, as important as it may be, must always be seen as serving the fullest proclamation of the word in the liturgical celebration. Biblical scholars serve this proclamation by providing dynamic and accurate translations which allow the text to be heard anew in every age. Furthermore, biblical scholarship assists homilists and proclaimers of the word as they strive to break open the word for the contemporary Body of Christ. The image of the Bible as God’s musical score implies that the study of the text can never

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Pastoral Music • August-September 1996
be seen as an end in itself, for the word of God cannot be
confined to the classroom, the study, or the academy. Rather it always strives for its fullest expression in liturgy
when the biblical scholar and the biblically untutored are
joined in their experience of God’s powerful word pro-
claimed.

For the minister of the word, this image poses differ-
ent, but equally profound challenges. If the word pro-
claimed is the fullest expression of God’s word spoken to
the church gathered in prayer, then the ministers of the
word must do everything in their power to facilitate that
proclamation. Those entrusted with the proclamation
itself must take great care for sensitive translations as
well as care for the acquisition of those skills necessary to
proclaim the word in an intelligible, dynamic, and faith-
filled manner. They become, in a very real way, the
mouthpiece of God speaking a message of timeless truth.

From those entrusted with the task of reflecting upon
God’s word in the homily, the proposed image elicits
even greater demands. To fulfill their responsibilities as
ministers of the word, they must participate in the work
of the biblical scholar, while going beyond it. The task of
the homilist is not to interpret the proclaimed word in the
context of the liturgical assembly, but rather, having
studied the passage, the homilist must “play” the text,
bring it to life in the midst of the assembly. Ultimately, the
homilist is charged with answering the question: What is
God saying to this community (including the preacher) as
it celebrates the inspired word proclaimed and prepares
to celebrate the sacrament? When this occurs, the word
proclaimed and reflected on is most truly the Word of
God.

The Musician and the Word

What is the role of the musician in this dynamic? Does
the metaphor have anything to say to pastoral musicians?
While the pastoral musician can certainly be understood
as a “minister of the word” who is faced with many of the
same challenges and responsibilities as others who share
this ministry, the insights drawn from the image of the
Bible as God’s musical score pose some unique chal-
lengees to pastoral musicians. The challenges are numer-
ous, but three will suffice to illustrate this challenge: the
musician as homilist, as exegete, and as proclaimer of the
word.

Beginning with the conviction that the liturgical as-
sembly is the context in which the word of God is most
truly and naturally incarnate, it follows that all who
minister in that context must be dedicated to a ministry
that allows that dynamic to unfold. Like the homilist, the
task facing the pastoral musician is a daunting one. As we
have already seen, the homilist must engage in extensive
preparation in the exercise of the homiletic task. A homily
which seeks to proclaim the word must be grounded in
a basic and thorough familiarity with the biblical text.
This familiarity must include not only a grasp of the basic
concepts communicated by the texts but also the dynam-
ics of proclamation required by the text so that it will
enjoy a faithful and faith-filled oral proclamation. Prepa-
ration does not stop there, however. The homilist is also
charged with “playing” the text, thus bringing to life its
nuance and message for the particular congregation in
which the reflection occurs. In this way, the homilist
answers the question: What is God saying to this com-
unity (and to me), at this moment in our lives of faith?

Similarly, the pastoral musician embraces a task which
requires familiarity with the liturgy, the word, the con-
gregation, and the musical tradition. The liturgical cel-
bration, which is the primary context for proclaiming
God’s word to the Body of Christ, demands that the
musician acquire a basic familiarity with liturgical and
biblical texts which will facilitate the communication of
that word. Just as the homilist needs to study the texts
and the context assigned for a given celebration, so too
does the musician fully exercise the music ministry when
each liturgical celebration is prepared in the light of these
texts and their context. The songs chosen, the instrumen-
tal music played, the appropriate balance among the
musical ministries of cantor, choir, presider, and congre-
gation are all decisions which are made to allow God’s
voice to be heard more clearly and to be celebrated by the community assembled. This is most possible when the musician is deeply immersed in the lives and the needs of the particular congregation. Together with the homilist, the musician delivers a “homily” of sorts. Through the choice of music, the manner in which it is played, and much more, the musician also answers the question: What is the musical ambiance which facilitates what God is saying to this community (and to me) in this moment in our lives of faith?

The pastoral musician also knows something of the challenge which faces the biblical exegete. The exegete understands and delights in the depths of the biblical text in a manner which is not possible for those who are untrained in the discipline. Indeed, the biblical scholar provides an invaluable service to the believing community. The fruits of biblical scholarship are particularly enjoyed by others through faithful and nuanced translations for worship as well as through a wealth of critical commentary and scholarship which assists the faithful in acquiring a more profound appreciation for the word. Nevertheless, biblical scholars are always reminded of the fact that the fruits of their labors are in the service of the word proclaimed. It is not their work to be proclaimed, but rather it is their work to assist in the proclamation of God’s word.

The image of the Bible as God’s musical score pose some unique challenges to pastoral musicians . . .

So too, the pastoral musician must always recall that the liturgical assembly is the forum in which God speaks through the word proclaimed and the sacrament celebrated. Like the biblical scholar, the musician understands and delights in the beauty and depth of the community’s musical heritage. Furthermore, the musician appreciates the sublime beauty of the tradition in a way which is often lost on the musically untutored faithful. The musician’s task includes assisting the faithful in acquiring a greater appreciation for their musical tradition and the ways that it enables God’s voice to echo in the life of the community. However, in the end, the musician is also reminded that the musical tradition is always at the service of the proclamation of word and sacrament. That which the community is to hear and reflect on is God’s word and sacrament, and the implications which flow from them, not the musical heritage, no matter how beautiful or sublime.

The Word That Is Sung

It is perhaps in the musician’s role as proclaimer of the word that the profound and mysterious dimensions of the role unite. While the musician’s craft strives to create the ambiance necessary for a full proclamation of the word, that task becomes explicit and complex in those instances when the biblical word itself is expressed in song. This is particularly the case in the singing of the responsorial psalm. However, the biblical text is also sung in the alleluia and its verse as well as in various acclamations and the ordinary of the Mass.

Through the singing of the psalm, the musician serves the proclamation of the word in a way which cannot be achieved through its recitation. The document Musica sacrae alludes to this dynamic when it states that “a liturgical service takes on a nobler aspect when the rites are celebrated with singing, the ministers of each rank take their parts in them, and the congregation actively participates.” No longer is this either the recitation of a printed word or the study of an intriguing text. Through the medium of psalmody, and the ministrv of the musician, the psalm text is raised to the level of a dialogue between a believing people who have heard God speak and who long to respond to the word they have heard. This is no longer a static musical score or a biblical text entombed in a manuscript; this is the Word of God, fully alive and in dialogue with a believing and hungry people.

There are few images or metaphors which continue to speak beyond an initial examination. Because of its freshness, constancy, and newness, the metaphor of the Bible as God’s musical score may well be worth continued examination. Or perhaps the examination should be expanded to “the proclamation of the word as God’s music.” Fr. Alonso Schökel implies as much when he writes:

The whole assembly sings a Psalm and the word, the inspired word comes into play, achieving through the community its full actualization. The whole assembly hears the word of God proclaimed, and they must respond with word and action: Not only with the liturgical action, but with the action of the whole of their lives, which then becomes energized and enlightened by the power of the Word.

Notes

1. This is clearly indicated in Music in Catholic Worship which states that “the function of music is ministerial; it must serve and never dominate. Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith. It should heighten the texts so that they speak more fully and more effectively.” NCCB Committee on the Liturgy, Music in Catholic Worship (1972) #23.


Praying the Psalms: A Christian Approach

BY LUCIEN DEISS, C.S.S.P.

The Book of Psalms is, in many respects, a summary of the entire Bible. Psalms drawn from this book, along with other biblical canticles and song fragments, make up an essential part of Christian liturgy: They provide the texts for the responsorial psalm, part of the proclamation of the word of God during any liturgy of the word, and they form the heart and nucleus of the liturgy of the hours which is, or which should be, as Vatican II affirms, "the source of devotion and nourishment also for personal prayer."

The way Christians pray the psalms is, therefore, of vital importance both in the renewal of the liturgy and in living the Christian life. In truth, learning how to pray the psalms in a Christian context is part of an even larger question: "How do we read and pray the Bible in a Christian way?"

These questions, some might say problems, of praying and living are relevant today when people are asking why we do not write new psalms, new creations that are expressive of our condition. Why do we continue to pray these old psalms, some of which are crumbling under the weight of age, that seem to express only the concerns of another day and another age? Did not Israel in the past compose these songs in the language of the people to address their pressing concerns? Would we not be continuing this tradition, rather than abandoning it, if we too wrote and created and prayed new psalms?

To the question of writing and praying new creations, I can only say that we have today, even as Israel had in the past, the obligation of creating each day new psalms, new prayers, new words, and new songs. We have the true obligation to celebrate each day the eternal newness of God's love, even as Psalm 98 proclaims: "Sing to the Lord a new song!"

But we also have the obligation of praying the psalms of Israel as the deepest expression of the yearnings of the chosen people of God. When we pray these psalms in the words the Holy Spirit gave to God's people, in the light of the Christian revelation, we are sure to encounter the presence of Jesus Christ. But when we pray our newly written prayers in the language of today, a language which swiftly changes, do we have the same security?

In the psalms we feel the security of the word of God, a sense of the presence of the Holy One. Against this security, our own creations seem frail. To pray with the words of the psalms surpasses prayer using the words of our own creations, even as heaven surpasses earth, as Christ surpasses the human, as the Holy Spirit surpasses our own spirit.

To be sure, all true prayer is heard, even when no words are used, but to understand why I assert the value of the psalms of Israel for giving us the words of prayer and shaping the very way we pray, allow me to examine them under these aspects: as prayers of humanity; as prayers of a people of blissful hope; as prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit; and, lastly, as prayers used by Jesus Christ in his own prayer.

The Psalms Are Prayers of Humanity

In a fundamental aspect, the psalms are songs of the human situation. The conditions which bring forth the psalmist's song or prayer are not fictional story lines: They are expressive of a condition truly experienced by human beings. When we read Psalm 88:2-3—"Save me, Lord my God! By day, by night, I cry out./ Let my prayer reach you;/ turn, listen to me"—we hear the prayer of someone, long ago, who called God all the day long and who went to bed oppressed by grief and sadness to lay wakeful through the long night.

And, again, when we pray in the words of a psalmist (Ps. 31:5b-6a; 15:17)—

You are my shelter;
I put myself in your hands . . .
I trust in you, Lord.
I say, "You are my God,
my life is in your hands."
. . . Look on me with love,
save your servant—

the words are the words of someone long ago (who had no thought that Christ on his cross would echo these same words), someone who commended the preserva-
tion of a life into the hands of the Lord.

Not all situations described in the psalms, of course, are those of sorrow. In Psalm 150:3-4 we read—"Praise! Praise God with trumpet blasts, / with lute and harp. / Praise! Praise God with timbrel and dance, / with strings and pipe." This psalm equally has its place because of the human need to dance for the Lord to the sound of harp, lute, and timbrel.

Throughout the psalms, we cannot escape the sense that psalmic prayer and the human condition are deeply intertwined. Thus it is that in Psalm 56:9, the psalmist describes God as "storing up" tears in a leather bottle (the equivalent of a modern flask). The psalmist's intent is to stress that God is aware of and collects the sorrows of humanity as well as their shouts of joy. Both find their way to the very heart of God who will succor us in our need and share in our joy.

All ages and conditions of humanity are mirrored in the psalms. There are prayers of thanksgiving for the beauty of young men and women: "God, you shape our sons / like tall, sturdy plants; / you sculpt our daughters / like pillars for a palace" (Ps. 144:12). There are also prayers for help amid the infirmities of age. An especially poignant example of the latter is the heartfelt yet confident prayer of the aged man (Psalm 71:9,18,22) who beseeches God in these words:

Pastoral Music • August-September 1996

Now I am old, my strength fails, do not toss me aside...
Do not leave me, Lord, now that I am old...
I will thank you, Lord, for your true friendship and play the lyre and harp for you, the Holy One of Israel.

The language of Psalm 71 is mirrored in the humble prayer composed by King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38: 11-12,20) after he had recovered from a sickness that brought him close to death:

I said, I shall not see the LORD in the land of the living...
My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent;
like a weaver I have rolled up my life;
he cuts me off from the loom...
The LORD will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the LORD.

The voices of individuals at prayer are not the only ones heard in the Bible's canticles and psalms, however. Consider the prayer of Tobit and Sarah on their wedding
night (Tobit 8:5-9) and the prayer for a couple that they will live to see their grandchildren in a peaceful land (Ps. 128:3,6): “Your beloved, a fruitful vine / in the warmth of your home . . . May you see your children’s children, / and on Israel, peace!”

Mirror of the human condition, the psalms also mirror the changing face of the rest of the created world. Oceans and rivers, mountains and valleys, springtime and autumn, sunshine and rain, day and night, wild goats and wild asses, lions and cattle, storks who nest in the tallest fir— all find their place in the Psalter. Special attention is given to the young ravens, about which it is said (Ps. 147:9) that God answers their cry: “The Lord feeds the cattle/ and young ravens when they call.” The ravens of this psalm, who mirror the providence of the heavenly Father, may have been the ones Jesus had in mind when he told his followers: “Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them” (Luke 12:24).

In these few examples we see the manifold diversity of psalms as it speaks the language of creation, the language of human distress and of human joy, the language that shaped the prayer of the one who called himself the “Son of Man.”

Because the human truth of the psalms is the bedrock of their meaning and their source for prayer, I invite us particularly as Christians to embrace the full range of human gestures that make up the prayer expressed in the psalms. In other words, if we affirm, “We sing to you, O Lord,” then we should really be singing. Let us abandon our inconsistencies. If we accept the invitation to “lift up your hands in the holy place and bless the Lord” (Ps. 134:2), then let us truly lift our hands. As we hear the call to “come, bow down and worship, kneel to the Lord our maker” (Ps. 95:6), let us not remain glued to our seats, but kneel! Let us cease proclaiming that we ought to “praise God with timbrel and dance,” if we are not going to dance, if we are going to stand as stiff as frozen chickens! At least, let us provide an opportunity for the people who do want to praise the Lord with dance to use this expression of prayer in their worship and praise.

In this invitation to respect the human truth of the psalms, of course, I am not suggesting that everybody should always do everything and affirm everything that we find in the psalms. We should reject what is inappropriate to our modern understanding of liturgy, but at the same time we should be fully aware that the psalms are the most alive prayers in our liturgy and that the assemblies of our beloved Catholic Church should be alive, lively, and life giving.

The Psalms Are Prayers of a People of Blissful Hope

The psalms reflect the human condition, but they become prayer only when we read them as Scripture and use them in the context of a community of faith, in our case, in the assembled church. God speaks to us, but he speaks to us in the midst of a community that believes in salvation. We answer God, but we form our answer in the midst of this same community.

To put it another way: The horizontal dimension of the psalms, which we have just examined, must be completed by a vertical dimension, the rising of prayer to heaven. We may go even further and assert that the vertical rise to heaven is possible only if it is based on the solid ground of the horizontal dimension, and both are embraced in the mystery that we call “church.” The people of God, the faithful, need to be in communion with their brothers and sisters if they are to pray in truth: “Our Father who art in heaven.” Likewise, the faithful also need to be united with their brothers and sisters in prayer, if they are truly to pray the psalms, for they are the prayers of all the people who are journeying toward God.

The greatest attention should be given to the fact that psalmic prayer is rooted in the history of Israel. We speak of the Psalter as one book, but it is in fact a collection of 150 prayers and songs whose composition spans a millennium. One of the oldest psalms (Psalm 68) dates to the tribal-confederation period of the Judges in the twelfth century B.C.E.; “God rises up,/ enemies of heaven scatter.” Some psalms, including some of the wisdom psalms, may have been composed as recently as a century before the time of Christ.

It would be a good thing for Christians to become familiar with the literary categories of the psalms so that we could distinguish a royal psalm from an enthronement psalm, and a hymn from a wisdom psalm. It helps, when we pray, to know that the particular psalm which we are praying is, for instance, a psalm of pilgrimage, and may be one of the psalms that our Lord sang as he went up to Jerusalem, and that we today sing and pray with him a text that he sang two thousand years ago. And it also helps to know that another psalm belongs to the collection of texts called the “Great Hallel” and it may have been sung by the Lord at the end of the Passover meal before the crucifixion. Thus when we sing that psalm we are uniting our prayer with his.

The literary types of psalms help our understanding, but we must always bear in mind that, whatever its literary category, when we pray a particular psalm we pray and sing a prayer text that belongs to a people of blissful hope, borrowed from the prayer of Israel and voiced by us in the name of the people of God that is the church of Jesus Christ.

Thus we cannot say, when we read or sing that “night after night I lie exhausted, hollow-eyed with grief, my pillow soaked with tears” (Ps. 6:7-8) that these words do not concern us, for we have never experienced the depth
of sorrow portrayed. Let us be grateful that we have not experienced it, but this sorrow does concern us because we are commanded to bear the burdens of our brothers and sisters who do weep night after night. And these words are of concern to us because of Jesus Christ who wept during that night in Gethsemani.

Psalmic prayer, molded by history, has internalized all the greatness and holiness of that history, and it has also internalized the hesitations and gropings (and failures) of a people in their journey toward God. Thus it is no surprise to find in the psalms atrocious clamorings for revenge couched in the language of supplication: “O God, break their teeth,/ rip out the young lions’ fangs” (Ps. 58:7). Nor should we be surprised to find the mournful lamentation of Psalm 137—“By the rivers of Babylon/ we sat weeping,/ remembering Zion”—followed by the terrifying cry for vengeance:

Doomed Babylon, be cursed!
Good for those who deal you evil for evil!
Good for those who destroy you,
who smash your children at the walls.

And we find this prayer in Psalm 139:22: “I hate them with a deadly hate/ these enemies of mine.”

Such texts highlight a real difficulty which must be confronted, a difficulty which has sometimes turned the faithful away from psalmic prayer. The Hebrew Scriptures present a religion which is incarnated in time, a time which runs unknown years from “the generation of Abraham” to the time of Jesus of Nazareth. There is necessarily an evolution in what is revealed. Thus we find in this picture elements which will be entirely integrated in the Gospel, for example, the law of love expressed in the Shema Israel: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). This law is the heart of the revelation toward which the Hebrew people journeyed; it is at the heart of the Christian Scriptures as well.

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all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). This law is the heart of the revelation toward which the Hebrew people journeyed; it is at the heart of the Christian Scriptures as well. It will subsist in eternity. Other elements of the Hebrew Scriptures appear obsolete today. Examples are numerous, such as the cataloguing of the valiant soldiers of King David’s army (2 Samuel 23:8-39), or the list of Solomon’s officers (1 Kings 4:1-6). These furnished an historical context for the Jews, even as today we remember the prominent generals in the American Civil War.

And there are elements of the Hebrew Scriptures that are contrary to the Christian revelation. Some of these elements are examined one by one and adjusted in the collection of sayings included in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus proclaimed: “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times... But I say to you...” (Matthew 5:21-48).

My point here is that the retaining of scriptural elements that are obsolete or contrary to our understanding of Christianity will not improve our psalmic prayer. Of course these elements should not be abandoned, for they have an historical and scholarly value.

Let us summarize: Certain elements of the psalms, such as the psalms of revenge, seem to me to have no place in Christian prayer. Here it may be important to distinguish between the biblical psalter and the liturgical psalter—a point to be made about the entire Bible and its use in the liturgy. The entire text of the Bible has not been retained in the liturgical lectionary, though we are careful to publish the whole text of the Bible for study and personal reflection and prayer. Here we need to apply common sense. Neither the psalter nor the Bible has an absolute value. We were not baptized in order to read the Bible and to pray the psalms. But being baptized, we receive the psalter and the Bible in order to encounter Jesus Christ. He alone is our absolute value. In short, the psalms exist for the faithful; the faithful do not exist for the psalms.

Many commentators over time have argued for the full retention of the psalms in Christian prayer. Usually these arguments center on an allegorical interpretation of the vivid words. For instance, we are not to understand that we are actually praying that God would crush children (Ps. 137). Rather, we have been told by Christian commentators, we are to understand that an “infant of Babylon” is an offspring of the “city of sin,” such as an obscene thought; those are happy who destroy such thoughts and hindrances by shattering them against the rock that is Jesus Christ.

This allegorization was common in the past, and some people today still accept it. But I believe that we must
respect the literal sense of these prayers. They are requests for a bloody revenge which Christian prayer cannot accept. Still we can understand them in a positive way: The request for vengeance was indeed an affirming of God's justice. Rather than seek the vengeance themselves, the people turn over their right to seek revenge to God: "Lord, never forget the crime ..." But we know that God is so just that he will crush the sins of evildoers but not the sinners themselves.

The Psalms Are Prayers of the Holy Spirit

Not only must we insist on the psalms for their human value and their insertion as prayer into the life of a people of blissful hope, but we must add, indeed insist, that these human prayers gathered by tradition as the word of God must also be considered as prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit.

This aspect of these texts upsets everything we've said so far. Now we look at these texts, which we've thought of to this point as emerging from and expressing human needs, emotions, and events, as texts that take their origin from and find their base, in a certain sense, in God. In this aspect we see the Holy Spirit seizing these prayers and transforming them over time for our benefit.

Allow me an illustrative example. Thirty-three centuries ago, some thirteen centuries before the birth of Jesus the Christ, there reigned in Egypt a Pharaoh named Akhenaton (which means, roughly, "Loved by Aton"—the name for the sun's disk, venerated as a god in distinction to other aspects of the sun—Ra—that were also worshiped in Egypt). This young prince, who ascended the throne at the age of thirteen, is remembered today for his mysticism and for his attempt to break the exploitive hold of the Theban priestly cult of Amon (another name for the sun) by instituting a new cult, grounded in the belief that there is only one god, the Aton, who is a god of love and truth. The young Pharaoh's "Hymn to the Sun," inscribed throughout Akh-boost-aton, the city which he founded and named for the one god, Aton, burns with love:

You are in my heart, and nobody knows You
But your son Akhen-aton.
In your designs, You have given him wisdom,
And by your power all beings, your creatures,
Are in your hands.
You are the time of existence;
It is also by You that all beauty is gazed at with wonder.
And all that is on earth, you have caused them to rise
for your child, the King living in truth!

With great tenderness does this young Egyptian king
sing the universal presence of his beloved god! Through Aton "the flowers open up, for they drink their fill of the warmth before his face" Through Aton "the little birds fly with joy from their nests. It is him which their innocent clapping of wings strives to worship." Indeed all the beauty and holiness of creation reflects this one God, Aton.

Was Akh-en-aton ever aware of the revelation to Israel of the only God, YHWH, who is truth and love? Did Akh-en-aton’s song arise from a knowledge of the Hebrew conception of the One who is holy? It may be possible. The sojourn of Israel in Egypt began around 1800 B.C.E. and ended around 1250. Beginning in 1378 B.C.E., this extraordinary pharaoh reigned for some sixteen years. Was he aware of the songs of the Children of Israel who had so long lived in Egyptian bondage? We cannot say.

What we can say is that the Holy Spirit did not consider Akh-en-aton’s prayer as unworthy of being the source for the inspired prayer that we find in Psalm 104: “I will bless you, Lord my God!/ You fill the world with awe./ You dress yourself in light,/ in rich, majestic light.” Thus it is that when I pray this psalm in the liturgy or in personal prayer, I am praying and using a prayer which is more than three millennia old.

As a member of the Christian community, I use this psalm (verse 30) on Pentecost: "Breathe into them, they rise;/ the face of the earth comes alive!" And I use it (vv. 13-15) when I sing this communion antiphon on the Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time:

| You nourish the earth with what you create. |
| You make grass grow for cattle, make plants grow for people, food to eat from the earth, and wine to warm the heart, oil to glisten on faces, and bread for bodily strength. |

And I use it for personal prayer, as when I quote verses 27-28 before starting meals: “All look to you for food/ when they hunger; you provide it and they feed./ You open your hand; they feast . . .”

When I use all of the above in my prayer, I am borrowing a prayer composed by Pharaoh Akh-en-aton according to the Egyptian tradition, taken up by the Holy Spirit and adapted as a prayer to the one God revealed to Israel, after undergoing a purification according to the exigencies of God’s holiness, to become inspired prayer. Thus we are beneficiaries of the extraordinary grace which is in fact at the heart of the incarnation. It is the assumption by the Spirit of God of all that is beautiful, dignified, fully human, in order to change and transfigure it into a divine prayer.

Paul tells us bluntly (Romans 8:26-27) that we do not know how to pray as we should, that we cannot pray as we should. But the Spirit, who is in us, prays with us and in our stead, with the words that we cannot express. Most fittingly, the Spirit who knows the Father prays for us.

The Spirit not only inspires us to pray, but gives us the very words which must be said in order to reach the heart of God.

The Psalms Are Prayers Used by Jesus

The incarnation of Christ intervenes, finally, to transform the various perspectives on psalmic prayer which we have considered thus far. These human compositions, inspired as prayer by the Holy Spirit, have been taken up as the prayer of Jesus the Christ and must now be understood as a divine prayer. They have acquired the boundless dignity of the Son’s praise for the Father in the Spirit.

The psalms have acquired the boundless dignity of the Son’s praise for the Father in the Spirit.

Jesus of Nazareth, indeed, prayed the psalms. As a pious member of the chosen people of God, he joined in communal prayer in the synagogue and, occasionally, in the Temple and in personal daily prayer, using texts drawn from the Book of Psalms. Most likely he sang the “songs of ascent” (Psalms 120-134) when he made the pilgrimage from Galilee up to Jerusalem. In the merry hubbub of the pilgrims and in the growing excitement of the faithful as they reached Jerusalem and by stages as they arrived at the Temple, he probably joined in singing: “With joy I heard them say,/ ‘Let us go to the Lord’s house!’” (Ps 122). And, if they were part of the Seder ritual at the time, then our Lord sang the psalms of the Hallel (Psalms 113-118) at the end of the Passover supper. (Matthew and Mark recount that he sang “the hymn” at the end of the meal; this may well have been all or part of this great act of praise: “Give thanks, the Lord is good,/ God’s love is for ever!” [Ps. 118:1].)

The early church (Hebrews 10:5-7) quoted Psalm 40:7-9 as the prayer of Jesus’s fidelity to the Father’s will from the day of his incarnation:

When Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me . . . Then I said: ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’ (in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

And it is from the psalms that Christ draws his prayer of agony when he cries out on the cross: “God, my God,/ why have you abandoned me . . . ?” (Ps. 22:2; see Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:34).

Everything Christ does bears a divine value. His prayer as well as his other deeds bear the infinite value of the praise of the Son for the Father. Christ’s prayer is thus a magnificent transformation of the meager prayer of the
faithful. As long as mere men and women were praying "Lord, our God, the whole world tells the greatness of your name" (Ps. 8:1), they offered to God only a human prayer, a prayer offered with the best love of their hearts. But when Christ prayed this psalm, for the first time this prayer transcended the human to become part of the divine dialogue. The prayer no longer expressed simply human praise, human waiting. It became divine praise, divine gladness, the prayer of the very Son of God the Father. Christ’s prayer of the psalms is situated, then, at the very center of human prayer.

The prayer of the Hebrew Scriptures did not bear a definitive value in itself, according to traditional Christian theology. Its value for Christians is to be found mainly in the hope of a future messiah, the one who would come to make up for human frailties. Christ was the culmination of this prayer. And the prayer of the Christian Scriptures has no value in and of itself, but has its value by its reference to Christ’s prayer. Christ is therefore at the center of human prayer.

When we pray the psalms we affirm this doctrine in a wonderful way. We lend our heart and lips to Christ in order that he may continue to praise the Father through the words that we pray.

Vatican II presents this view in a splendid statement:

Christ Jesus, High Priest of the new and eternal covenant, taking human nature, introduced into this earthly exile the hymn that is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven. He joins the entire human community to himself, associating it with his own singing of this canticle of divine praise.

For he continues his priestly work through the agency of his Church, which is ceaselessly engaged in praising the Lord and interceding for the whole world. The Church does this not only by celebrating the eucharist, but also in other ways, especially by praying the divine office.¹⁰

Finding the Face of Christ

Vatican II made a recommendation to priests "and all others who take part in the divine office" —a recommendation that may be considered as valid for all the faithful— "to improve their understanding of the liturgy and of the Bible, especially the psalms."¹¹ In the account of the last appearance of the risen Lord to his disciples (Luke 24:44–45), Jesus speaks of what was written of him in the psalms. The writers of the Christian Scriptures found many psalm texts that would help to illuminate the meaning of Jesus’ life and ministry (nearly 30% of all the Hebrew Bible texts quoted in the New Testament come from the Book of Psalms). St. Thomas Aquinas thought of the psalms as another Gospel. I ask of us that we learn to pray the psalms, that we teach the psalms to the children in our care, and that we pray that the Holy Spirit help us discover, in each psalm, the face of Jesus Christ.

Notes


2. English translations of the psalm texts in this article are taken from International Commission on English in the Liturgy, The Psalter (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994).

3. Psalm 71 belongs to the so-called “Psalter of Jeremiah,” so this may be a prayer of Jeremiah himself in his later years.

4. Apart from the psalms, the English translations of all biblical quotations in this article are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

5. The terms B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era) are often used in scholarly publications to replace the terms B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini).

6. The identification of literary types was, in large part, the work of scholars like Hermann Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel.

7. There is currently a debate going on in the churches about whether or not to retain such elements as prayers of vengeance or references to ancient practices in the church’s prayer and proclamation. For instance, the French version of the liturgy of the hours retained as prayer such texts as Psalm 51:21—“Then sacrifice will please you, young bulls upon your altar.” The U.S. version of the hours dropped the bulls. Americans seem to have a certain common sense in this regard.

8. Akh-en-aton is also remembered as the husband of “The Beautiful Woman” (Netertiti), whose beauty her husband acclaimed: “Face of brightness, mistress of joy, woman of grace, great in love” (quoted in C. Aldred, Akhenaton, Le Pharou mystique, p. 13).

9. Other psalm texts placed on Jesus’ lips by the evangelist include Psalm 69:22 (see John 19:28) and Psalm 31:6 (see Luke 23:46).

10. CSL/DOL #3.

11. CSL/DOL #90.

Pastoral Music • August-September 199
Preaching the Psalms

BY JAN MICHAEL JONCAS

My understanding of preaching has been formed especially by my experience of the communities in which I have been called to preach and by my experience of seeking out other communities in order to hear preaching that differs from my own. So, in offering my suggestions about how to preach the psalms, I will start with a definition of liturgical preaching derived from my experiences. Next, I will examine what the Lectionary for Mass offers us in the way of psalmonic texts. Further, accompanying this article is an English translation of a fourth century "Homily on Psalm 131" by Hilary of Poitiers. Using this translation I will highlight ten points about this homily, not because I think that this is the way we should preach about the psalms, but rather because the way Hilary and his community engaged the text in their time may give us some clues about how we can engage the text in our time. I will conclude with two points about the psalm that Hilary didn't make, but which might be appropriate in preaching about Psalm 131 today.

Toward a Definition of Liturgical Preaching

I approach my first task with some trepidation, since most of the liturgical documents don't seem to want to define the mystery of liturgical preaching. What I've arrived at is a definition that offers a six-point examination of the mystery. Liturgical preaching is a language event, within the context of worship, inspired by ritual texts proclaimed and enacted, addressed to believers, mediated by preachers, by which God encounters and transforms God's people.

So the first point about liturgical preaching is that it is a language event, specifically (except in communities that sign their communications) a spoken language event. It is an event, and I want to illustrate this point with a story that I have used before. The setting was my junior high minor seminary English class, in which we were studying a poem with the lines: "The word lives on/Long after its echoes have died away." Using a dangerous teaching technique, the professor suddenly launched a verbal attack on a classmate sitting next to me: "All right, Mr. Kennedy, I've had it with you. I've been watching you for the last fifteen minutes, and you've been so disruptive that I'm concerned about your vocation. Now, cut it out." Immediately, in the room, there was dead silence and utter hostility (this was during the decade of the in-your-face '60s); there were immediate physiological changes in my innocent classmate, Doug—he turned beet red. Then came laughter and relief as the recognition slowly dawned that we had witnessed a perfect example of the word living on, "long after its echoes have died away."

Let me emphasize once more that liturgical preaching is a spoken language event. There are books of homilies that you can read, but reading a text is very different from hearing it spoken. One example of the difference between the two is this: When you are reading, if you don't understand a sentence, you can go back and re-read it. But when you are listening, if you don't hear something the first time, it is gone. You can't go back and re-hear it (unless it's been recorded, of course).

The second point of my definition is that liturgical preaching is a spoken language event within the context of worship. Roman Catholic preaching theory identifies at least three kinds of liturgical preaching. The first is "evangelical preaching" which is actually pre-liturgical, since it grounds the liturgical event. According to our texts, this kind of preaching is the first proclamation of the good news of Jesus to those who have never heard it. I believe there are relatively few people in the United States who genuinely hear evangelical preaching. In our culture, this kind of preaching usually comes via television: It is the preaching favored by the "televangelists," although, admittedly, the U.S. Catholic Church is working to expand the availability of this preaching.

The second liturgical preaching situation is catechetical. This, I think, is the most common kind of preaching in our Sunday assemblies. Presuming that evangelical preaching has brought people to a first acceptance of the gospel, catechetical preaching helps a congregation to think through the implications of the good news. In the church's early years, such preaching would tease out the implications of the basic claims of faith. The preacher would point out, for instance, that we believe that Jesus is Kyrios. Therefore, Christians cannot offer incense to the emperor as a god. In our culture, that same catechetical
challenge is best illustrated by a comment from a German graduate student whom I knew. He said, "Ach, you Americans are so amusing. We inscribe 'Gott mit uns' on our swords, while you Americans put 'In God We Trust' on your money!" The question remains the same in our day: Who is Kyrios for us?

The third kind of liturgical preaching is mystagogical. Its presumption is that the preacher is no longer thinking through with a congregation the implications of the gospel they have received. Preacher and congregation, in the mystagogical experience, are presumed to be fairly far along in accepting and living the faith. So the preacher's mystagogical task is directed toward absolute union with God. As I travel the U.S. and listen to preaching in Roman Catholic communities, I hear a lot of evangelical preaching within liturgical situations, as if the congregation hasn't yet heard the gospel; and, I hear a fair amount of catechetical preaching—we're doing a good job of unpacking the implications of the gospel. However, rarely, if ever, have I heard mystagogical preaching. The only places where I hear such preaching are, usually, monasteries or communities of religious women but not parishes.

As a spoken language event within the context of worship, preaching shares in liturgy's twofold purpose: “human sanctification and God's glorification.” In the very process of declaring that God is the central reality, we are transformed in holiness. The potential horror in this understanding of liturgy comes when we split the two purposes apart: when our preaching, which gives absolute glory to God, is utterly unintelligible to the congregation, or when our preaching never refers to the divine event but becomes a kind of disguised therapy for us, in which we preach ourselves, our stories, and our insights instead of preaching an encounter with the divine.

The third part of my definition of liturgical preaching says that it is "inspired by ritual texts proclaimed and enacted." This part of the definition offers preachers another challenge: Prior to the Second Vatican Council a lot of Roman Catholic preaching tended to be directed by “preaching programs.” Dioceses even published topics for preaching on particular Sundays: the ten commandments, or the mysteries of the rosary. Such preaching was, at best, catechetical or instructional. Since Vatican II, we've made a radical shift toward preaching from the Scriptures, but that shift has been accompanied by its own set of problems. One of these is that preaching from the Scriptures ignores the other textual sources for liturgical preaching. There are really three sets of ritual texts...
that could inspire this verbal event: the four excerpts from the Scriptures that are proclaimed that day (the first reading, usually from the Hebrew Bible, a psalm, which we usually neglect, a New Testament letter, and a gospel); the prescribed liturgical texts other than the Scriptures (e.g., the collect, a preface, the eucharistic prayer); and the season or feast. Each of these could be the subject for liturgical preaching.

The fourth point is that such preaching is “addressed to believers.” This is what makes liturgical preaching different from evangelical preaching. Liturgical preaching presumes that if the hearers are the baptized who have gathered for the Sunday assembly, they are already faith-filled; thus, they deserve catechetical and mystagogical preaching. What is preached is spoken from the faith within the preacher to the faith within the assembly. (Those of us who do this as a vocation know that there may be problems at either end—faith that exists in the preacher may be weak or strong on any given day; and the challenge of speaking to each of the faith stages represented in the assembly is “enhanced” by a recognition of the various forms of relationship to the church within a particular assembly: unbaptized inquirers, catechumens in process of initiation, spouses of Catholics from some other—or no—religious tradition, and fully initiated Catholics.)

“Mediated by preachers”: This fifth part of the definition is fairly simple. “Mediation” is a key word in the document Fulfilled in Your Hearing; it seems to be the technical term for what the preacher is supposed to do in preaching.4 Mediation in preaching is twofold: the preacher represents God to the assembly (and sometimes we, as preachers, are afraid of doing that, of proclaiming the prophetic word, “Thus says the Lord . . .”); and the preacher represents the assembly before God (and, therefore, not knowing the joys, hopes, dreams, sorrows of this assembly really cripples the preacher, who must also stand before God like a prophet and even on occasion put God “on trial” for seeming to violate the covenantal relationship with believers.)

The final part of my definition, “by which God encounters and transforms God’s people,” finds an appropriate image in the traditional story about Michelangelo who, when asked what he did as a sculptor, replied that he merely chipped away the stone to reveal the image already there. But in order to release the Pietà from its confining marble, Michelangelo needed two things: careful technique (he needed to know what to do with a chisel) and greatness of soul or a contemplative spirit (in order to see the image within the block of stone). Preachers also need these two “tools” in order to put the sermon at the service of God’s encounter.

The Psalms in the Lectionary

Perhaps the first point to be made about the psalms as they appear in the Lectionary for Mass is the need to clear up a misunderstanding about the phrase “responsorial psalm.” The Latin name for this text is “psalmus responsoriale seu graduale,” which we’ve translated as “responsorial psalm or gradual.” The problem is that we have understood the adjective “responsorial” as a functional description rather than a musical one. The psalm’s function is not merely a “response” to the first reading; in fact, the description of this psalm in the revised Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass regularly refers to it as “the psalm after the first reading.”5 “Responsorial” really describes an arrangement of a psalm (or, on some occasions, a canticle) for liturgical use with a “response” added to the verses of the text. In other words, it contrasts this way of proclaiming the psalm with “antiphonal proclamation (alternating verse by verse between two groups) or in directum—a straight-through proclamation of the text, sung by a soloist or schola.

I support this interpretation of the title by invoking the Lectionary’s description of why certain psalms, like the other biblical texts, have been chosen for particular occasions.6 Sometimes a psalm is chosen because it is quoted in the gospel reading for that day (e.g., the psalm for the First Sunday of Lent) and, therefore, it is anticipatory of the gospel rather than responsive to the first reading. Sometimes, of course, it does echo themes or images evoked in the first reading; in the strong seasons (such as Lent) some psalms have connections to all three of the other readings.

Additional support for this interpretation of “responsorial” comes from the very way the other readings are
Hilary of Poitiers
Homily on Psalm 130/131

1. This brief psalm is to be explored more in an exegetical than an exhortational way, teaching us about humility and meekness. And because we have in a great number of other places treated [the topic of] humility, it would be improper to repeat the same things here. Certainly we ought to keep in mind in how great need our faith stands of humility when we hear the Prophet thus speaking of it as equivalent to the performance of the highest works: *O Lord, my heart is not exalted.* For a troubled heart is the noblest sacrifice in the eyes of God. The heart, therefore, must not be lifted up by prosperity, but humbly kept within the bounds of meekness through the fear of God.

2. *Neither have my eyes been lifted up.* The strict sense of the Greek here conveys a different meaning: ὁδὲ ἐμεταφράζον ὁ σάρκωμα μου, that is, have not been lifted up from one object to look upon another. Yet the eyes must be lifted up in obedience to the Prophet’s words: *Lift up your eyes and see who has displayed all these things* [Isaiah 60:26]. And the Lord says in the gospel: *Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white unto harvest* [John 4:35]. The eyes, then, are to be lifted up: not, however, to transfer their gaze elsewhere, but to remain fixed once for all upon that to which they have been raised.

3. Then follows: *Neither have I walked amid great things, nor amid wonderful things that are above me.* It is most dangerous to walk amid mean things, and not to linger amid wonderful things. God’s utterances are great; he himself is wonderful in the highest degree: how then can the psalmist pride himself as on a good work for not walking amid great and wonderful things? It is the addition of the words, *which are above me,* that shows that the walking is not amid those things which people commonly regard as great and wonderful. For David, prophet and king as he was, once was humble and despised and unworthy to sit at his father’s table; but he found favor with God, he was anointed to be king, he was inspired to prophesy. His kingdom did not make him haughty; he was not moved by hatreds: he loved those that persecuted him, he paid honor to his dead enemies, he spared his incestuous and murderous children. In his capacity of sovereign he was despised, in that of father he was wounded, in that of prophet he was afflicted; yet he did not call for vengeance as a prophet might, nor exact punishment as a father, nor requite insults as a sovereign. And so he did not walk amid things great and wonderful which were above him.

4. Let us see what comes next: *If I was not humble-minded but have lifted up my soul. What inconsistency on the Prophet’s part! He does not lift up his heart: he proclaimed. Each of them incorporates responses and acclamations by the whole assembly, either at the end of the reading (“The word of the Lord.” “Thanks be to God.”) or, in the case of the gospel, at the beginning and the end. The psalm heightens this general assembly involvement in the liturgy of the word by giving the community not merely a standard ritual text to say or sing, but (usually) the very word of God as their song.

We need to understand the psalm, then, as a proclamation in song of a biblical text which has its own minister—the cantor—just as we have gospel readings proclaimed by the deacon as their special minister and other readings assigned to lectors. Assuming, then, that the psalm is being treated as a sung proclamation of the word of God (and, therefore, a source for preaching) and not as a “meditation song”—a kind of seventh- inning stretch between proclamations—the present Lectionary offers five options for psalm texts to be sung as one of the readings on a particular occasion (this list does not include the options for psalms at the entrance and communion processions). In my own hierarchical ranking they are: first, the proper psalm with its proper refrain as assigned to the particular Sunday or solemnity or major feast and to be taken as seriously as any of the other readings; second, an option which may be used, according to the official documents, “for the pastoral benefit of those participating,” the proper psalm with a seasonal refrain (see Lectionary #174); third, also a choice “for pastoral benefit,” a seasonal psalm with a seasonal refrain (Lectionary #175). I do not favor the use of this third option because it severely limits access to the riches available in the Scripture; however, it does have the advantage of making a particular psalm familiar, as it is sung again and again, week after week, through a whole season.

I don’t know of anyone in the United States who is using the last two options, except, perhaps, those who are celebrating Mass in Latin. The fourth option for a psalm text is found in the Graduale Romanum, which still remains a normative document for Roman Rite worship. You may choose to sing the gradual (in effect, one or at most a few verse[s] of a single psalm) in its Gregorian form. Use of this option, I believe, requires professional musicians; the gradual is not a chant for the congregation but for the schola cantorum or, perhaps, for soloists. Using it as a source for preaching would demand that the preacher unpack the meaning of this single psalm verse—

Pastoral Music • August-September 1996
a difficult challenge, one best left to mystical/ogical preaching. The fifth option is the use of the texts found in the Graduale Simplex, and I find this possibility very interesting. Back in the 1960s, the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy translated the Graduale Simplex into English and invited composers to set these texts. They included such choices as Psalm 34, "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord’—always an appropriate response to the proclamation of Scripture; Psalm 19 or 119, "Lord, you have the words of everlasting life," with a meditation on the Torah—always appropriate, no matter what the circumstances. But I have not had the experience of any parishes using the Graduale Simplex.

My point is that we have a wide variety of psalm texts as sources for preaching on any given occasion. As noted above, even with all of these options, I would normally make the proper psalm with its proper refrain my first choice. Of course, this whole discussion presupposes that preparation for preaching is done in collaboration with the other liturgical ministers. If you are going to preach from the psalm, for instance, you will need to know which translation of the psalm the musicians are going to be using, and what setting of that translation they will sing. You will need to work with the lectors concerning the other readings, to make sure that they proclaim a longer version of one text, for instance, if that is going to be the source of your preaching.

One Approach to Preaching the Psalms

There are ten points I want to make about the way Hilary preached on the text of Psalm 131: “O Lord, my heart is not proud, my eyes are not lifted from the earth.” I will conclude my reflections on this homily by highlighting two issues that Hilary did not address.

1. Hilary is unbelievably straightforward in indicating the central theme of his treatment of this psalm—look at paragraph 1: “The word of God teaches us humility and meekness.” If there is one lesson that has been key to all homilies from Hilary’s time to ours, it is this: Put your point in a single sentence. If there is not a point that you can make in one sentence, then you’ll probably wander all over the place.

2. His homiletic process is to go through the psalm phrase by phrase and comment on each phrase of the psalm as the canonical order offers it. He's not afraid to dive into some of the difficulties that are set up by the text; he respects his community enough to do exegetical work with them.

3. One major issue that every preacher on the psalms has to face is to find and name the voice of the psalmist: Whose voice is heard in the assembly when this text is brought forward? Ancient Christian writers and preachers understood that voice to be the voice of God or the voice of Christ or the voice of the church—sometimes the church talking to God or God talking to the church, sometimes the church talking to Christ or Christ talking to the church. Their aim was not to use the historical-

does lift up his soul. He does not walk amid things great and wonderful that are above him; yet his thoughts are not mean. He is exalted in mind: and cast down in heart. He is humble in his own affairs: but he is not humble in his thought. For his thought reaches to heaven, his soul is lifted up on high. But his heart, out of which proceed, according to the gospel, evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, raillings [Matthew 15:19], is humble, pressed down beneath the gentle yoke of meekness. We must strike a middle course, then, between humility and exaltation, so that we may be humble in heart but lifted up in soul and thought.

5. Then he goes on: Like a weaned child upon his mother’s breast, so will you reward my soul. We are told that when Isaac was weaned Abraham made a feast because now that he was weaned he was on the verge of boyhood and was passing beyond milk food. The Apostle feeds all that are imperfect in the faith and still babes in the things of God with the milk of knowledge. Thus to cease to need milk marks the greatest possible advance. Abraham proclaimed by a joyful feast that his son had come to stronger meat, and the Apostle refuses bread to the carnal-minded and those that are babes in Christ. And so the Prophet, because he has not lifted up his heart, nor walked amid things great and wonderful that are above him, because he has not been humble-minded but did lift up his soul, prays that God may reward his soul, lying like a weaned child upon his mother: that is to say that he may be considered worthy of the reward of the perfect, heavenly and living bread, on the ground that by reason of his works already recorded he has now passed beyond the stage of milk.

6. But he does not demand this living bread from heaven for himself alone, he encourages all human-kind to hope for it by saying: Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for evermore. He sets no temporal limit to our hope, he bids our faithful expectation stretch out into infinity. We are to hope for ever and ever, winning the hope of future life through the hope of our present life which we have in Christ Jesus our Lord, who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

critical method, as we do in the late twentieth century, to find out what the original author intended to convey to the original audience. They were comfortable with the idea of the psalms as mystical texts that reflect a continuing divine-human dialogue.

In this example, Hilary identifies the voice of the psalmist as that of David. Using the tradition that King David composed the entire psalter, Hilary claims that the biographical details of David’s life are reflected in the poetry. That’s the major reason, I think, why today we would never preach on this psalm in the way Hilary does; we would never encounter the text sharing his presuppositions about its composition.

4. Hilary is not afraid to use his scholarship—look at paragraph two: “The strict sense of the Greek here conveys a different meaning” . . . and he quotes the Greek. Now, we know that the original languages for the psalms are Hebrew and Aramaic but, since Hilary did not know Hebrew, the Greek Septuagint translation was normative for him, not the Latin translation, which was the “vernacular” of the time. But my point is that he is not afraid to raise the grammatical problems in the text in order to help his community understand more clearly what is going on in the psalm. Many of today’s preachers are afraid to put scholarship at the service of the assembly, for fear of being thought precious or boring, but there are ways to use scholarship that people will welcome.

5. Hilary makes abstract ideas concrete. In paragraph three, for instance, he uses a vivid set of biographical details from David’s life. Of course, in using these details, Hilary presumes that his assembly knows the story of David’s life; he doesn’t have to retell it. Things may be a little different in our day . . .

6. In paragraph four, he absolutely revels in binary oppositions in order to clarify the underlying meaning of the text. And, in that same paragraph, he is not at all afraid to criticize the word of God: “What inconsistency on the Prophet’s part!” Of course, he then grapples with the problem that the text raises for his classical sense of order.

7. He yokes images from the Hebrew Bible with phrases and insights from the New Testament—the meaning of Isaac and Paul’s statement to neophyte Christians about nurturing them on pabulum—in order to have the assembly understand the “weaned child” image of the psalm.

8. He applies in paragraph six to all of humanity what was clearly a limited-to-Jews statement in the original psalm. He’s not interested in telling us what it meant “to them back then.” His concern is to proclaim what this psalm might mean for us.

9. Hilary’s rhetorical skill is apparent, even in its printed form, but it never calls attention to itself.

10. He concludes doxologically, moving from proclamation into prayer. This is an important point; it unites preaching to its prayer context in the liturgy and turns the focus of the assembly back to God’s presence among them.

What might a contemporary preacher do with this psalm, that Hilary didn’t do?

1. Take seriously that the God image in the poem is feminine. This is particularly important when you realize that the Lectionary places this psalm right after a first reading that uses very strong patriarchal images for God. The contrasting images should be highlighted by the preacher.

2. Examine the spiritual depth of the image of the weaned child: The child who once sought all nurture from the mother has broken with her, going through that messy stage when the child longs to receive nurture from the mother’s breast but knows that it is time to take food from elsewhere. It is the weaned child, who has gone through all of this, who no longer expects absolute sustenance from the parent, who is pictured in this psalm resting in peace on the mother’s lap. This image offers volumes of insight into the development of the spiritual life.

Notes

1. For further reflection on this material, see the first chapter of my book Preaching the Rites of Christian Initiation in the Forum Essays series (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994).


5. See Lectionary for Mass: Introduction #89. This text is found in The Liturgy Documents.

6. Ibid. #67, 106.

For Further Reading


Irene Nowell, cso, Sing a New Song: The Psalms in the Sunday Lectionary. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press. Far and away, this is the most useful book on preaching the psalms, a wonderful reading of the psalms through their placement in the Sunday lectionary.

Walter Ong, SJ, The Presence of the Word.
The Psalms: A Three-Thousand-Year-Old Dialogue with God

BY PATRICIA DATCHUCK SÁNCHEZ

A n ancient rabbi once remarked that those who minister to the community in the prayerful expression of its faith should carry two stones in their pockets. One stone should be inscribed: “For my sake the world was created!” The other stone should have as its inscription: “I am but a puff of wind—dust and ashes—here today and gone tomorrow.” The rabbi continued, “The person who carries these two stones possesses the keys to wisdom.”

Perhaps it might also be said that the carrier of these two stones possesses, as well, the keys to the mystery of human existence. Wonderfully created and graciously entrusted with the stewardship of the universe (“for my sake the world was created”), each person has been extravagantly endowed with an eternal, transcendent voice which will never be silenced. But the earthen vessel which bears each person’s unique and eternal voice to the world is fraught with fragility and anchored by time (“here today, gone tomorrow”).

Perhaps it could be further noted that the carrier of these two stones, in addition to possessing the keys to wisdom and to human existence, also possesses the keys to the psalter, wherein the eternal human voice finds its fullest expression. As carriers of these two stones and keepers of these keys, ministers of liturgical music are called on to unlock continually, but never routinely, the treasure of the psalms for the worshiping community. When the psalms are sung, the gathered assembly celebrates every aspect of its faith and joins its voice to the eternal voice of every believer who has prayed these special prayers for almost three millennia. Composed over a period of many centuries by a variety of poets, cantors, and choirs, the psalms mirror every attitude and emotion, every posture and thought of a believing people.

The late Carroll Stuhlmueller once wrote that opening the Book of Psalms is like walking into a home that has been lived in for many generations. As keeper of the keys to that home, ministers of liturgical music can serve as both host and guide by extending the rich hospitality of the psalter to those who may be less familiar with it. Once visitors to the psalter begin to feel at home they can appreciate all the memories and rich traditions preserved therein. Moreover, they can hear the saving story of our people, told and retold in joyful modes as well as in more somber tones.

People who are in love often have a favorite song and when they hear it are likely to remark, “Listen, they’re playing our song!” When the psalms are sung, each is in a sense our song. Each psalm brings to focus here, in this moment, the rich heritage of humankind’s centuries-old dialogue with God and affords the assurance that the dialogue will continue even into the unknown future. “The psalms,” said Stuhlmueller, “bring us home to God; no matter how we are dressed, how we feel, what we have done or left undone. The psalms lead us through the sections or rooms of our life, always ending with a strong ‘Amen’.”

Claus Westermann has suggested that the two primary categories of the psalms or prayerful approaches to God are praise and lament. This being so, then those who would help others to pray are challenged to bridge and maintain an appropriate tension between the shouts of praise, which gratefully glory in God and in divine gifts (“for my sake the world was created”) and the cries of lament, which confidently confront God with the inevitable burdensomeness of living (“I am but a puff of wind—dust and ashes”) and trust that God hears and cares.

During each season of the liturgical year, the responsorial psalms celebrate the God who hears and cares while engaging the community in the spirit and significance of the season. Soon, the psalms of Advent will unite the voices of believers. It may seem surprising that this season of joyful anticipation is accompanied by psalms of lament (Ps 80, 85, 89). But as Walter Bruggemann has noted, the lament springs from an insistent hope that God is present and will act. Psalms of disorientation, the laments are acts of bold, tell-it-like-it-is faith with the power to reshape the world. Even if all is not as it should be, the lament clings, without doubt, to the sure promise that transformation is possible because the other partner in this frank and prayerful conversation is the God who comes.

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez, a regular contributor to Celebration, Praying, and Cantor, taught Scripture for three years at a college in Uganda; currently she lives in Hattiesburg, MS, with her husband and four children. With this issue of Pastoral Music, she begins a three-year set of columns on the responsorial psalms in the Lectionary for Mass.

Pastoral Music • August-September 1996
Advent Psalms, Year B

Psalm 85

More numerous than any other type of psalms, the songs of lament, whether individual or communal, comprise more than one-third of the psalter. Curiously, laments are generally underused in the lectionaries of the mainline Christian communities. When a lament psalm is incorporated into the liturgy, the term “lament” and the cry of complaint are often omitted. William L. Holladay has suggested that if a congregation were thoughtfully guided, the psalms of lament would prove to be apt vehicles for expressing the very real exigencies of human existence and of deepening the faith of believers. Roland Murphy described the lament as “an appeal to God’s compassion to intervene and change a desperate situation.” Bernard W. Anderson added that the lament is “really an expression of praise—praise offered in a minor key in the confidence that Yahweh is faithful and in anticipation of a new lease on life.”

Structurally, the lament is comprised of: (1) a cry to God to listen; (2) the complaint; (3) a confession of trust; (4) a petition for help; and (5) an oracle of salvation or an expression of certainty that God hears and answers prayer.

A consensus of scholars agrees that Psalm 85 was occasioned by the disillusionment of the recently returned Jewish exiles from Babylon. Aware that they had been forgiven their sins of infidelity to the Covenant, the exiles associated their homecoming to Judah as a homecoming to a forgiving God as well (vv. 1-3). But a sense of loss still hung heavy over the people. Judah’s political and spiritual structures were in shambles, and it was difficult to know how to go about the process of rebuilding (vv. 4-7). Despite their ambivalent feelings (joy at their return, yetdaunted by their situation), the people’s trust in God was unshaken.

Psalm 89

In his Exposition on the Psalms, St. John Chrysostom recommended that, at the conclusion of the liturgy, each member of the gathered assembly should make an effort to extend the prayer by taking with them the memory of the psalms they had sung. “I urge you,” said the Patriarch of Pastoral Music • August-September 1996
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29 The verses selected for the responsorial psalm on this day appear in bold type.

Response:
For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

The favors of the Lord I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.
For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”; in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

“I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant; Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations.”

The heavens proclaim your wonders, O Lord, and you faithfulness, in the assembly of the holy ones . . .

Once you spoke in a vision, and to your faithful ones you said: “On a champion I have placed a crown; over the people I have set a youth. I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him . . .

“He shall say of me, ‘You are my father, my God, the Rock, my savior.’ And I will make him the first-born, highest of the kings of the earth. Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him and my covenant with him stands firm.”
I will make his posterity endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven . . .

I will not violate my covenant; the promise of my lips I will not alter. Once, by my holiness, have I sworn; I will not be false to David . . .

Constantinople, “not to leave here with empty hands, but to gather, like pearls, the refrains of the psalms. Keep them forever with you, meditate on them . . . If your soul is troubled by greed, anger or any torment, sing them assiduously and find consolation and peace.”

The liturgy’s “parting gift” to the community for the Fourth Sunday of Advent is Psalm 89. Although this lengthy song gives voice to a communal lament, the verses excerpted for this responsorial psalm seem to belie that classification. Part of the hymnic introduction (vv. 1-37) to the lament (vv. 38-53), these selected verses established the grounds on which the appeal to God was based, namely, God’s goodness, faithfulness, and kindness. The psalmist launched this prayer by singing of these covenantal virtues and returned to proclaim them no less than eight times in the course of the psalm (vv. 1, 2, 5, 8, 14, 24, 33, 49).

In addition to being reflected in the wonders of creation (vv. 5-18), God’s loving goodness was also made manifest in the selection of David as king and in the promise of his everlasting dynasty (vv. 19-29). As Carroll Stuhlmueller explained, the psalmist expressed Israel’s belief that David and his royal successors would be God’s instruments in sustaining the good order of the world and in insuring the people’s fidelity to the Covenant of Sinai. However, this psalm also described a military reversal of tragic proportions which seemed to threaten the fulfillment of God’s promises and put the entire nation in jeopardy. Because of the references to the defeat and death of the dethroned king (vv. 41-46), scholars believe the psalm can be dated ca. 597-587 B.C.E., when Babylonia’s intrusion resulted in the eventual demise of Judah and the monarchy.

Contemporary believers, observing the Advent season, understand that the covenant and promises which were first bestowed on David have been renewed and fulfilled in Jesus, Son of David, Son of God. No reversal or defeat, however tragic, will change that fact or diminish the hopes of those who celebrate the God who comes in faithfulness and love.
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Whose Music Is It?

At first thought, the question of “Whose music is it?” might seem odd. Yet, upon reflection, it provokes a series of other questions regarding the place, role, and ownership of the music that we use in our liturgy. Is it the composer’s or publisher’s? Does the music belong to the pastor or to any other member of the parish staff? Does it belong to the worship or liturgy preparation committees, or the parish liturgist? Does it belong to the choir director, the organist, the director of music ministries, or to another parish musician? Does it belong to the bride, the groom, the families of the deceased? Does it belong to the congregation? I think you have the picture. There are a variety of issues that arise when we ask this simple question. Responses will vary according to the concerns that each of the above inquiries raises. Since the scope and number of issues exceed the parameters of this article, let us look at only a few of them.

Power and Authority

One obvious concern that immediately comes to mind is that of power and authority over music issues. In most instances, when a pastor seeks someone to fill the position of director of music ministries, he is looking to hire someone who he believes can create and implement a music program that he, his staff, or the worship committee envisions. Once the person is hired, it is up to the pastor to articulate a vision for the parish music program. If the parish staff operates as a team, this articulation may be done in committee.

But sometimes conflicts arise when the lines of authority are not clearly defined. We then find ourselves involved in needless power struggles. One colleague, for example, who was hired as a director of music ministries/liturgy coordinator is constantly being reminded by one of the assistant priests that “you are only music”—even though his title, job description, and education (degrees in both music and theology) say otherwise. Another colleague is frustrated by a pastor who allows him to order any music he needs so long as it is from GIA’s “Celebration Series.” Still another reports of a conflict she is having with a parochial vicar who only wants to sing Gregorian chant, while her colleague in a neighboring parish is struggling with a “born again” worship committee/choir member who keeps demanding that they do only “evangelistic” music. Another is struggling with a school principal who feels no need to deal with the music director, since, in the principal’s words, “The school is a closed community unto itself and, as such, apart from the parish music program.” (This same principal also scolded the parish DRE who is in charge of sacramental preparation, saying that the celebration of the sacraments of reconciliation and first communion were school celebrations rather than parish celebrations, even though the documents on the rites make it clear that all sacramental celebrations are communal, parish celebrations—not to mention that the number of students in that particular CCD program was higher than that of the school enrollment.)

The list of horror stories could go on. How odd it is that all participants believe themselves to be experts in music or liturgy! Can you imagine the reaction that the principal would have if the music director began to behave like a self-appointed educational expert?

Style and Taste

This brings us to the next of our concerns: questions that revolve around style and taste. These two issues, more than any others, seem to be at the heart of most of the challenges that we struggle with. Not one of us is without preferences regarding style. And we each have our own taste for colors, food, clothing, seasons, you name it. There are subjects about which we are well-informed and can make decisions based on our knowledge. Then, there are areas in which we simply have opinions based on our feelings.

Because music is all about communicating feelings, many people feel free to base judgments about pastoral music on their feelings, rather than on knowledge.

Mr. John Bennett Porchirian, the director of music ministries at St. Elizabeth Church in Pittsburgh, is the coordinator for Professional Concerns, Pittsburgh DMM Chapter, and a member of the national Professional Concerns Committee.
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that song at my first communion. Sometimes this can become very frustrating and we fail to remember that we are approaching the same issue from different perspectives.

To compound things, there is a secondary, but no less important, issue attached to matters of style and taste: value judgments. It seems that when people make judgments about anything based on their emotional disposition toward it, they also have a tendency to make value judgments about it. Simply put, if they like something, then it is good; if they don't like something, then it is not good. Any educated person knows that one's feelings about something have nothing to do with its intrinsic value. But in matters involving religion and music, where emotions tend to dominate our thinking, this kind of errant reasoning seems to flourish! Imagine the outrage (not to mention the liability suits) if, when we went to a doctor and asked for his/her best informed medical judgment as to the nature and treatment of an illness, we received advice based solely on an emotional response to our condition!

Issues are also raised involving publishers and composers. These days, one hears the criticism that our repertory is industry driven; that is, the publishers are dictating the repertory that comes to our parishes. There may be some truth to that, but if so, it is probably our fault. Composers and publishers are in the business of producing music to earn a living. As with any other business, their survival depends on meeting the demands of the marketplace. We get what we ask for and, if we demand a dozen new anthems by a given composer, the chances are more than even that we will get them. If the industry does publish music of poor quality and text and we buy it, then we are sending the message that we have no objection. Avoiding bad music and communicating our needs to the publishers and composers will remedy this situation.

Ritual Music's Purpose

It is important to remember that the purpose of music in liturgy is to heighten aesthetically the prayer experience of our communities, allowing them to reach into themselves and render praise to the Almighty with hearts uplifted in song. The issues and controversies regarding the music we select for our services are not always evident or comprehensible to the parishioners and those to whom we minister. We have been trained to look at music and to make a determination as to its quality and serviceability. By virtue of our education, when we look at a piece for the first time, we instinctively make liturgical, musical, pastoral, ritual, and textural judgments. While we might like one piece of music, there may be another piece that better supports and expresses the ritual action. Sometimes, within a given piece of music, we may find that the music and the text are not saying the same thing. In other instances, we might find that a certain text (especially when it is a paraphrase of Scripture) obscures the message of the actual biblical text. We may even find that a text does not elucidate and support a tenet of our faith. Pastoraly, we have to deal with issues of history, inculturation, and ethnicity. And, then, there is the fact that not all music, regardless of its quality, works with all congregations.

As music directors we must be attentive to the need of the parish as articulated by members of the staff, the congregation, the worship committee, assisting musicians, the parish liturgist, and so on. We must communicate clearly with composers and publishers about our musical requirements. We are also in the responsible position of educating and reminding our committees, staff members, and music ministers about the nature, purpose, and power of the ritual music we use and the criteria used to make judgments.

In the end, while the overall substance, shape, and direction of the parish music program may be the responsibility of its chief parish musician, we must remember that we all own it! The most important part of our ministry may very well lie in our ability to listen carefully to those with whom we serve and to fashion a music program that will meet their spiritual needs.

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Correction

In the June-July issue of *Pastoral Music*, the “Organ Recitative” reviews were incorrectly attributed to James Burns. They should have been attributed to Dr. Craig Cramer, who teaches organ at the University of Notre Dame. NPM regrets the error.

Choral Recitative

These titles are available from World Library Publications. They are identified individually by their series as well as by their catalogue number.

*Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life.* George Herbert and Paul M. French. SATB choir, soloist flute, and keyboard. Westendorf 8619. $1.25. 8 pages. A nicely atmospheric setting of one of the metaphysical poet’s great texts makes this a real find. George Herbert’s words are eloquently proclaimed by the soloist with a well-wrought flute filigree. The 15-measure choral ending is well put together as is the substantial accompaniment.

*Anima Christi.* Ralph Wright and Robert E. Kreutz. SATB choir and organ. Westendorf 8618. $1.25. 8 pages. Robert Kreutz has given a competent setting to the text of Ralph Wright that is adequate and singable. Unison and three-part choral writing abound. Vocal ranges are congenial, and the accompaniment adds a quasi-chromatic touch in the final pages.

*Holy Spirit, Storm of Love.* Carl Johansen. SATB choir, mezzo-soprano solo, baritone solo, and keyboard. Westendorf 8614. $1.25. 8 pages. There’s a lot to like in the musical portion of this work, but the text is problematic. Read it out loud and see for yourself how the text of Brian Wren jumps from image to image in a fashion that borders on stylistic disconnection. It reads as if it were intended to be a political and social commentary. If you can accept the text, however, you will find much to like in this lyrical offering. A competent organist is a must.

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Oregon Catholic Press is a nonprofit corporation organized exclusively for religious, charitable and educational purposes.
Is This a Day for New Beginnings? Carl Johengen. SATB choir and organ, Westendorf 8615. $1.15. 7 pages. Using a 3+2+2 rhythmical figuration throughout, Carl Johengen offers a propulsive setting of Brian Wren’s periphrastic text of personal musings and eventual declaration that “This is the day of new beginnings.” Such unending reliance on 7/8 meter does take the spin of musical variety out of the running. Choral parts demand a well-trained choir with good tenors.

What Beauty There Is to Your Place on Earth. Francis Sullivan and Jeffrey Honoré. SATB choir, harp or piano. Westendorf 8620. $1.50. 11 pages. It is interesting to compare the opening line—“What beauty there is to your place on earth”—with the Jerusalem Bible translation of the same text—“How lovely are your dwelling places, Yahweh Sabaoth.” It does make a difference in the imagery.

Musically atmospheric, this work needs a good keyboard player, plus good singers capable of singing a cappella in tune and being able to hold their own in polypetral. A challenge for better ensembles.

As the Deer Longs for Running Waters (Psalm 12). Richard J. Siegel. SATB choir, cantor, assembly, guitar, and keyboard. Psalms for the Church 6209. $1.25. 8 pages. As interesting as this brief setting of selected verses from Psalm 42 is, the antiphon has a lot of notes for a congregation to learn. The choral harmonization of the antiphon is straightforward. The verses for the cantor pose a chalumeau problem, however, with their insistence on D-E and D-C# which could pose some problems for singers.

Speak Now, O Lord. Joe Mattingly. SATB choir, assembly, two trumpets in Bb, guitar, and keyboard. Music for the Rites 5204. $1.15. 8 pages. From the opening notes of the introduction the listener is led to a big-bang musical style with lots of gathered 7ths, syncopations, and “willowy chords” (see page 2, end of line 1). Musically simple but demanding a discreet rhythmical surety, Speak Now, O Lord is a composite of semi-popular musical styles with a somewhat curious scriptural paraphrase. The title page refers to Isaiah 6 and Luke 4. Compare the references with the text.

Magnificat. Alan J. Hommerding. 3-part choir and optional assembly. Music for the Rites 5208. $1.00. 3 pages. I must admit that I am instinctively wary of any work that has lengthy performance notes such as those for this piece. Yet, the work gets a lot of mileage out of minuscule musical material. Using two ostinati figures as the underpinning of the verses of PLEADING SAVIOR do little to enhance the appeal of this already plaintive melody. The third verse with its nod to organum will need singers capable of fine-tuning the interval of a fifth as a consistent musical artifact.

On Jordan’s Bank. William Ferris. SATB choir, soprano descant, C instrument, and organ. Music for the Seasons 5701. $1.50. 10 pages. This is an entry for choirs that specialize in four-square verse-anthems. Vocal lines are simple; organ interludes add variety; the choral parts are well-conceived; the descant basically is drawn from the alto line and passing-tone figures for the closing. There is strong reliance on tonic-dominant throughout which defeats harmonic interest.

Creator of the Stars of Night. William Ferris. 2-part mixed choir and organ. Music for the Seasons 5703. $1.15. With the Advent text as foil, William Ferris offers choirs a 37-measure musical vehicle that would serve well for those choirs with only a few members, or for choirs of limited singing capacity, to say nothing of how it could be done with a good mixed group! Quasi-ionian in modality, the melodic line is somewhat sprawling, but nonetheless has its own tonal integrity. Worth looking into and worth singing.

Lift Up Your Heads. William Ferris. SAB choir and organ. Music for the Seasons 5702. $1.15. 7 pages. This is a clever setting of the tune MACKT HOCH DIE TÜR (a paraphrase of Psalm 24:7-10). A rollicking 6/8 dance figure propels the text “Lift up your heads” to a lilting middle section that takes “O blest the land” in a quieter vein. With a chorale-like bass solo that lies just right, the chorus comes to a rousing conclusion with the re-entry of the opening figure. Enjoyable, easy to learn, guaranteed to please. Don’t miss this!

James M. Burns
Congregation

Half Way Home / Been So Busy


No introduction to these collections is necessary for those who know Grayson Brown's music. These are retrospectives of his work over the years. His work as a song leader, composer, and speaker is well-known, thanks in large part to the NPM Conventions where his efforts have been well showcased and promoted.

Brown's music reflects the strong influence of the Afro-Caribbean, particularly as it is found around the New York area. Combined with that is a Jamaican influence wedded to "high" Caribbean against Reggae.

His texts show his personal, intense spirituality focused on justice, peace, and racial equality. His charisma has touched thousands of worshipers, leading them in prayer and song focused on those elements.

Musically, Grayson Brown is a melodicist who carefully sculptures his vocal lines to reflect his passionate musical sensibilities. Additionally, he has the able support of a talented team of arrangers who supply colorful harmonies and rhythmic definitions that have become the hallmark of his songs.

There is an added element in these two publications. As original as these compositions are, they give even the first-time listener/player the definite impression that "I've heard this song before." This quality can lend appeal and musical "friendship" to those groups who use these works for worship. Simple and subtle melodic lines invite participation and create an "instant accessibility."

As noted, both collections form a retrospective of Brown's work over the years. Each songbook contains liturgical, scriptural, and topical indices with the addition of a liturgical index in Been So Busy. These collections are well worth examination by all parishes.

James M. Burns

Books

The Hiawatha Man: The Life and Work of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.


Finally, here is the most complete book yet about the English-Black composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (but...
readers are also referred to the June-July 1995 issue of Pastoral Music for a review of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: The Development of his Compositional Style by Jewell Taylor Thompson (Scarecrow Press, 1994). Written objectively and based on solid research, this book by Geoffrey Self systematically pursues the life, times, and music of this unjustly neglected African-English composer.

Coleridge-Taylor is not to be confused with the English poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Our composer, Coleridge-Taylor, was born to an English mother and a medical doctor from Africa.

Coleridge-Taylor received tremendous success with his large scale choral work Hiawatha. Based on Longfellow’s poem, this work was to continue as a life-long love. Indeed, Coleridge-Taylor was to write two more major choral works on the poem as well as the Hiawathan Sketches for violin and piano.

The composer toured the United States three times to great acclaim. These tours were organized by the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society of Washington, DC. This first all-Black choral society not only dedicated its services to his music but also performed all the great choral masterpieces. Because of the political and racial climate of his day (1875-1912) Coleridge-Taylor was strongly advised not to perform south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

The composer’s most important cultural influence was that he served as the inspiration for an extensive renaissance of Black culture in the United States. Luminaries such as Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, Harry Burleigh, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and many others saw that their African brother in England could overcome prejudices and become a great model to his people. And the inspiration was mutual. The composer (whose name was usually shortened to Taylor) was equally inspired by his reception in the United States.

Although not ostentatious about his religion, Taylor had been steeped in the English choral system since childhood. He composed eight well-crafted and singable sacred anthems. Four of these have been reissued by Broude Brothers and are well worth the time and effort of a choir.

As a biographer, Self progresses methodically and logically in his examination. In addition to more than one hundred musical themes and many photos, he includes excerpts from letters, reviews, and interviews. The music deserves recognition and is a major and unique African expression. Taylor was inspired by the “Negro” dialect used in Dunbar’s poetry and composed several lovely songs in this idiom. There are also twenty-four Negro Melodies for the Piano, all based on the art form of the Negro spiritual, and a wonderful, untapped wealth of liturgical piano music.

There are two important sources that Self neglects to mention. One is an exceptionally fine thesis written in 1935 by Theodore D. Phillips at Oberlin College. Also not mentioned is a charming extensive description of Taylor and his music, especially the Violin Concerto—itself using a spiritual—by Carl Stoechel at the Litchfield (CT) County Choral Festival where Taylor was guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

This composer deserves re-recognition. This excellent book puts many facts and interpretations on paper very well. Now is the time to sing and play the music.

William Tortolano

About Reviewers

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TEXAS

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