Beauty as Revelation and Doxology: A Theology of Aesthetics

Adam Begnaud OSB
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/sot_papers

Part of the Christianity Commons, and the Liturgy and Worship Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/sot_papers/777

This Graduate Paper is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Theology and Seminary Graduate Papers/Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csbsju.edu.
BEAUTY AS REVELATION AND DOXOLOGY: 
A THEOLOGY OF AESTHETICS 

by 

Adam Begnaud, OSB 

Saint Joseph Abbey 
Saint Benedict, Louisiana 
70457 

A Paper submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology of Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Theology. 

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY 
Saint John's University 
Collegeville, Minnesota 

29 May, 1996
This Paper was written under the direction of

Susan Wood, SCL
Adam Begnaud, OSB

has successfully demonstrated the use of Latin in this paper

Susan Wood, SCL

5/29/96

Date
BEAUTY AS REVELATION AND DOXOLOGY

Description of the Project:

This project was initiated as a term paper for the course "Trinity, Faith and Revelation" at Saint John's University, School of Theology, Collegeville, Minnesota. The paper presents the author's theology of beauty as a search for and praise of God in Benedictine monasticism and liturgical music.

Purpose of Disclosure:

Disclosure of this research is made for the purpose of consultation alone and not publication. In no way do the views presented in this paper represent those of its director or Saint John's University and the School of Theology.

Parties to whom the Disclosure may be made:

The writer grants permission for referencing and quotation of this paper in further research providing proper acknowledgment is given.

Adam Begnaud, OSB

25 May 1996

Date
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ....................................................................................................................... 1

**Beauty**................................................................................................................................. 2  
  *The Transcendental Beauty* .............................................................................................. 3  
  *Beauty and Theology* .................................................................................................... 4  
  *Aesthetics* ..................................................................................................................... 7  

**Revelation and Doxology** ............................................................................................... 9  
  *Revelation* .................................................................................................................... 9  
  *Doxology* ..................................................................................................................... 14  

**Beauty, The Name of God** ............................................................................................. 16  
  *The Significance of Naming* ......................................................................................... 16  
  *The Name of Beauty In Scripture* ................................................................................ 18  
  *The Beauty of Heaven and Earth* ................................................................................ 21  
  *Beauty, the Source of Being* ....................................................................................... 24  

**A Philosophy of Liturgical Art** ......................................................................................... 26  
  *The Example of Liturgical Music* .................................................................................. 30  
  *Unity in Music* ............................................................................................................. 37  

**A Prophetic Image of Beauty** ........................................................................................... 42  
  *The Benedictine Vocation* ............................................................................................. 44  
  *The Monk as Artisan of Praise* ..................................................................................... 47  
  *Liturgical Music and Benedictine Monasticism* .......................................................... 52  

**Conclusion** .......................................................................................................................... 60  

**Bibliography** ..................................................................................................................... 63
One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: 
to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, 
to behold the beauty of the LORD, 
and to inquire in his temple.

Ps 27:4

Introduction

Psalm 27 presents what has been revealed to the poet as the final objective for humanity: to live in the house of the LORD for eternity. The objective is not simply to be in the divine tabernacle, but to live in it. Life, the psalmist goes on to explain, is conditioned by the ability to inquire so to ascertain the beauty of the LORD. Life, therefore, is dependent upon the ability of one to learn and be transformed through and into that which is sought. In this case, what is sought is life through, with and in Beauty.

If the human goal is life everlasting through, with and in beauty, a means to that reality must be articulated. But even before that, a concept of what is actually being moved toward requires naming. The thesis of this paper is that Beauty is not simply an attribute of God, but a fitting name for God. Since Beauty possesses the three essential theological descriptions of the Christian notion of God as Trinity, it is postulated that God is Beauty. The very nature of the triune God is in the dynamic activities of ekstasis (external movement), perichoresis (mutual engagement) and koinonia (participatory communion). These three reciprocally interdependent dynamic models of existence are made known through revelation, yet to reach their proper telos, they must be reflected back in doxology. In short, there is no eternal life in Divine beauty “without the naming
of the blessed Trinity, or without participation in the [same] mystery of God."\(^1\)

"The beauty unfailingly manifest outward in all creation is God's own self-proclamation and to this the only proper human response is ecstasy."\(^2\) Beauty, it will be shown, is an *ekstatic perichoretic koinonia* which acts both as a revelation of God and a doxology for God. In a cyclical eternal life, beauty is the *exitus-reditus* of God. God reveals the divine self as beauty and beauty is then returned to God in praise.

The manner in which the *exitus-reditus* nature of beauty will be treated in this paper is logical enough. First, the concept of beauty as a transcendent subject of a Christian theological investigation proper to the field of aesthetics will be presented. The nature and function of revelation and doxology as it pertains to the stated theology of aesthetics will follow. The recognition of the revelatory and doxological dimensions of beauty will result in a discussion of God as Beauty. From there, the merging of the revealed Beauty and the doxological beauty will be developed in a philosophy of liturgical art. The final step in this work will be to consider the implementation of the preceding theories into a lived experience. The intersection of Benedictine monasticism and liturgical music will serve as the point of reference.

**Beauty**

The first step in progressing toward a goal is to know clearly what it is that is being sought. Concepts of beauty have varied greatly in the history of the world. Most people have simply resigned themselves to believing that beauty can not be objectively defined. The resolution of this situation is far beyond the

---


scope of this work. However, in an effort to distill the murky waters to some extent, beauty will be considered here as a transcendental subject of a Christian theological investigation proper to the field of aesthetics.

The Transcendental Beauty

Beauty is the third of what is classically known as the transcendentals. Although beauty has been given much attention in classical Western thought, the transcendentals of truth and goodness have typically been the focus of discussions. Sufficiently explained for the purposes of this investigation, a transcendental is that which is beyond common thought or experience; is concerned with the a priori or intuitive basis of knowledge as independent of experience and thus often spoken of in terms of the mystical or supernatural. One must transcend empiricism in order to ascertain the a priori principles of knowledge. The “idea,” to use Platonic terms, transcends the sensate experience and is knowable only through intuition or divine revelation. Noel Dermot O’Donoghue explains the transcendentals as “a set of ideas that belong to all reality, transcending all differences of class and category, breaking through even the polarity of finite and infinite, temporal and eternal.”

It is on these grounds that Paul is able to stake the claim in his instructions to the people of Galatia: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” In terms of Christian theology, then, transcendentals are attributes of God who is totally other, beyond any categorical determining. God is truth, goodness and beauty. As such, God can be named in accordance with the divine character. God is known by the names Truth, Good-

---


ness and Beauty.

That which is authentically true and good, although categorized as ultimately knowable only transcendentally, has received much attention on rational and logical grounds. Simple, supposedly self-evident, definitions of the beautiful, on the other hand, have historically been left to suffice for the most nebulous of the three transcendentals. In the extreme case, such defeatist and anti-intellectual statements concerning beauty, and the ability to judge the quality of beauty, were relegated to the status of complete and total subjectivism. *De gustibus non disputandum est,* has been a favorite scapegoat phrase for many. Following Thomas Aquinas, Eric Gill, for example, wrote in his book *Art and a Changing Civilization:* "the beautiful is that which pleases." Such ready-made definitions reach back at least as far as Aristotle and venture into Christian philosophy via Augustine of Hippo—not to mention scripture. Beauty is not, however, a concept which can simply be defined with a pleasure principle. Beauty is a way of being. That way of being is an *ekstatic perichoretic koinonia* which both reveals and praises being as beauty.

*Beauty and Theology*

Even though such an authority as Hans Urs Von Balthasar suspects that the human habit of calling beautiful only what strikes the mortal mind as such appears insurmountable this side of the eschaton, the necessity of attempting more is pressing. Indeed, it is a matter of salvation. Balthasar warns that, "at least practically speaking, it seems both advisable and necessary to steer clear of

---

5 "Concerning taste, there is no dispute;" or "Matters of taste are not disputable," they are purely subjective; determined by an individual and completely valid as such.


the theological application of aesthetic concepts.”

To circumvent this alleged problem, Balthasar suggests that we “think of the beautiful as one of the transcendental attributes of Being as such, and thereby ascribe to the beautiful the same range of application and the same inwardly analogous form that we ascribe to the [other transcendental].” Though it may sound somewhat daring and even paradoxical, being and beauty are indeed convertible terms. Balthasar’s explanation of why this philosophical maneuvering is necessary is simple. A theology that makes use of such concepts, he claims, “will sooner or later cease to be a ‘theological aesthetics’ . . . and deteriorate into an ‘aesthetic theology’ by betraying and selling out theological substance to current viewpoints of an inner-worldly theory of beauty.” In other words, Balthasar does not want to bring worldly notions of what is aesthetically pleasing to God—the transcendental form of Beauty. The taste of the world must instead be conformed to that of divine beauty.

Attempting to give beauty its due, Bonaventure placed it among truth and goodness as the foundational transcendental. Instead of beauty being defined in terms of the good and true, the good and true were defined in terms of the

---

8 Balthasar, I, 38.
9 Balthasar, I, 38.
10 O’Donoghue, 257, fn 1.
11 Balthasar, I, 38.
beautiful. The foundational text explaining the name of God as Beauty, however, comes from Dionysius the Areopagite. In his treatises, *The Divine Names*, Dionysius wrote:

We call "beautiful" that which has a share in beauty, and we give the name "beauty" to that ingredient which is the cause of beauty in everything. But the "beautiful" which is beyond individual being is called "beauty" because of that beauty bestowed by it on all things, each in accordance with what it is. It is given this name because it is the cause of harmony and splendor in everything. . . . Beauty "bids" all things to itself . . . and gathers everything into itself.

Beauty unites all things and is the source of all things. It is the great creating cause which bestirs the world and holds all things in existence by the longing inside them to have beauty. . . . [It] is the longing for beauty which actually brings [things] into being. It is a model to which they conform.

From [the Beautiful] derives the existence of everything as beings . . . . Hence, the interrelationship of all things in accordance with capacity. Hence, the harmony and the love which are formed between them but which do not obliterate identity. Hence, the innate togetherness of everything.

To put the matter briefly, all being drives from, exists in, and is returned toward the Beautiful. . . . All things look to it. All things are moved by it. All things are preserved by it.

The 18th century American philosopher Jonathan Edwards echoes the ancient tradition of the East in the post-enlightenment West when he posits: "God's beauty . . . is pre-eminent among his attributes: God is beautiful, indeed beauty

---

13 Claire Maitre cites a prime example of an attempt at grounding beauty in truth. "The Cistercian principles of plainsong reform are based on the postulate that truth is inherent and that there is only one truth" [Claire Maitre, "Authority and Reason in the Cistercian Theory of Music," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, Vol 29, No. 2 (1994), 207]. In other words, truth must be known before beauty can be realized. Beauty is incapable of revealing truth. The presupposition of the Cistercian reform stands in marked contrast to the presuppositions which underlie this project. It must ultimately be admitted, however, that the notion of beauty as the keystone will also be lacking. Beauty, it will be shown, exists only out of love. Without love, there is nothing to be beautiful. God is love and thus Beautiful not Beautiful and therefore loving.


15 Pseudo-Dionysius, IV, 7 (p. 77).

16 Pseudo-Dionysius, IV, 10 (p. 79).
itself and the source and foundation of all beauty in the world."17 Beauty, then, is not merely a transcendental attribute of God, but the essense of God and thus that by which the divine is known and named. Furthermore, the revelation of Beauty gives rise to the doxological life in Beauty. A communion is established as a dynamic activity by which life is insured.

The promise of life, and life abundant, is found by the Christian in the person of Jesus Christ. There is, then, nothing more beautiful for the Christian than the perfect reflection, or icon, of God which is Christ. One of the most revered names of God for Christians of the Eastern traditions is in fact Beauty.18 Following the ancient Christian tradition first set out by Paul, Christ will be considered here as the true icon of Beauty. As such, Christ "stands as the fountainhead of the Christian aesthetic, and therefore of all aesthetics!"19

**Aesthetics**

The study of aesthetics generally connotes an attempt to explain the phenomenon art—the way one thinks and talks about creating, appreciating, and criticizing works of art or, synonymously in traditional Western thought, the beautiful. Consistent with the original Greek *aisthetikos* (sense) and *aisthanesthai* (to perceive), the study of aesthetics addresses training for the acute perception of beauty. Here, however, linked as it is to the study of God (that is, theology), the term aesthetics is concerned not ultimately with the sensitive perception of beauty in works of art made either by humans or God, but with the divine self as the beautiful. God will here be considered as the aesthetic object, if you will.

---

19 Balthasar, I, 29.
If the ultimate concern is to live eternally through, with and in Beauty, people must possess an eye capable of perceiving beauty; they must possess a spiritual eye. As Jean Corban presents the situation:

If our gaze is to liberate the beauty hidden in all things, it must first be bathed with light in him whose gaze sends beauty streaming out. If our words are to express the symphony of the Word, they must first be immersed in the silence of harmony of the Word. If our hands are to fashion the icon of creation, we must first allow ourselves to be fashioned by him who unites our flesh to the splendor of the Father.

Such was the human condition in the beginning and such is the new life of those recreated in Christ. For this reason, Balthasar posits: “No theme of revelation can be isolated from the field of theological aesthetics.” The question is, therefore: How does one identify beauty? Posed more pragmatically and borrowing from Saint Benedict: What must be done now that will be of profit for eternity?

The position to be forwarded here is that knowledge of God as Beauty is revealed by God and must be given back to God if life is to be attained in this time and the next. Beauty, in other words, assures salvation when it is both revelation and doxology and lived as an ekstatic perichoretic koinonia. This theology of aesthetics will be deciphered in two basic steps. First, the meaning of revelation as a mode of communication and its relation to beauty will be apprehended. Following this set of propositions, the doxological character of life will be considered.

---


Revelation and Doxology

The author of Psalm 27 suggests that the goal of humanity is everlasting life through, with and in the beauty of the LORD. The particulars of how the writer came to this imaginative portrayal is perhaps well beyond the discerning abilities of anyone. The more general speculation as to how one is able to forward any theological proposition, however, is possible. The operative framework for making any statement concerning God is ultimately that of revelation and its corollary, doxology.23 The bipolar references are inextricably inter-related and will be considered here accordingly.

Revelation

In his book, Models of Revelation, Avery Dulles outlines five distinct—though not exclusively independent—means of understanding the phenomenon of revelation.24 Of these “models,” that which Dulles calls “new awareness” or “consciousness” (model five) is proposed in this paper to be an accurate description of the very essence of revelation and the most effective means of the reciprocal communication of beauty. It is within Dulles’ fifth model of revelation, then, that the present theology of aesthetics is situated.

The will of God and the very purpose of divine revelation is “that [humanity] should have access to the Father through Christ . . . in the Holy Spiri-

---

23 The proposition that revelation and doxology require one another for either to be complete reflects the ancient maxim of the fifth century monk Prosper of Aquataine: ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi (the law of faith grounds the law of belief). The contemporary abbreviated use of the principle simply states: lex orandi, lex credendi (the law of prayer is the law of faith). That is to say, the way the church prays determines the way the church believes. For invaluable discussion of this topic see: Kevin W. Irwin, Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 3-43 passim; and Geoffrey Wainwright, Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 218-283 passim.

it, and thus become sharers in the divine nature."\(^{25}\) It is the explicit intent of the Incarnate Word to "dwell among [humanity] to tell them about the inner life of God."\(^{26}\) "God wishes," according to the \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, "to make [people] capable of responding to him, and of knowing him, and of loving him far beyond their own natural capability."\(^{27}\) This desire of the Lord "involves a specific divine pedagogy: God communicates himself to [humanity] gradually."\(^{28}\) The gradual unveiling of God is necessitated by the fact that: God is invisible and incomprehensible; God's thoughts and decrees are unfathomable; and God dwells in unapproachable light.\(^{29}\) Therefore, in as much as religion is concerned with the finite coming to know the infinite, revelation is essential.\(^{30}\) The degree to which the created is able to ascertain the Creator is, however, dependent upon the extent to which the Creator permits such to occur. Even though "God . . . can be known with certainty from the created world, by natural light of human reason,"\(^{31}\) it is to God's self disclosure as revelation that humans are able to know "with ease, with firm certainty, and without the contamination of error."\(^{32}\)

As a categorical expression for those experiences in which people become aware of the divine disclosure,\(^{33}\) the overarching principle in determining the validity of a revelation lies in the discernment of what is perceived to be revealed. What God reveals is not an object, a teaching or commandment, but

\(^{26}\) DV, 4.
\(^{27}\) \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church} (CCC), 52.
\(^{28}\) CCC, 53.
\(^{29}\) Walter Kasper, \textit{The God of Jesus Christ} (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1984), 126. \textit{cf}: Rm 1:20, Col 1:15; Ps 139:6, Jb 36:26; Rm 11:33 ff; 1Tm 6:16.
\(^{30}\) Kasper, 116.
\(^{31}\) DV, 6.
\(^{32}\) DV, 6.
\(^{33}\) Kasper, 116-117.
the divine self. In so doing, God reveals to humanity something of themselves and their own mystery.\textsuperscript{34} As Rahner sees it, revelation is simultaneously anthropocentric and theocentric.\textsuperscript{35} Revelation is, therefore, an image and likeness, a foretaste and anticipation of the eschatological relationship between Creator and creation.

Revelations are true to the extent that they reflect the communal life of the Trinity thus enriching the quality of human life as community.\textsuperscript{36} As reflections of the Trinitarian life, revelatory experiences consist of being one with God as the Father and Son are one in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the perfect image of the Father because his very being is predicated by the Spirit. Human life lived in the Holy Spirit as the Body of Christ, enables humans to continue the presence of the fullness of God in the present. This, however, can only be accomplished when revelation is considered as a dynamic process rather than as static content.\textsuperscript{37}

If we are to advance from infancy to the maturity of the Body of Christ, we must grow in the wisdom and knowledge offered us in the experience of the God who is symbolically present. To be a symbol, an object, sound, word, action or deed, must participate in both the transcendent and the immanent realms of reality simultaneously. A symbol does not merely point to the reality which it seeks to express, but makes real and present the reality of the heretofore unexperienced. Symbols are discovered gifts from God, not manufactured products of an individual or society. A symbol is an environment to be inhabited, not an object to be manipulated.

\textsuperscript{34} Kasper, 121; 119.
\textsuperscript{35} Dulles, 100.
\textsuperscript{36} Dulles, 104.
\textsuperscript{37} Dulles, 256.
Environments naturally effect those who inhabit them. A person living in a desert can not live as a person living on a tropical island. Environments transform people even as people attempt to transform the environment. In this transformation, symbols inspire commitment to the behaviors they present. When taken-up with life in the symbol, people come to an awareness of reality previously unknown. This is revelation and the purpose of symbols. Symbols exist so that people may participate in a transformative experience which leads to a commitment of behavioral characteristics offered by the awareness of the insight.

When viewed as an interactive experience, revelation “is a transcendent fulfillment of the inner drive of the human spirit toward [the] fuller consciousness ... found in an experience of participation in the divine life.” At the meeting of two previously separated “cultures” which results in a “new awareness,” there is a necessary linkage to change. Change, unless it is the worthless deceptive movement of change for the sake of change, is dependent upon revelation. In other words, revelation is the cause of change. Gradual change is the pedagogical method employed by God for the ascending reconciliatory movement of the created. Without change coming from the revelation offered by active participation in the symbolic life of God, humanity is doomed to wander aimlessly in the desert with an unquenchable thirst.

Closely connected to any concept of change is imagination. According to Hart, “imagination is the power by which we construct our future.” Revelation gives rise to imagination and imagination to revelation. Imagination gives rise to revelation not in a Feuerbachian sense of projecting a reality which in

---

38 Dulles, 136-137.
39 Dulles, 98.
40 Dulles, 103.
actuality does not exist, but in the sense that it leads to deeper and fuller perceptions which could easily be overlooked by the less resourceful. Imagination aroused by revelation peaks sensitivity. As the organ through which the imagination operates (that is, through which ideals are constructed and possibilities are apprehended), revelation stimulates the mind and conveys a deeper sense of reality. That is to say, revelation stimulates a sense of the transcendent. A greater experience of transcendence leads to a greater participation in the divine, the goal of revelation. By arousing the imagination, revelations initiate and direct, via symbols, a process whereby the perception of radically new patterns and meanings in particular constellations of data are recognized.

The primary conduit through which imaginative powers are unleashed is receptivity. One must be open to and prepared for the recognition of revelatory moments. First and foremost, we must be receptive to God being revealed through love. Those who love their brothers and sisters are in the light and there is nothing to cause them to fall. Those who hate their brothers and sisters walk in darkness; and those who walk in darkness do not know where they are going because darkness has blinded their eyes. "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God . . . . Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love." If we are indeed the Body of Christ, seeing one another is equivalent to seeing Christ and Christ is the full symbolic expression of God.

Secondly, according to Hicks, "revelation does not essentially consist in doctrine but in encounter and awareness." Receptiveness to God in the arts and the liturgy serves as a prime example. For example, Sacrosanctum concilium says

---

41 Kasper, 28-31 passim.
42 Dulles, 104.
43 Dulles, 258.
44 1Jn 2:10-11.
45 1Jn 4:7-8.
46 Dulles, 107.
of music: "Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance." As a symbol, music plays a vital role in the fullest expression of the Church's faith life and revelation of God. The liturgy of the Eucharist itself is not a mere sign, but a material channel to the divine—a participation in the Incarnation and a communion with the Trinity. As the "source and summit" of Christian life, "the sharing in the body and blood of Christ has no other effect than to accomplish our transformation [through "full, conscious, and active participation"] into that which we receive."

In his "new awareness" model of revelation, Dulles proposes a means of considering revelation which demands participation and transformation leading to awareness and commitment. Such an attitude of conversion will continually renew the people of God as the Body of Christ and lead to an eternal life of beholding Beauty. It is this very attitude of perpetual conversion which lies at the heart of Benedictine monasticism. Referred to as conversatio morum in the Rule of Benedict, this characteristic trait of Western cenobitic life serves as a model of the Baptismal life of all Christians and, as will be shown, leads to the imaginative living out of creative beauty, or doxology.

**Doxology**

As a corollary of revelation, doxology requires little by way of definition. It has already been shown that doxology is fundamentally the active participation in that which is named in revelation. It will not be without profit, however, if the concept is considered in more objective terms.

---

47 Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), 112.
48 Lumen Gentium (LG), 11.
49 LG, 26; SC, 14.
51 OL, §9 ff passim.
From the Greek *doxa* (glory) and *logos* (word or utterance), doxology is literally an utterance which expresses glory or praise.52 “Utterance,” however, should not be understood too literally. *Doxa* begins as the intrinsic character of God and becomes the means by which God is perceived.53 God’s immanent doxological life reveals God as a communal being. Doxology can only be present in relationships. Glory and praise is a gift to be given, not an act of self-indulgence. Leahy explains Balthasar’s notion of doxology in terms of a divine dance or *perichoresis*. *Doxa*, he explains, is a theological transcendental which exists in an indissoluble *perichoresis* with the philosophical transcendentals of being.54 In simpler words, a dance-like relationship between God and humans must exist if being is to be. “Our task,” according to Don Saliers, “is to search for ways to let the *doxa* of God shape our actual doxological practices.”55 “We cannot understand who God is until we know the shared life of glory in God…”56

The doxological character of the divine *perichoresis* is the model life. As a lived epiclesis, the perfect doxology, the perfect reflection of the glory of God is Christ. The life of Christ was able, and continues in the church, to be an unending praise of God through an epicletic lifestyle. The Father is known by the Son in the Spirit. A life lived as the appropriate response to the revelation of God as the source of his being gives praise.

53 Saliers, 41.
54 Leahy, 26.
55 Saliers, 42.
56 Saliers, 40.
Beauty, The Name of God

After a brief introduction to the significance of naming, Beauty as a proper name for God will be considered under three headings. First, as a fundamental source of revelation, the name Beauty as made known through Scripture will be discussed. Next, the characteristics of earthly beauty will be considered as a reflection of divine beauty. Finally, beauty as the source of being will be equated with God.

The Significance of Naming

What is gleaned from the inter-related character of revelation and doxology is that both are mandatory in God’s plan for establishing a relationship with creation. The relationship is sealed by God with the identification of the divine name. The great significance of naming is noted in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.57 After explaining that “God revealed himself to his people Israel by making his name known to them,”58 the Catechism goes on to state: “A name expresses a person’s essence and identity and the meaning of this person’s life. . . . To disclose one’s name is to make oneself known to others; in a way it is to hand oneself over by becoming accessible, capable of being known more intimately and addressed personally.”59 So to leave no doubt, the Catechism clarifies: “God has a name; he is not an anonymous force.”60 Furthermore, the name of the LORD is unique. “Among all the words of Revelation, there is one which is unique: the revealed name of God. . . . The gift of a name belongs to the order of trust and intimacy.”61 The name of God, though revealed fundamentally in the theo-

58 CCC, 203.
59 CCC, 203.
60 CCC, 203.
61 CCC, 2143.
phony on Sinai as “I Am,” has been revealed progressively and under different names throughout salvation history. Even before revealing the divine self to humanity in words, however, the mystery of God was made known through *that which is beyond words*. God disclosed the holy name through the universal language of creation, through the beauty of the work of the Word.

To name, suggests some degree of power of the namer over the namee. To name, initiates a previously non-existent orientation toward the other. The act of naming also infers a kind of judgment. When something is named, it is identified as being of some value. Perhaps the thing was not previously known and hence had no name; or perhaps the thing was merely generically lumped together with other things within a larger genus. With the gift of a name, the thing once without particular identity is distinguished with a place in the cosmos. This place, however, is imposed upon it from something which is in some way greater than itself. There is, though, nothing greater than God. For once you think you have understood, that which you have understood is not God. Hence, it is impossible for a creature of God—as empowered as it might be to name other

62 CCC, 204. cf Ex 3:14.
63 cf Augustine’s sermons #52, 6.16 and 117, 3.5.

*Augustinus Hippomensis, Sermones LII:*

> Quid ergo dicamus, fratres, de deo? Si enim quod uis dicere, si cepisti, non est deus: si comprehendere potuisti, altius pro deo comprehesisti. Si quasi comprehendere potuisti, cogitazione tua te decepisti. Hoc ergo non est, si comprehendisti: si autem hoc est, non comprehendisti. Qui ergo vis loqui, quod comprehendere non potuisti?

*Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 52:*

What am I to say, brothers, about God? If indeed you have grasped the point you want to say, it is not God. If you have been able to comprehend it, you comprehended something other than God. If comprehended, this then is not God. If, however, it is God, you cannot comprehend it. What, then, is this chatter? The fact is, that it is not possible to comprehend God.

*Augustinus Hippomensis, Sermones CXVII:*

> De deo loquimur, quid mirum si non comprehendis? Si enim comprehendais, non est deus. Sit pia confessio ignorantiae magis, quam temeraria professio scientiae. Attingere aliquantum mente deum; magna beatitudo est: comprehendere autem, omnino impossible.

*Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 117:*

Concerning talk about God, why wonder if you cannot understand? If you comprehend it, it is not God. May the pious acknowledgement of ignorance be greater than the thoughtless profession of knowledge. To grasp God with the mind in some way is a great blessing, but to comprehend God completely is impossible.
creatures— to name God. All the creature can hope to do is come to know God as God reveals the divine self to the created order.

John the Evangelist offers what is perhaps the most often repeated and accepted name by which God has chosen to be known: love. The equally subjective and ambiguous notion of beauty as a name for God is not quite so explicitly used in scripture. The legitimacy of the name, however, can be reasonably deduced from the revelation of sacred text.

*The Name of Beauty In Scripture*

"From beginning to end," claims Huerre, "Scripture is nothing but a record of our human capacity for marvel." The wonders which entice the marvelous reaction are ultimately all grounded in the beauty of the Lord. What, after all, can compare to the beauty of salvation? Less oblique references to the beauty of the Lord, however, are not lacking. Verse 4 of Psalm 27 (which prefaces this paper) is perhaps the most direct statement claiming God to be Beauty. The psalmist sings that it is indeed the goal of creation to "behold the beauty of the Lord." A Christian reading of the prophet Isaiah easily suggests the messianic king who exhibits the nature of God as beautiful. Upon deliverance, speaks the prophet, "your eyes will see the king in his beauty." It is from the Song of Songs that the most beautifully poetic references to God as beauty come. Here,

---

64 *cf* Gen 2:18 ff.
65 1Jn 4:8.
66 Huerre, 305.
67 It must be pointed out that this verse is sometimes translated in ways which would not necessarily lead one to the same conclusion. Often, it is not the "beauty" of the Lord which is sought, but the "sweetness" of the Lord. The original Hebrew word (*no'am*) is more correctly translated as that which gives pleasure or is pleasing. Such a notion, as was addressed previously, does in traditional Western-Judeo-Christian thought, however, connote a sense of beauty. It is also interesting to note, that the word *tub* in verse 13 of Psalm 27 is rendered "goodness" in the *NRSV* while Dahood claims that it is more correctly translated as beauty.
68 Is 33:17.
the lover lauds the beloved with accolades such as:

Ah, you are beautiful, my love; ah, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves. Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly lovely.

How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful!

You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.\textsuperscript{69}

In the last verse cited, there is a somewhat objective statement of what beauty is. The altogether beautiful has no flaw. According to the Wisdom of Solomon, such things exist in nature and reveal God. That is, God is known to be beautiful by witness of the beauty found in that which was divinely created.

For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works; but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world. If through delight in the beauty of these things people assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them. And if people were amazed at their power and working, let them perceive from them how much more powerful is the one who formed them. For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.\textsuperscript{70}

It is perhaps with these very pearls of wisdom from Solomon, that the crux of the present dilemma lies. What is the reality perceived behind the beauty of creation?

\textsuperscript{69} Sg 1:15-16; 4:1; 4:7.

\textsuperscript{70} Wis 13:3-5. Paul insinuates these very same sentiments when he writes in his Letter to the Romans:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles (Rm 1:18-23).
In the Book of Sirach it is written that there are three things which are beautiful in the sight of God and of mortals: "agreement among brothers and sisters, friendship among neighbors, and a wife and a husband who live in harmony." 71 At risk of presumption, perhaps these three relative synonyms of agreement, friendship and harmony which please both God and humans, could be restated with the single word "unity." As the psalmist writes: "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" 72 It is the social construct of conciliation which gives pleasure to God as the beautiful. This is indeed what Christians believe God to be as a Trinity and what humanity is called to imitate throughout scripture. "Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God," 73 writes the prophet Baruch.

Nothing shows forth the splendor, glory and beauty of God more than the Incarnation and it is to that very same beauty that creation is to be conformed. All of us, Paul proclaims, are being transformed into the image of Christ 74 who is the image of God. 75 Reflecting Baruch, Paul commands: Strip off the old self with its practices and be clothed with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. 76 Put away your former way of life and be renewed in the spirit of your minds. Clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. 77 In so doing, Paul explains, "we are members of one another." 78 Or, as explained by ben Sira centuries earlier, we are in agreement, friendship, and har-

---

71 Sir 25:1.
72 Ps 133:1.
73 Bar 5:1.
74 2Cor 3:18.
75 2Cor 4:4; Col 1:15.
76 Col 3:9-10.
78 Eph 4:25.
mony. We are beautiful in the sight of God by being conformed to the likeness of the Icon. Beauty, then, is the very source and summit of the Christian life and all creation.

The Beauty of Heaven and Earth

With the presuppositions that beauty is the source and summit of creation and that revelation demands active doxological participation clearly stated, the task at hand is to illustrate how creation participates in the reality. At risk of falling prone to the type of evasive simplistic response offered by earlier thinkers, I posit that beauty both reveals and gives praise to God. Beauty is both revelatory and doxological by being an ekstatic perichoretic koinonia. The means to reconciliation of the world and its Creator, therefore, is by participation in beauty. That which we believe God to be, we also hold as our ideal. We believe that we were made in the image and likeness of God\textsuperscript{79} and that we are all called to be perfect as God is perfect.\textsuperscript{80} Beauty, as the perfection of being,\textsuperscript{81} is what God is and what creation longs to be united to. The question then, is: What is the essence of divinity which makes God beautiful? What are the characteristics of beauty?

Ever since Plato, the West has more or less been satisfied with beauty being characterized as proper proportion. Here, I propose a dynamic characterization of that to which the salvation of the world has been credited. Beauty is an ekstatic perichoretic koinonia. Each of the three terms, ekstasis, perichoresis, and koinonia, used here to describe beauty, are more often attributed to the character of the Triune Christian God. The complex technical propositions of each of the terms deserve separate investigations. When taken together as a single concept, however, their precise nuances become manageable. In effect, each of these terms

\textsuperscript{79} Gen 1:27.
\textsuperscript{80} Mt 5:48.
\textsuperscript{81} Putnam, 202.
are interdependent. That is to say, one cannot be defined without use of the others. In the end, they will denote the essence of God and the key to salvation—they will denote Beauty. Beauty, it will be shown, is comprised of and dependent upon the very attributes of ekstasis, perichoresis, and koinonia.

The characteristics of the Christian triune God are also fundamental elements of humanly created beauty or works of art. This being the case, the claim that God is revealed in art and that praise is rendered to God through art follows logically. A delineation of the three common characteristics of God and art will substantiate the proposition. The approach taken here begins with perichoresis at the center. Ekstasis and koinonia will be considered centrifugally.

Virtually every teaching in Western Christianity since the great Trinitarian controversies leading to Nicea, according to Catherine Mowry LaCugna, has been a move away from what she considers crucially important: theology as activity of faith, not as exercise in philosophy. That is to say, "it is impossible to think of the divine essence in itself or by itself." The divine persons cannot be disconnected from salvation history. It follows, therefore, that the Trinity has real and great gravity for every day Christian living. The claim which frames the investigation, therefore, is that: "The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life." "The doctrine of the Trinity," she states, "is ultimately . . . a teaching not about the abstract nature of God, nor about God in isolation from everything other than God, but a teaching about God's life with us and with each other." Trinitarian theology is, in other words, a theology of relationship.

---

83 LaCugna, 70.
84 LaCugna, 1, 377, italics added.
85 LaCugna, 1.
86 LaCugna, 1.
The operative concept of God for LaCugna is one which demands interactive dynamics between the Creator and the created. Expressing God in terms of *perichoresis* (the divine dance considered earlier in terms of doxology), provides just such dynamic model of the Trinity. Gadamer posits that dance is the essence of God and thus the authentic representation of the divine according to the classical theory of art as mimesis or imitation. Further, Gadamer suggests that dance characterizes the concept of transformation as the superior mode of being. As the primordial representation of God, dance exemplifies how memesis is "not merely a repetition, a copy, but knowledge of the essence." Imitation is a "bringing forth" and necessarily revelatory.

Notions such as substance (typical of Latin thought) and monarchy (characteristic of Greek thought) suffer from a lack of the life giving dimension dominant in the dance alternative. Further, to even conceive of God in a context of choreography, two other beneficial modes of perception must be present: *ekstasis* and *koinonia*. A dance which does not "go out of itself" so to bond with another is no more than self-adulation. Still, a fundamental presupposition to what dance is must be accepted if the concept of God as *perichoresis* is to be properly developed.

In LaCugna's concept of dance there is no lead. As she explains in terms of the Trinity, the idea is that "the three divine persons mutually inhere in one another, draw life from one another, "are" what they are by relation to one another." Dance choreographed with a leader means that the follower derives their existence from the original mover. For the choreography to actually work, all that is given must be actualized in the other. Particular nuance may be added,

---

88 Gadamer, 114.
89 Gadamer, 114-115.
90 LaCugna, 270-271.
but the dancers cannot be distinguished from the dance. The dancers become the dance. Then, and only then, are the two one in the creation of a third. The third, in turn, shares completely in the dance and the three become one. Then is there koinonia—participatory communion in unity.

Beauty, the Source of Being

The koinonia created by the ekstatic perichoresis of God is both the source and the result of beauty. The neglect of beauty, therefore, holds dire consequences. Whoever sneers at beauty, claims Balthasar, can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love.91 For John D. Zizioulas, such a condition means death.

Perhaps the best way to explain Zizioulas' thinking is by pointing to three of his critical presuppositions which are carried throughout his momentous book, Being As Communion. First, Zizioulas proposes that the Church "is a 'mode of existence,' a way of being."92 This "way of being," according to Zizioulas, is "an event of communion," that is, being demands relationship.93 Outside of relationship there is no being: "nothing exists without it, not even God."94 From this first proposition it is possible to assert a second. The full and ultimate relationship is communion with truth and love. In actuality, truth and love are one and the same thing—God. Humans do not simply want to be, they want to fully be. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee, O God."95 The fully actualized person can only be achieved through interaction with others.96 Humans become

---

91 Balthasar, I, 18.
92 John D. Zizioulas, Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), 15. The Church is, as the Catechism quotes Cyprian, "a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (CCC, 810; cf I.C, 4). "The Church is one because of her source: [the Trinity]" (CCC, 813).
93 Zizioulas, 15.
94 Zizioulas, 17.
95 Augustine. Confessions, I, 1. "... inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te."
96 Zizioulas, 46.
persons through the hypostatic union of loving and being loved. When such a communion of being exists between God and the created, the ultimate relationship is established and eternal life is actualized. The goal of salvation is ascertained as "divinization"—participation in the personal existence and identity of God—when humans are united to God. Zizioulas' third proposition maintains that humans are creatures and not divine. As creatures, humans are unable to achieve the goal of life in God unaided. Eternal life in God is possible only through ekstasis. Authentic ekstasis is a creative act of love. The world and all it contains is the product of God's ekstatic spirit. If humans are to live in God, they must share in this same creative spirit. Life in the Spirit, therefore, is the path of salvation.

As defined by Zizioulas, then, "the person is the horizon within which the truth of existence is revealed. . . . [I]f one sees a being as a person, one sees in [that person] the whole of human nature." If one sees the whole of human nature, one sees Christ. When one looks upon the face of Christ they see the Father, for the Father and Son are one and desire the same state of being for all. That state of being is Trinitarian eternal life. In the end, "only the Trinity can offer to created being the genuine base for personhood and hence salvation." Life in the body of Christ incarnated as Church exists only pneumatically. "[T]he body of Christ is literally composed of the charismata of the Spirit." True life, then, is identical with the eternal life of the Triune God and is

97 Zizioulas, 49.
98 Zizioulas, 49-50.
99 Zizioulas, 107.
100 Adam was unable to be fully human without Eve. Only the "Human" being as Adam and Eve—the image and likeness of God—was ekstasis able to occur and the procreative act possible.
101 Zizioulas, 106
103 Zizioulas, 107-108.
104 Zizioulas, 111.
realized to its maximum in the Eucharist—the source and summit of our very being as Church, as the Image of Christ, the Icon of Beauty.

A Philosophy of Liturgical Art

With the defining of both beauty and the Eucharist as the source and summit of being, a full circle has been made in the explanation of beauty as revelation and doxology. Though a dangerous step, the conclusion that the Eucharist is a work of art seems logical. It is only left, then, to discover how the liturgy serves the purpose of revelation and doxology. In accord with the claim made by Patrick Regan, the task is to come to the understanding that "liturgy is simultaneously revelation of God's trinitarian life and our insertion into it." Regan therefore concludes, "must be as fully present to the Father as he is to them. Then their actions will articulate and proclaim their perfect union through Christ in the Spirit." In this way the liturgy becomes the revelation and doxology of the ekstatic perichoretic koinonia Beauty.

How the Eucharistic Liturgy achieves its end of transforming all creation to oneness in God is, to a great extent, part and parcel with the mystery celebrated. It can be safely posited, however, that the multi-disciplined artistic nature of the

105 Zizioulas, 114.

106 To refer to the Eucharist as a "work of art" is dangerous precisely for the reason Balthasar spelled out and was noted previously here: the concern is for a theological aesthetics not an aesthetic theology (see page 4-5 here). Gadamer makes similar claims with reference to play (Gadamer, 91 ff). Though liturgy/ritual and play having many intriguing similarities, the liturgy can never be considered play.


108 Regan, 350.

109 Regan concludes more simply, stating: "In the end, liturgy is really only perichoresis and choreography" (350). It is unfortunate that Regan uses the phrase "really only perichoresis" in his description of the liturgy. Nonetheless, his concept is useful. By including εκστασις and κοινωνία, in addition to omitting the qualifier "really only," I take the liberty of expanding Regan's notion in conformity with the fuller sense of Trinitarian life outlined here.
ritual has a substantial role in its overall effectiveness. Concerning the fine arts in general, Sacrosanctum concilium states: Of their very nature, the arts are "directed toward expressing in some way the infinite beauty of God in works made by human hands."\textsuperscript{110} Building off the premise etched out by the Second Vatican Council, the United States Conference of Bishops stipulate:

\begin{quote}
... it is important that some of the Church's material resources ... be allocated to the development of the liturgical arts because they nourish the human spirit and bear witness to the preeminence of the sacred in human life. They enable Christians to grow more and more into that holy temple wherein God can dwell and empower people to transform the world in [the name of God].\textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}

In his now classic text, The God of Jesus Christ, Kasper credits the Trinitarian ethos of art with a critical role in salvation history. Kasper asserts that the salvific reconciliation of the world to God is dependent upon humanity's active participation in the life of the Holy Spirit in the creation of works of art which reflect the beauty of the Father incarnated by the Son. The only real human fulfillment of the ideal of a reality that is unrent, undivided, and successful, according to Kasper, is art.\textsuperscript{112} The reason given to support the theologian's position is that art, as the pinnacle of human realization of the beautiful, is the manifestation of the very Idea of Beauty. Art is, according to Kasper, "the anticipation of definitive reconciliation. In a work of art ... there is ... a foretaste of that which Christian faith looks to with hope as to be accomplished by the Holy Spirit; the transfiguration of reality."\textsuperscript{113}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{110} SC, 122.
\bibitem{112} Kasper, 200.
\bibitem{113} Kasper, 200.
\end{thebibliography}
In his laconic presentation of the power of art, Kasper is certain to clearly position himself within the traditional Western posture. His claims are made, "according to the classical understanding of art."\textsuperscript{114} The contemporary arts are dismissed by Kasper since they operate "in the form of criticism, protest and negation, given the spiritless condition of the present age."\textsuperscript{115} "In contemporary art," Kasper therefore concludes, "the question is largely left unanswered how the transformation of the world and [humanity], a real reconciliation of the world and [humanity], are possible."\textsuperscript{116} Though it is unfortunate that Kasper chooses to condemn all contemporary art as spiritless, there certainly is reasonable cause for such a categorical accusation.

Corbon is not quite as naively optimistic nor as categorically dismissive as is Kasper in his views on art. Corbon strives to clearly assert that art is not "innocent"—that is, innately capable of anything positive or negative. Art, he suggests, is always conditioned by the society from which it arises. "[N]o matter what the claims [are] made for it," Corbon continues, "[art] is not immediately divine."\textsuperscript{117} In tones which resonate with Kasper, Corbon explains what is required of the arts. "If beauty is to save the world it must first cleanse the world. If the work of the artisan or artist is to reveal the glory resident in beauty and bring it to fulfillment, it must first have passed through the fire in which creation is restored to its integrity."\textsuperscript{118} The Holy Spirit is the cleansing and revelatory fire which brings to light the glory of God buried and held captive in creation.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{114} Kasper, 200.
\textsuperscript{115} Kasper, 200.
\textsuperscript{116} Kasper, 200.
\textsuperscript{117} Corbon, 161.
\textsuperscript{118} Corbon, 161.
\textsuperscript{119} Corbon, 161-162.
“We have never been taught,” Huerre concludes, “that we are saved by this world’s beauty...”120 It is by the beautiful act of Jesus Christ and that alone that salvation is won. “[B]eauty is solely and wholly divine, and the human beautiful only in so far as it is receptive of the divine.”121 The time and place of this receptivity climaxes in the Eucharistic liturgy. The aesthetic quality of the liturgy, therefore, is not inconsequential, but of particular concern.

The type of art required of the Liturgy is firmly characterized, if not specifically mandated, by the conciliar and post-conciliar documents.

[The entire liturgy] involves the use of outward signs [works of art] that foster, strengthen, and express faith. There must be the utmost care therefore to choose and to make wise use of those forms and elements provided by the Church that, in view of the circumstances of the people and the place, will best foster active and full participation and serve the spiritual wellbeing of the faithful.122

Any work which is “repugnant to faith and morals and to Christian devotion and that offends true religious sense either by their grotesqueness or by the deficiency, mediocrity, or sham in their artistic quality,” should be “remov[ed] from the house of God and from any other places of worship.”123 In short, beauty is integral to the source and summit of life.

Those who create beauty participate in the transcendental beauty and enter into a relationship with the divine Beauty. In no other human activity is the fullness of the effects of revelation made manifest than in creating a work of art. Gill goes so far as to state: “The act of the artist in the creative imagination is... the nearest human counterpart [to the creative acts of God].”124 It is not, however, only the artist-creator who is a participant in the work of beauty. Music, for

120 Huerre, 315.
121 Huerre, 313.
122 General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), 5.
123 SC, 124.
example, requires not only the initial creator, that is the composer, but also co-creators or performers. Even then, the experience of a work of art is only fully realized when there is active audience participation. Active-listeners of performers of a composer’s music creates a work of art. The composer Paul Hindemith stressed this very point in his book, *A Composer’s World*, when he suggested: whatever sound and structure music may assume, it remains meaningless noise unless it touches a receiving mind. Irwin brings Hindemith’s aesthetic into the realm of ritual practices when he asserts that there are no “spectators” in the liturgy. “[T]he operative notion of symbol in the liturgy is dynamic, involving and ultimately transformative of the community,” Irwin maintains. By consequence, he concludes, “it is important to view active participation and symbolic engagement as essential aspects of the ecclesial enactment of liturgy.” As “a necessary [and] integral part of the solemn liturgy” and a liturgical symbol of “preeminent importance,” the art of music will serve to illustrate both the revelatory and doxological modes of beauty in the active participation and symbolic engagement of the ecclesial enactment of liturgy.

The Example of Liturgical Music

Arguably the most significant artistic medium utilized throughout the history of Christianity is music. Why music has held such a predominant place in the Christian saga is reason for much speculation. Here, the reason has clearly been foreshadowed with the presentation of beauty as the revealing transcendental attribute and name of God. The *ekstatic perichoretic koinonia* nature of

---

126 Irwin, 145.
127 Irwin, 145.
128 SC, 112.
129 *Music in Catholic Worship (MCW)*, 23.
Beauty itself is able to be revealed and doxologically participated in through the art of music.

The notion that music is able to act as a medium of divine revelation is built upon the symbolic character of the art. Bob Hurd posits three points to explain how music symbolically presents the sacred. First, music is a primordial communal and participatory event. As God is a communal being so is music a communal activity. Secondly, "music both embodies and evinces the whole of reality as well as our participation in it." As such, "music is not so much an object we create or possess or consume as a cosmic-transcendent medium in which we participate." Thirdly, music exhibits a sacredness by its contrast to non-music. "[M]usic enhances, intensifies, and . . . transforms almost any experience into something felt not only as different but also somehow better."

The three ways in which Hurd suggests that music symbolically presents the sacred, also serve as the common thread by which music resembles religion itself. “When music is put to use in worship,” Söhngen explains, “. . . it is with the expectation that . . . it contributes toward fulfilling the purpose of worship. . . .” Authentic liturgical music cannot merely be designated a “serving art,” it must be considered in terms of a necessary component of the cult. As stated in Sacrosanctum concilium, “music will be the more holy the more closely it

---

131 Hurd, 675.
132 Hurd, 675.
135 Söhngen, 9. This notion stands somewhat apart from that said of the visual elements of the liturgy in the Conciliar and Post Conciliar documents. The visual arts are required merely to “aid and serve the action of the liturgy” (Environment and Art in Catholic Worship (EACW), 25). Though it is stated that “The art form must never seem to interrupt, replace, or bring the course of the liturgy to a halt” (EACW, 25), there is no sense of the art being a constitutive element of the liturgy itself as music so clearly is.
is joined to the liturgical rite. . .”136

Due to the transformative power of both religion and art, Ellingson forwards a sort of gestalt theory of liturgical art. Ellingson claims that “when the energies of music and religion are focused on the same object . . . toward a common meaning and goal, intensification reaches a peak greater perhaps than either might achieve by itself.”137 Ellingson concludes, therefore, that the “otherness” of music and the “otherness” of religion merging in a heightened synthesis of experience can only be considered in terms of symbol.138 Ellingson purports:

"If a symbol is that which stands for and reveals something other than itself, then music throughout the world has been accepted as successfully symbolizing the “other” of religion. Part of its success must derive from its generally perceived qualities of otherness and extraordinariness, and perhaps even from the very abstractness that frees it from associations too narrow to be associated with religious goals and meanings."139

Ellingson goes on to suggest that such associations between musical content and religious content are sometimes quite evasive. The elusiveness is lessened, however, when the forms of music and religion are properly combined with the functional applications of ritual. In this way, a music that effectively symbolizes a religious object is able to be produced. This synthesis occurs, according to Ellingson, “when the form of a religious experience, action, image or statement stimulated the creation of a corresponding musical form appropriate to and effective in the context of the musical system of its particular culture or religious tradition.”140 “When religious and musical forms and purposes thus coincide,” he explains further, “we have a kind of congruence that allows religious meaning to

136 SC, 112.
137 Ellingson, 168.
138 Ellingson, 168.
139 Ellingson, 168.
140 Ellingson, 168.
pervade every aspect of music..." 141 It should only be added that the potential for religious meaning to pervade every element of life is also greatly increased. Herein lies the key of the relationship between theology and aesthetics.

The close connection between speaking and chanting further demonstrates the critical link between music and worship. According to Söhngen, "the collective primal fears and primal raptures of the creature [when confronting God in worship] ... cannot be articulated in the words of secular colloquial speech; only the elevated language of tones is fitted for speaking with God." 142 Two basic reasons can be offered for the usefulness and appropriateness of music for communication with the divine. The first reason assists the establishment of the second.

The fundamental reason music is believed to be capable of communicating with the divine in many cultures is due to its source. According to Ellingson, "The idea that music originally belonged to "other" places, times, persons, or beings is found in many myths." 143 Whether music is thought to originate in a divine power or through the efforts and discoveries of humans, music is primarily viewed as something outside the normative sphere of human operations. There may be, in other words, a close relation to music and religion because of their common origin. 144 Music stems from the realm of auricularia (audible things) just as the Gospel does. 145 The second reason that music is able to aid creatures in their communication with the divine is related to words. As suggested above, a central characteristic of music is its ability to enhance. When joined with speech, music elevates words to a level of communication worthy of

141 Ellingson, 168-169.
142 Söhngen, 8.
143 Ellingson, 167.
144 Ellingson, 167.
divine ears. As a divine language, music constructs the cosmological view of those who use it.

The very act of adding pitch and rhythm to words in a manner atypical of the language being used, gives the words a special character. There is also, however, a case to be made for the expressive and constitutive power of music apart from words. A basic understanding of the three primary ways in which words and pitch can be joined will demonstrate this ancient abstract concept. Each of the three ways have an increasing effect on the communicative expression of the words and thus an increasing sense of transcendence. Syllabic music is *logocentric*. With this type of music, there is only one note per syllable. The addition of music to words in this minimal manner has as its primary concern the transmission of the text without any significant interpretation. At its most fundamental level, pitch is used for purely functional purposes—to help carry the sound. Sounds which are sung carry better and further than those spoken. The recitation of text in a rectotono method is the most severe case of such treatment. Music which uses one *neume* per syllable is referred to as neumatic. A *neume* is composed of two to five pitches written together. While the text is still able to be clearly understood with this restrained type of melodic embellishment, some degree of "word painting" is sometimes evident. With melismatic music, the text is sometimes obscured. A *melisma* (Gr., song) treats syllables of words as highly ornamented phrases of multiple notes. Here, the melody is concerned more with conveying the passion or emotion of the text than the simple denotative meaning.¹⁴⁶ The most extreme example of this emotive treatment of text is

the *jubilus*.147

In the rather ecstatic singing of the *jubilus*, vowel sounds are used to convey what words cannot. Commenting on Psalm 32, Augustine suggests that in the *jubilus*, God has given us the preferred method of singing. “Sing a jubilation,” declares the Bishop at the bequest of God. Augustine then goes on to explain what it means to sing a jubilation.

It is the realization that words cannot express the inner music of the heart. For those who sing ..., when they are overcome with joy at the words of the song, being filled with such exultation, the words fail to express their emotion, so, leaving the syllables of the words, they drop into vowel sounds—the vowel sounds signifying that the heart is yearning to express what the tongue cannot utter.148

---

147 It is interesting to note that Gertrude of Helfta (1256-1302) titles Chapter 6 of her *Exercites* “Jubilare.” In this spiritual treatise, the designation refers to “the high point of an ineffable mystical experience and of ecstasy” or simply “joyful praise” [Gertrude Jaron Lewis, “The Mystical *Jubilus*: An Example from Gertrude of Helfta (1256-1302), *Vox Benedictina*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1984), 245].

There are prevalent examples of nonsense syllables replacing actual words completely. Sometimes, as in the case of Christian Gnosticism, the “nonsense” syllable is meant to convey a divine secret. It is a basic premise in Gnostic thought that the most effective and fitting entry-way to enter the circle of salvation, even to participate in the Godhead, is through song. Hymn singing therefore becomes the most appropriate and important vocation of the worshipper [Forrester F. Church and Terrence J. Mulry, eds. *The Macmillan Book of Earliest Christian Hymns* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988), 32]. One means to achieving salvific self-knowledge through song for the Gnostics was by calling on the sacred hidden name. Knowing the proper names of the various powers is what is important. The ecstatic is stressed, so speaking in tongues or the chanting of nonsense vowels served as the name calling chant for the revelatory knowledge. The “Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth” presents this approach to salvation (Church and Mulry, 123-124).


*In jubilatione cane: hoc est enim bene canere Deo, in jubilatione cantare. Quid est in jubilatione canere? Intelligere, verbis explicare non posse quod cantitur corde. Etenim illi qui cantant, sive in messe, sive in vinea, sive in alioque opere ferventi, cum coeperint in verbis canticorum exsultare laetitia, veluti impleti tanta laetitia, ut eam verbis explicare non possint, avertunt se a syllabis verborum, et eunt in sonum jubilationis.*

Sing in jubilation: It is truly good to sing to God, to sing in jubilation. What is it to sing in jubilation? It is to realize that words are not able to express what the heart sings. They who indeed sing in this way, whether in the harvest field, in the vineyard, or at some other fervent work, they begin to exult with delight in words of a song, having been filled with such joy, the words no longer suffice, they leave the syllables of the words and they make a joyful noise.
Augustine explains jubilation again in his commentary on Psalm 99. "A [person] who sings a 'jubilation' does not use words because 'a jubilation' is the expression of joy without words. . . . [The person] singing the joy [from their] own heart bursts forth into sounds when normal means of utterance fail to express [their] meaning."149 "No doubt," Chambers comments, "Jerome has this same interpretation of the word in his mind when he used "jubilare" in his translation of the Psalter."150 In fact, writing on Psalm 32, Jerome refers to the "jubilus" in much the same way as Augustine. "That is called jubilus which neither in words, nor syllables, nor letters, nor speech, can utter or define how much [one] ought to praise God."151

As "a necessary [and] integral part of the solemn liturgy"152 and a liturgical symbol of "preeminent importance,"153 music permits humanity to participate in the life of the divine Creator in a unique way. Through the medium of music, humans are able to appropriate a primary characteristic of God. Music aids the community in the experience of living the not-yet already. The primary means by which music initiates the eschaton is simply by being beautiful. As the repeti-

---

149 Chambers, 4. Similar explanations of jubilation are given by Augustine in commentaries on Psalms 97, 46 and 44 (cf. Chambers 4-5). Augustine: Ps 99 (PL 437, 1272)

Qui jubilat, non verba dicit, sed sonus quidam est aetitiae sine verbis: vox est enim animi diffusi laetitiae, quantum potest, exprimentis affectum, non sensum comprehendentis. Gaudens homo in exultatione sua, ex verbis quibusdam quae non possunt dici et intelligi, erumpit in vocem quandam exultationis sine verbis: ita ut apparent eum ipsa voce gaudere quidem, sed quasi repletum nimio gaudio, non posse verbis explicare quod gaudet.

One who jubilates sings [says] no words, but a certain sound of joy without words: the voice is the joy of the spirit having been poured out, as much as it is able, experiencing the effect but not comprehending the meaning. Rejoicing in this exultation from words which are not able to be spoken or understood, the person erupts in an exultant voice without words; in this way, the person seems to celebrate something with his voice, but having been filled with extreme joy, he cannot explain in words what he rejoices in.

150 Chambers, 8.

151 Chambers, 8. Jerome: Ps 32 (PL 426, 970)

Jubilus dicitur, quod nec verbis, nec syllabis, et nec litteris, nec voce potest erumpere, aut comprehendere quantum homo Deum debet laudare.

That is called jubilus which neither in words, nor syllables, nor letters, nor even speech can utter or embrace how much a person ought to praise God.

152 SC, 112.

153 MCW, 23.
tive motif of this paper has maintained: When something beautiful is created, Beauty is revealed and praised.

Unity in Music

No matter how simple or ornate a melody, what its intervallic and rhythmic composition is or what mode it is in, one thing is necessary if the symbolic significance of beauty associated with the proper praise of God is to be realized: 

 *una voce dicentes*\textsuperscript{154} While the literal understanding of *una voce dicentes* that has sometimes been taken by theologians and artists of by-gone-days as singing in unison does have great symbolic meaning and effectiveness, a more liberal interpretation is not without validity. To sing in one voice does not necessarily denote unison singing. To be in unison, does not mean all must be the same. According to Walter Taylor, unity is “the totality of that which is diverse and varied. It is a oneness which does not obliterate what is distinctive about its members. ‘Unity does not mean uniformity, but solidarity...’”\textsuperscript{155}

The first, more restrictive conception of *una voce dicentes*, has a long and strong history. According to early Christian thought, singing in unison had both an immanent and an eschatological function as well as an aesthetical effect for God. Clement of Alexandria presents the concept of singing in unison as the greatest musical expression of the union of souls and of community as *koinonia*. “We want to strive,” Clement writes,

\textsuperscript{154} “Saying [Singing] in one voice.” The literal translation of the Latin *dicentes* from the infinitive *dicere* is indeed “saying” and not “singing.” The greater importance of precise translation will explained later in this work.

so that we, the many, may be brought together into one love, according to the union of the essential unity. As we do good may we similarly pursue unity . . . . The union of many, which the divine harmony has called forth out of melody of sounds and division, becomes one symphony, following the one leader of the choir and teacher, the Word, resting in that truth and crying out: "Abba, Father."  

Basil of Caesarea comments on the effects of unison singing in practical terms. "Who can consider as an enemy one with [whom they have] sung God's praises with one voice? Hence singing psalms imparts the highest good, love, for it uses communal singing . . . as a bond of unity, and it harmoniously draws people to the symphony of one choir." 

The earthly goal presented by Clement of Alexandria and Basil of Caesarea is posed as an angelic act in the early Prefaces of the Mass which speak of the angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim singing in one voice: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." Clement of Rome reinforces this notion of the earthly and heavenly realms uniting their forces in praise of God when he comments on the vision recounted by Isaiah at the time of his calling. "Seraphs were in attendance above [God]; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" 

Clement of Rome is of the opinion that "We too, assembled with one accord, should earnestly cry out without ceasing to [God] as with one voice." 

The aesthetical effect for God of "singing in one voice," is proposed by Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius comments that nothing is more sweetly pleasing to God than if "the symphony of the people of God, by which, in every church of

157 Quatsen, 70.
158 Quatsen, 68; cf Rev 4:8.
159 Is 6:2-3.
160 Quatsen, 68.
God, with kindred spirit and single disposition, with one mind and unanimity of faith and piety, we raise melody in unison in our psalmody.”161 In his Apology to the Emperor Constantius, Athanasius puts this concept in a scriptural context. Just as the Savior promised that “when two people unite their voices everything that they request will be granted,” Athanasius speculates, “so it is also when, out of a multitude who have come together, a single voice is heard crying out “Amen” to God.”162 In short, it is the unification of people that pleases God. This is the fulfillment of the mission of Christ, that all may be one and the Father and Son are one.163 It is the unification of all in the person of Jesus Christ that is our salvation. We must, therefore, live so that together with one voice we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.164 For living now in this way, we will attain a share in the great and glorious promise of salvation.165 It is to this end that Ambrose employs an instrumental metaphor. The Bishop of Milan comments that the effect of monophony on the singers themselves is “a pledge of peace and concord, like a cithara putting forth one song from different and equal voices.”166 Quatsen concludes from the historical documents pointing to the great significance of unison voices in the early Church that in “the liturgy, which aimed at making a unity out of the many who participate [in both heaven

162 Quatsen, 69-70.
163 cf In 17:20-23.
164 cf Rm 15:5-6.
165 Clement of Rome, I Cor. 34:5-7; cf McKinnon, 18.
166 Quatsen, 70. Ambrose, in Psalmum I Enarratio (PL 14, 924): Laudate, inquit, quoniam bonus est psalmus: Deo nostro sit jucunda, decoraque laudatio (Ps 146:1). Et vere: psalmus enim benedictio populi est, Dei laus, plebis laudatio, plausus omnium, sermo universorum, vox Ecclesiae, fidei cano a confessio, auctoritatis plena devotio, libertatis laetitia, clamor jucunditatis, laetitia resultatio. Ab iracundia mitigat, a sollicitudine abdicat, a moerore allevat. Nocturna arma, diurna magisteria; scutum in timore, festum in sanctitate, imago tranquillitatis, pignus pacis at que concordiae, citharae modo ex diversis et disparibus vocibus unam exprimens cantilenam. Diei ortus psalmum resultat, psalmum resonat occasus.

NB: The English translation follows on the next page.
and on earth], there was room for nothing else than monophonic singing..."167

The promotion of unison singing as the appropriate type of music for the church is not just an archaic notion. The famed twentieth century martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, also rallies the cause. In his ever so gentle yet provoking manner, Bonhoeffer writes: “God has prepared for Himself one great song of praise throughout eternity, and those who enter the community of God join in this song.”168 “The purity of unison singing, unaffected by alien motives of musical techniques,” he goes on to suggest, is the manner in which the God’s song is to be sung since “this way of singing is the essence of all congregational singing.”169 “It is the voice of the Church that is heard in singing together. It is not you that sings, it is the Church that is singing, and you, as a member of the Church may share in its song.”170

While Bonhoeffer and his predecessors want to illustrate the church as unison singers, Paul’s explanations of the church as the body of Christ can be effectively utilized in the case for polyphonic music. According to Pauline thought, in the activity and realization of the unity of the body of Christ, “the many” become “the one.” “The more included in ‘the many,’ the more dramatic becomes the realization of ‘the one.’”171 It is, accordingly, quite appropriate for polyphonic music to serve the purpose of uniting many in the creation of beauty.

Praise, it is said, because it is good: To our God be pleasurable and beautiful praise (Ps 146:1). And truly; the psalm is indeed a blessing for the people, praise of God, praise of the assembly, the applause of all, the word of the universe, the voice of the Church, the harmonious confession of the faithful, the full devotion of authority, the joy of freedom, the shout of delight, the result of beauty. It mitigates anger, abdicates anxiety and alleviates sadness. The night weapon, the daily teaching, the sword in fear, the feast in holiness, the image of tranquility, the place of peace and concord, like a cithera putting forth one song from different and equal voices. The rising day results in song, the song resounds in the west.

167 Quatsen, 70-71.
169 Bonhoeffer, 59-60.
170 Bonhoeffer, 61.
171 Vincent Branick, The House Church in the Writings of Paul (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 100.
This can only be true, however, if Paul’s appeal to the people of Corinth is heed­ed. “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” 172 The means to achieving this ideal is by learning to use the gifts of the Spirit for building up the body of Christ and not for self-aggrandizment. The spiritually mature are not merely of the same mind, however. This too would be nothing more than agreement with the present age of the world. The “same mind” that the church at Corinth is to have is to be formed by the one to whom they have been joined, Jesus Christ.173 Perhaps the key means of achieving “same mindedness” in Christ for Paul is by being for the other. In short, ekstasis is the means to koinonia.

By giving of oneself, a community of unity can be established. At the outset of the great christological hymn of Philippians Paul states: “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.”174 Paul plainly states the purpose of this expression of self-giving in the letter to the Romans. “Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor.”175 “[B]e of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.”176 This is the plea of Paul for the sake of unity. “God is a God not of disorder but of peace.”177 Peace is, for Paul, the product of order in unity which comes only out of love.

172 1Cor 1:10.
173 1Cor 2:16.
174 Phil 2:4.
175 Rm 15:2.
176 Phil 2:2-3.
177 1Cor 14:33.
It is the intent of Benedictine monasticism to be the very symbol which Paul posits as the task for the church. The charism of the religious life is living the gift of the Father, which is the Son, in the Holy Spirit. That is, to be church. Church is, according to Cyprian, nothing less than “a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”\(^{178}\) The charism of the religious is incarnating the ecclesial community of the Trinity which is the \textit{ekstatic perichoretic koinonia} known as Beauty.

\section*{A Prophetic Image of Beauty}

The vocation of all Christians is the realization of the communal life of the Trinity. All Christians have the same call to holiness; to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect.\(^{179}\) In the terms of this project, all have the call to be an \textit{ekstatic perichoretic koinonia}—that is, to image Beauty. Yet, from the very beginning, the Church has recognized that some have particular gifts to contribute to the building up of the body of Christ. Those called to the consecrated life offer one such particular gift to the church. As \textit{Lumen Gentium} has been concisely restated:

\begin{quote}
The consecrated life is a gift which the Father has given to the church by means of the Spirit so that, in faithfulness to the Gospel, the most characteristic traits of the life of his Son Jesus . . . and the unfathomable riches of his mystery might be present in the world and might draw everyone toward the kingdom of God.\(^{180}\)
\end{quote}

Again, though God has “willed to make [all people] holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness,”\(^{181}\) there

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \(^{178}\) CCC, 810.
\item \(^{179}\) Mt 5:48 and Lk 6:36 which reads merciful. cf \textit{LG}, 32; 39.
\item \(^{181}\) \textit{LG}, 9.
\end{itemize}

are those people with the charism of accepting the call and inviting others to this task with particular emphasis. The Second Vatican Council reminded the Church of this when it stated: “All members of the Church should unflaggingly fulfill the duties of their Christian calling” while “[t]he profession of the evangelical counsels shines before them as a sign. . . .”\textsuperscript{182} In brief, the consecrated life is “a prophetic witness to the primacy of God”\textsuperscript{183} “exercising a critical symbolic and transforming role within society and interpreting the transcendent hopes of humanity”\textsuperscript{184} “among the people as a sign of ecclesial communion and Christian fraternity.”\textsuperscript{185} Above all, then, the consecrated life is called to be a prophetic image of Beauty.

One form of the consecrated life which has traditionally been regarded with particular esteem in contributing to the mission of the Church is monasticism. In the West, this form of communal life has predominantly been in accord with the teaching of Saint Benedict (c. 480-547). In his “little rule for beginners,”\textsuperscript{186} as he calls his guide to living the cenobitic life, Benedict outlines a course of action which he promises will be of eternal profit. The means to achieving this great reward, lies in being now what is hoped for eternity. The vocation of the Benedictine can be interpreted, then, as a call to the ekstatic perichoretic koinonia known as Beauty. Though typically known for a strict interpretation of \textit{una voca dicentes} through the use of chant, the polyphonic interpretation also plays a substantial role in the life of Benedictine communities. However, in order to know how music functions symbolically for Benedictines, a minimal understanding of the charism must first be outlined. From there, an interpretation of the type and place of music in the monastic life can be forwarded.

\textsuperscript{182} \textit{LG}, 44.
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{RB}, 73:8.
The Benedictine Vocation

Even though Benedict never makes any mention of the concept of beauty in his guide to living the Gospel, a consideration of two literary mentor's words prove enlightening. In considering what material should be read to the monks, Benedict suggests, along with Sacred Scripture and the writings of the holy fathers of the church, only one person by name—Basil. All of these works merit reading and attentive listening to because they "resoundingly summon us along the true way to reach [our] Creator." The goal to which the monk is propelled by an essential zeal for love, according to Basil, is eternal life with Divine Beauty.

Of this, no external proof is required, since anyone can discover it [of and within themself]. We are by nature desirous of the beautiful, even though individual conceptions of the beautiful differ widely. . . . Now, what is more admirable [desirable] than Divine Beauty? What reflection is sweeter than the thought of the magnificence of God? . . . . Totally ineffable and indescribable are the lightning flashes of Divine Beauty. Words do not adequately convey nor is the ear capable of receiving [knowledge of them].

This Beauty, invisible to the eyes of flesh, is apprehended by the mind and soul alone. . . . Indeed, by reason of their insatiable eagerness to enjoy the vision of Divine Beauty, [the saints] prayed that contemplation of the joy of the Lord would last as long as the whole of eternal life. [People] are by nature, then, desirous of the beautiful.

A second literary source for Benedict is known today simply as the Master. It is the Master's Rule on which Benedict is largely dependent for the construction of his Rule. Entire sections of the Rule of the Master are directly transported into the Rule of Benedict. The editing and adding of material from other sources which Benedict does, however, creates a significant difference in the two documents. In

---

187 RB 73:5.
188 RB 73:4. "... ad creatorem nostrum."
190 Basil, LR Q2 (Wagner, 235).
short, and at risk of over simplification, Benedict hopes to achieve now what the Master only expects in heaven. Benedict operates from a realized eschatology, while the Master reserves the joys of heaven for the eschaton. It is fruitful, then, to consider the Master's futuristic vision of life eternal with Benedict's command to do now what will be of profit forever.

The Master paints overtly enticing images of heaven. Benedict excludes each of these texts without exception. A prime example of the Master's eschatological vision is in his tenth chapter. There, he describes in euphoric language the rapture of everlasting joy that comes with eternal life. The soul which enters into the reward of eternal life promised by the Lord, explains the Master, will experience "absolutely nothing that is ugly." In heaven, there is nothing but beauty. The Master goes on to describe heaven as the place where: "The eyes, always open, feast upon the loveliness and all the grandeur, and the ears hear nothing at all that would disturb the mind. Rather, instruments are always playing there to accompany hymns sung by angels and archangels to the praise of the king." "This," the Master concludes, "is the heavenly homeland of the saints."

Without stating as much, Benedict is clearly in agreement with both Basil and the Master. Beauty is the monastic objective. On the one hand, Benedict's omission of key images from Basil and the Master could indicate a disagreement with the literary mentors. On the other hand, these omissions could simply point to Benedict's careful editing. Benedict includes in his Rule that, and only

---

191 RM 10:103.
192 RM 10:104. Pulchritudo in amoenitate nemorum . . . “In that pleasent place there is nothing that is not beautiful.”
193 RM 10:104-106. . . . splendor in aere incundo, et formositatem atque omnem elegantiam sine intermissione patentes oculi permeantur et nihil omnino quod conturbet mentem auribus datur. Sonant enim ibidem fugiter organa hymnorum, quae ad laudem regis ab angelis et ab archangelis decantantur.
194 RM 10:118-120. Haec est sanctorum caelestis patria. “This is the heavenly homeland of the saints.”
that, which is necessary. Fanciful speculation and poetic descriptions are allotted precious little space in the Rule of Benedict. Benedict’s Rule is directed much more toward brevity and open-endness.

Benedict seeks to create the environment here on earth in which he and his fellow monks hope to find themselves for eternity. The beauty of the Lord which envelops the heavenly tent must also pervade the replica in the earthly dwelling of the monastery. Benedict envisions no other way to approach this task than through unending conversion in an earthly rendition of the heavenly tent. In this way, “The monastery is the prophetic place where creation becomes praise of God and the precept of concretely lived charity becomes the ideal of human coexistence . . . becoming a reference point for all people . . .”\(^{195}\) as the beauty of God and Christian living.

An example of how Benedictines have, either consciously or not, sought to introduce the beauty of the Lord here on earth over the centuries is through the everydayness of the communal life and in the liturgical life of singing the opus dei. The monk, as Terrence Kardong puts it, is an eschatological witness and the monastic liturgy anticipates heaven.\(^{196}\) The example Benedict makes of the artisans of the monastery\(^{197}\) will serve to illustrate the monastic vocation as doxological.\(^{198}\) Given the relation between doxology and revelation discussed earlier in this work, the monk’s doxological life is also clearly a revelation of Beauty.

---

\(^{195}\) OL, §9, p. 6. Italics added.


\(^{197}\) RB 57.

\(^{198}\) cf “Revelation and Doxology,” 8-15 here.
The Monk as Artisan of Praise

In the "Prologue" to his Rule for Monasteries, Benedict ponders the question posed by the psalmist: Who will dwell in the tent of the Lord? He then responds with the psalmist: Those who "praise the Lord working in them, and say with the Prophet: 'Not to us, Lord, not to us give the glory, but to your name alone.'" In addition to every act of the monk being performed according to the well known (if not well practiced) monastic virtues of humility and obedience, it is critical that every act is directed toward giving praise and glory to God. The perfect end the monk seeks through prayer at the start of every "good work," is, in effect, a foreshadowing of the work to be handed over to the Lord at the end of the monk's life. The monastic task, then, is to craft and be crafted into the perfect instrument of praise.

The monastic life as a "work of art" performed by the monk-artist is evident in Benedict's Chapter 57, "The Artisans of the Monastery." As with other positions singled out by Benedict, what is said of the artisans of the monastery can aptly be applied to all in the community. The artisans of the monastery, Benedict explains, "are to practice their craft with all humility, but only with the abbot's permission." In this single verse Benedict stipulates that the monk is to do three things: (1) practice their craft in (2) humility and with (3) permission. Benedict expects the same from all of the monks whatever their "craft." When considering the observance of Lent, for example, Benedict writes:

199 Ps 15:1.
200 RB Pro:23, 30; cf Ps 15:1; 115:1.
201 RB Pro:4.
202 RB 4:75-76.
203 For example: the Abbot (cf RB 2; 64); the Prior (RB 65); the Porter (RB 66); and the Cellarer (RB 31).
204 RB 57:1.
Everyone should ... make known to the abbot what he intends to do, since it ought to be done with his prayer and approval. Whatever is undertaken without the permission of the spiritual father will be reckoned a presumption and vainglory, not deserving a reward. Therefore, everything must be done with the abbot's approval.205

After iterating the Gospel principle of humility ("Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted")206, Benedict goes on to illustrate the "steps of humility." The same three elements of act, humility and permission weigh heavily in the ascent of the ladder. The "eighth step" summarizes this perspective succinctly: "The eighth step of humility is that a monk does only what is endorsed by the common rule of the monastery and the example set by his superiors."207 The monk, Benedict concludes, is to act according to this tripartite principle so that God may be glorified in all things208 and the monk may gain the eternal reward of dwelling in the tent of everlasting life.209

The praise orientation of the monastic endeavor is dominant in Chapter 16 of the Rule of Benedict. There, Benedict gives his rational for the number of prayer times. Formulated from the admission made in verse 164 of Psalm 119 ("Seven times a day I have praised you") and an already standard monastic practice,210 Benedict explains that the monk should also follow this mandate. He goes on to annotate the decree: it is right that we should praise our Creator.211 The obligation to praise the name of the Lord from the rising of the sun to its setting.212

---

205 RB 49:8-10.
207 RB 7:55.
208 RB 57:9; cf 1Pt 4:11.
209 RB Pro:22, 17; 72:11.
210 cf RM 34.
211 RB 16:5.
212 Ps 113:1-3; cf RM 34:7.
—not to mention in the middle of the night\textsuperscript{213}—is reinforced with specific directives of the "liturgical code."\textsuperscript{214}

Prior to considering these three points of praise in the communal prayer of Benedictine monasticism, however, the very manner in which the monks initiate their prayer cannot go without mention. The psalm verses which Benedict employs to begin communal prayer set the doxological tone of the entire monastic life. At the opening of Vigils the monks pray: "Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will proclaim your praise."\textsuperscript{215} To commence the other hours, the monks plead for assistance in praising the very one they are about to praise. "God, come to my assistance, Lord make haste to help me."\textsuperscript{216} In both instances, the tenor of the monastic endeavor is clear: the monk is centered on praising the God without whom nothing can be accomplished.

The long and venerable tradition of ending psalms with the doxology deserves first mention in this discussion. The earliest known reference to the Trinitarian homage comes from Basil in the fourth century.\textsuperscript{217} A difference in the monastic observance between East and West made known via Cassian, however, is more relevant here. In Book II of the \textit{Institutes}, the good and faithful correspondent of early monastic practices reports:

That practice ... which we have observed in this country—\textit{viz.}, that while one sings to the end of the Psalm, all standing up sing together in a loud voice, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost"—we have never heard anywhere throughout the East, but there, while all keep silence when the Psalm is finished, the prayer that follows is offered up by the singer. But with this hymn in honour of the Trinity only the whole Psalmody is usually ended. . . .\textsuperscript{218}

\textsuperscript{213} Ps 119:62.
\textsuperscript{214} RB 8-20.
\textsuperscript{215} RB 9:1; cf Ps 51:17.
\textsuperscript{216} RB 18:1; cf Ps 70:2.
\textsuperscript{217} In an effort to clarify the Trinitarian theology of the times, Basil wrote \textit{De Spiritu Sancto}. The arguments made in this text are largely based on how the doxology had been formulated in the tradition.
\textsuperscript{218} Cassian, \textit{Institutes}, II:8.
Not atypical of the RB liturgical code, Benedict incorporates the doxological methods of the East and the West. The *gloria* always appears to be called for at the close of a single psalm.\(^{219}\) In other situations, a larger block of prayer is indicated before reciting the hymn.\(^{220}\) Benedict seems conscious of the fact that other practices are in use. In an effort to alleviate confusion when dividing the lengthy “Canticle from Deuteronomy,” therefore, he explains that the *gloria* is added to each section.\(^{221}\) With these directions, Benedict demonstrates a marked concern for theocentric praise not evident in Cassian. Though Benedict never cites Psalm 22:4 in the *Rule*, his concept of monastic communal prayer does suggest an awareness that God's throne is built on praise, the rock of our salvation. What was the life of Christ—the rock of our salvation—if not a continuous act of praise to the Father?

In commenting on the use of the *gloria* in the liturgical code of the *RB*, Kardong makes two points. First, Kardong suggests that “[t]he doxology to the Trinity was especially popular with the Orthodox party at the time of the Arian controversy, for it hymns the full divinity of Christ.”\(^{222}\) Kardong then goes on to note that Benedict's use of the doxological prayer “christianizes the Old Testament psalms.”\(^{223}\) The ultimate function of the hymn, however, can be nothing other than unequivocal praise of the God who is Three in One.

Chapter 3 of the *Rule of the Master*, “The Holy Art that the Abbot Must Teach his Disciples,” closes with one of the Master's typical eschatological word paintings.

\(^{219}\) *cf* RB 13:3—psalms are said according to custom. 9:2—“... the following order is observed: Psalm 3 with 'Glory be to the Father'...” 17:2—“Three psalms are said at Prime, each followed by 'Glory be to the Father.'

\(^{220}\) *cf* RB 9:6—“After each reading a responsory is sung, 'Glory be to the Father' is not sung after the first two responsories, but only after the third reading.”

\(^{221}\) RB 13:9.


\(^{223}\) Kardong, 173.
In this land of splendor which our faithful Lord has promised us, there are musical instruments constantly playing hymns which are sung to the praise of the King by the holy angels and archangels raising their voices in unison. The walls, gates, streets and squares [of the heavenly Jerusalem] resonate with the sweet singing of music, forever crying out “alleluia,” the canticle of joy.224

The Master’s promise is that upon practicing the holy art of the monastic life continuously day and night on the day of judgment, God will allow the monk to join in the heavenly jubilus.225 Benedict’s modest agreement with the Master omits the glorious musical imagery but arrives at the same magnificent conclusion.226 “When we have used [the instruments of the spiritual arts] without ceasing day and night ... our wages will be the reward the Lord has promised: What the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, God has prepared for those who love him.”227

The conclusion is clear. Those who desire true and eternal life228 and wish to dwell in the heavenly tent of the Lord’s kingdom,229 must run now and do what will be of profit forever;230 Praise the Lord in loving kindness for he is good.

Proper praise of the God who is living and active in all aspects of life cannot, however, be limited to particular times and places. The praise of God must be forever on our lips regardless of circumstance. For this reason, one of the few things Benedict insists upon is what in popular parlance of today would be called “good stewardship.”

---

224 RM 3:78-93. *In cuius terrae fulgere (v 86) quam nobis fidelis Dominus repromittit (v 82) Sonant ... organa hynmorum, que ad laudem regis ab angelis psallentibus simul sanctis et archangelis decantantur (v 90). Cuius muri uel portae, plateae uel uicus, canore nocis suauis modulamine laetitiae canticum in perpetuo conclamant alleluia (v 93).
225 RM 3:78-83.
226 Kardong suggests that Benedict omits text either because the original source is likely the apocryphal *Visio Pauli* 21-22 or that he is deliberately making a shift in eschatology from the Master (Kardong, 98; 101).
227 RB 4[75]76-77. cf 1Cor 2:9. RB 1980 translates *instrumenta artis spiritualis* as “the tools of the spiritual craft.” I have opted for a more literal rendition for the sake of emphasizing the parallels with the Master.
228 RB Pro:17.
229 RB Pro:22.
230 RB Pro:44.
Benedict states that all people should be treated as Christ and all things as vessels of the altar. Within the context of the whole Rule, verses 10-11 of Chapter 31 can legitimately be read as: Let all people, utensils and goods of the monastery be regarded as Christ himself and sacred vessels of the altar. Beware that no thing or no one is neglected.231 The focus of Benedictine monasticism is fundamentally Christological. The development of this characteristic attitude, however, can not occur without the trademark of monasticism, conversatio morum. Further, in accordance with the premise of this work, the Benedictine life is dependent upon uniting ora et labora (prayer and work). That is, following the principle of lex orandi lex credendi and the concept of exitus-reditus, the life prayed will be the life lived, and the life lived will be the life prayed. Prayer and work are joined as one while both are maintained individually.

Liturgical Music and Benedictine Monasticism

If the interdependent relationship of lex orandi lex credendi in the Christian endeavor and that of exitus-reditus between the Creator and the created is to exist with benefit, there must be a symbolic point of reference. The value of music as symbol will serve to demonstrate how the beautiful is both expressive of God and constitutive of life in God for Benedictine monasticism.

One could easily make a case for the monastic use of either polyphonic or unison music based on inferences drawn from the Rule of Benedict. The types of music Benedict does make explicit reference to, however, were in common practice meant for unison performance (i.e. Ambrosian hymn, antiphon, response, versicle, litany).232 From among these musical forms, Benedict dictates a particular preference for the Ambrosian hymn. It is not without warrant, therefore,

---

231 RB 31:10-11; 36:1; 53:1, 7, 15.
232 It should be noted for the sake of historical accuracy, that polyphonic singing was very much in its infancy during this early stage of Western art music.
that speculation is made into the characteristics of that form in determining what sort of life Benedict desired for his monks. Attention will next be given to the general concept of chanting. A third section will note and interpret the discriminating attention Benedict pays to the use of “alleluia.” Finally, the shift made by Benedict in terms of monastic spirituality as it relates to liturgical music will be sketched.

From the Greek *hymnos*, meaning a song in praise of gods or heroes and *hyphainein*, meaning to weave or combine words artfully, the word “hymn” denotes a song in praise of God. Benedict calls for the use of hymns at all the liturgical hours, both day and night. Other than Benedict’s work, no Roman source earlier than the twelfth century mentions hymnody as a regular feature of the Liturgy of the Hours. It has been speculated that Benedict acquired this custom of hymning from Lérins or Milan. Milan is quite likely since in four

---


235 French, *Harvard*, 385; Anderson, *Grove*, 836. This definition is also consistent with that of Augustine. The Bishop of Hippo stipulates the presence of three essential elements in a hymn: song, praise and God. In this way, the Bishop distinguishes hymns from psalms or spiritual songs as done by Paul in Ephesians 5:19 (“sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”) and Colossians 3:16 (“with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God”) [*Harvard*, 385]. Messenger warns in a work on early Christian hymns, however, that one must, “... abandon at once [the] contemporary connotation of the word “hymn” which is derived ultimately from the hymns of Ambrose . . .” [Ruth Ellis Messenger, *Christian Hymns of the First Three Centuries*. (Springfield, OH: The Hymn Society of America, 1942), 4]. Furthermore, she contends, “Not only should the word hymn be conceived in terms of ancient thought, but also the futile attempt to differentiate among psalms, hymns and canticles should be avoid-ed” [Messenger, 4].

Gail Ramshaw points out in her book, *Words that Sing*:

Some scholars find it helpful to distinguish among various types of communal song. Perhaps inspired by the comment in Ephesians about “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” this categorizing usually defines hymns as metrical and imaginative congregational song. According to this strict definition, hymns are not ballads, folk songs, spirituals or mantras, nor are they canticles or versified psalms [Gail Ramshaw, *Words that Sing* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992), 2].

places Benedict explicitly calls for an Ambrosian hymn *(Ambrosianum)*. The qualities which contributed to the success of the Ambrosian hymns, and thus likely appealing to Benedict, include: written for congregational participation; in simple meter of a symmetrical form; syllabic and in unison. "The result," according to Hugo Leichtentritt, "was a plain easily remembered tune, quite similar to the popular tunes of later antiquity." The significance of this result, as pertains to the purposes of this paper, is the *ekstatic perichoretic koinonia* character the music both reveals and effects. By singing Ambrosian hymns, a person is naturally engaged with others in communion. Beauty is both revealed and praised as the art of Benedictine monasticism is simultaneously formed and expressed.

A second musical technique utilized by Benedict in the conversion process is chanting. A combination from the Latin words *cantare* ("to sing," or "to

---

237 RB 9:4, 12:4, 13:11, 17:8. At the other times, either an "appropriate hymn" is called for (cf 17:5 and 18:1) or a specific hymn is mandated (cf 11:8, 10 which call for the *Te Deum* and the *Te decet laus* respectively).

238 Though more than a dozen hymns have been attributed to Ambrose, only four are accepted as authentic: *Aeterna rerum Conditer* ("Framer of the Earth and Sky"); *Deus Creator omnium* ("Maker of All Things God Most High"); *Iam surgit hora tertia* ("Now Appears the Third Hour"); and *Veni Redemptor gentium* ("Come, Thou Saviour of Our Race"). A fifth hymn traditionally attributed to Ambrose is *Splendor paternae gloriae* ("0 Splendor of God's Glory Bright") [William J. Reynolds and Milburn Price, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Co., 1987), 7].


240 Hugo Leichtentritt, *Music, History, and Ideas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944), 31. "In short... the Ambrosian hymn became, a thousand years later, the model for the chorale of the Protestant Church" [Leichtentritt, 31].

241 It must be noted that the chant referred to here is not that which is so often associated with Benedictines in modern times. While this style of chant can trace it roots to that which Benedict knew, the stylized art which would incorrectly come to be attributed to Pope Gregory the Great (Bishop of Rome, 590-604) does not find full development until some centuries later. As a matter of historical fact, the only thing Gregory can be given credit for doing in connection with sacred music, is propagating the use of a particular style of Roman chant as a part of his reform efforts and missionary endeavors. The first witness to the Gregorian tradition is made by Leo IV (847-855). In the bull, *Una res* (c. 850), the Pope begs Honoratus, abbot of the monastery at Farfa, not to reject the Gregorian chant (*Carmen Gregorianum*) which you find "distasteful" yet which "all who join the praise of the eternal King and raise their resounding voices in the Latin language" make use [Robert F. Hayburn, *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music: 95 A. D. to 1977 A. D.* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 8].
intone”) and cantilalare (“to sing low,” or “to hum,” cantilate), definitions of “chant” apply to the recitation of writings sacred in nature and in a free style often even improvised.\(^2\) Chant is an unaccompanied unison music of free rhythm and limited pitch range; the result of which is a simple melodic style typically primarily concerned with conveying a text. A fitting synonym for the music would be “vocalization.”\(^3\) There are, of course, notable exceptions to each of the points offered as characteristics of chant. It is nonetheless reasonable to consider all such vocalizations, to whatever degree possible, as something different than song, hymn or any other more controlled formal structure of singing not to mention any type of polyphonic music.

In its most basic form, chant is but an intermediate stage between speaking and singing—a sort of elevated speech.\(^4\) This idea is present in the Rule of Benedict and evidenced through the vocabulary utilized in the document. In only six places in the Rule of Benedict are directions clearly stated that something is to be sung (cantentur) or chanted (decantandum).\(^5\) In other places, Benedict mentions the use of a hymn, canticle, response, refrain or versicle. None of these are specifically joined with instructions that they be sung.\(^6\) All mentions of the method of rendering the psalms are connected to the word “said” (dicatur). The exceptions to this are in Chapters 18 and 19: “Four psalms are sung each day at Vespers...”; “...let us stand and sing the psalms...”\(^7\)

\(^3\) cf: Ellingson, 166, 167.
\(^4\) Spector, 212.
\(^5\) RB 9:6 and 9:3 respectively.
\(^6\) The one exception to this is a reference to intoning the hymn in RB 11:10. This is present, however, only in the English translation. The Latin simply states: et subsequatur mox abbas hymnum. The English is rendered: “and immediately the abbot intones the hymn.”
\(^7\) RB 18:12 and 19:7 respectively. The Latin of RB 18:12 reads: Vespera autem cotidie quattuor psalmorum modulatione canatur. In a similar vein, the original of RB 19:7 reads: et sic stesmus ad psallendum ut mens nostra concordet voci nostrae.
With the direct translation offered by most English editions of the Rule, one could certainly be led to believe that the psalmody is to be recited. Taft suggests an answer to the question of language in the liturgical code of the Rule.

[In the RB], as in other sources, one can make no argument from the variety of verbs Benedict uses to describe the performance: “to sing” (cantare, canere, modulare: RB 9:5-6, 9; 11:2-3; 17; 18:12), “to psalm” (psallere: RB 17:6), or simply “to say” (dicere: RB 11:6; 18:15). This is clear from RB 11:3, where Benedict says that “the Gloria is said by the one singing (dicatur a cantante gloria). The same is true in liturgical Greek or Syriac, where such verbs as legein or emar, the equivalents of dicere, “to say,” just indicate vocalization indifferently, with no implication of “saying” as distinct from “chanting” or “singing.”

The beneficial elements of ecstatic singing (addressed previously in terms of the jubilus) are also present in Benedict’s Rule. The times for singing “Alleluia” suggest a unique function of the text for a particular purpose. There are two basic divisions of time which concern the structure of the opus Dei: the daily and the seasonal. Each of the two time periods have a corresponding use of the jubilant Alleluia. The macrochronology takes precedence. “From the holy feast of Easter until Pentecost,” Chapter 15 mandates, “‘Alleluia’ is always said with both the psalms and the responsories.” The chapter goes on to clarify, “with responsories except from Easter to Pentecost.” In the microchronology, the very same chapter stipulates: “Every night from Pentecost until the beginning of Lent, [‘alleluia’] is said only with the last six psalms of Vigils. Vigils, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext and None are

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item Taft, 139.
  \item RB 9; 11; 12; 15.
  \item RB 15:1.
  \item RB 15:4.
\end{itemize}
said with "alleluia" every Sunday except in Lent..."\(^\text{253}\)  

A more detailed analysis of the use of the "alleluia" in the \(\text{RB}\) will demonstrate the jubilant character of its use even further. For example, the "alleluia" is linked to the special canticles used for Sunday Vigils.\(^\text{254}\) The joining of the great penitential psalm (Ps 50/51) to an "alleluia" refrain every Sunday Lauds serves as another example.\(^\text{255}\) In the cursus of Vigils, however, Benedict utilizes the "alleluia" in a particularly interesting way. This final observation concerning Benedict's use of "alleluia" as an ecstatic response is poised in harmony with his use of the esteemed Trinitarian doxology. In the first nocturn (section) of the night office, the "Glory be" is sung only after the first psalm (Ps 3).\(^\text{256}\) In the second nocturn, the "Glory be" is sung only after the third reading.\(^\text{257}\) In the final nocturn, the "Glory be" is not sung at all. Instead, "the remaining six psalms are sung with an 'alleluia' refrain."\(^\text{258}\) Not even that response sung standing in honor and reverence for the Holy Trinity\(^\text{259}\) is suitable for the joy to be expressed at this point in the divine work. Neither is it sufficient to only sing the text once. The joy experienced summons repetition. All one can hope to do is "praise the Lord!"

\(^{253}\) \(\text{RB}\ 15:2-3.\) According to Kardong, the place of the "alleluia" was controverted during the sixth century. The practice of singing "alleluia" during Lent may have come to Benedict via the Greek Church, which had no qualms about singing it during penitential seasons; or from the Rule of the Master, which uses "alleluia" even more than Benedict [Kardong, \textit{Translation and Commentary}, 190]. The Master states in Chapter 28 of his rule: [NB: Continued on next page.]

It is forbidden to fast from Easter to Pentecost because Easter Saturday closes the fast of sadness and opens the alleluia of joy, whereas Pentecost Saturday closes the alleluia of and opens the fast. But alleluia is closed for the churches, but in the monastery the servants of God, devoted as they are to the divine service in a special way, sing the alleluia to the Lord in the manner set for the psalms until Epiphany [Luke Eberle, OSB, trans. \textit{The Rule of the Master (RM)} (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1977), 28:44-47].

\(^{254}\) \(\text{RB}\ 11:6.\)
\(^{255}\) \(\text{RB}\ 12:2.\)
\(^{256}\) \(\text{RB}\ 9:2.\)
\(^{257}\) \(\text{RB}\ 9:6.\)
\(^{258}\) \(\text{RB}\ 9:9.\)
\(^{259}\) \(\text{RB}\ 9:7.\)
The use of music in the Rule as a means to the creation of the beauty for the purposes of revelation and doxology is manifested in a way which some have noted as rather radical. Using Cassian and the Master as the guideposts leading to Benedict, Adalbert de Vogüé proposes that a sort of revolution was wrought in the liturgical psalmody of the RB. The monastic prayer predominant prior to the advent of the Western cenobium established by Benedict was primarily concerned with personal salvation and the monks generally prayed individually in their cells.260 Paul Bradshaw comments that,

... the presence or absence of other people was a matter of indifference. There was nothing inherently corporate in the worship, nothing which might not be done equally as well alone as together. It was the same prayer which was performed in the cell as in the community gathering, and neither setting was viewed as superior to the other.261

The monks of this age clearly had different ideals and thus different practices from those initiated by Benedict. The monastic prayer of Benedict and his predecessors was a hybrid of the so called “cathedral” office and the desert tradition.262 The chief differences between these two models can be succinctly summarized in terms of revelation and doxology. Instead of being primarily a message from God to humanity, psalmody became chiefly humanity’s homage to God. These two different approaches to prayer are incarnated in the development of two kinds of psalmody and corporal attitudes.263 Vogüé explains:

---


261 Bradshaw, 189. cf Taft, 66-73.

262 Bradshaw, 187. cf Taft, 84.

In Cassian’s time almost all of the psalms were said in the direct mode; the one reciting was the only person to stand up, the monks remained seated to listen to the psalm as they would have listened to any other scriptural reading. By the Master’s time almost all the psalmody was sung antiphonally, which obliges the whole community to stand.264

The end result differentiating these two approaches is that “the hearers of the word of God have been changed into those who sing his majesty.”265 Coinciding with the marked change in liturgical psalmody, musical practices not found in the more individualistic approaches to prayer become more common place. In fact, it is the doxological character of the cathedral practices combined with the revelatory nature of the desert prayer tradition that underscore Benedict’s liturgical code.266

Benedict, in the words of Kardong, was no “liturgical snob.” The monastic leader was quite ready to construct a liturgy from any source so long as it worked well for his people.267 From the varied sources and forms of music which the Rule does utilize, it is fair to speculate that Benedict would have little or no problem with any music so long as it served the purpose of leading the community to the promised life. Be it monody or polyphony, a music which symbolizes that to which we hope to encounter at the end time has a place in the interpretation of Benedict’s Rule.

264 Vogüé, 147. For support of the direct mode of psalmody in the desert tradition, see Cassian’s Institutes II. “One rose up in the midst to chant the Psalms to the Lord. And while they were sitting (as is still the custom in Egypt), with their minds intently fixed on the chanter...” (Institutes II:5, Taft, 58-59). “That practice too which we have observed in this country—viz., that while one sings to the end of the Psalm, all standing up sing together with a loud voice, “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost”—we have never heard anywhere throughout the East...” (Institutes II:8, Taft, 59).

265 Vogüé, 147.

266 Taft, 130.

Having reached the conclusion that the intent of Benedict's Rule is to be a prophetic sign and that the exitus-reitus nature of Benedictine music aids this goal, the daunting statement made in the "Prologue" of the Rule is at least in a broad sense answered. What we must run and do now that will profit us forever is be the ekstatic perichoretic koinonia which prophetically announces and gives praise to Beauty. Using music as an example of humanity's co-operative effort in God's salvific mission I do not pretend to suggest that Benedict's notion of monastic life is dependent upon a particular style music (much less that he himself makes any such claim). What I propose here via Benedict's Rule, is that the objective of the monastic life—the incarnation of the eschaton, unity with God here and now—is hastened by attention to the transmission and receptivity of beauty. The attention monastics have traditionally given to liturgical music; their brothers and sisters; and the goods of the monastery, serve to illustrate the postulation. Though intimately linked to the more traditional Western characteristics of beauty as unity, the characteristics of beauty given here as ekstasis, perichoresis and koinonia, find a logical place in the Rule of Benedict.

Conclusion

Western Civilization has long defined the transcendental beauty in terms of truth and goodness. The endeavor here, has been to illustrate a preference for beauty as the essence of life. All beauty has its source in being\(^{268}\) and being is dependent upon relationships of love. God is love, thus Beauty and the source of all being.\(^{269}\) Beauty, then, is incarnate love.\(^{270}\) Beauty is the ekstatic perichoretic koinonia. In order to be, one must go out of the self and move about in a peaceful co-existence with the other. The aesthetic is both the result of the communal act

\(^{268}\) O'Donoghue, 259.
\(^{269}\) Gill, Beauty, 53-54, 215, 249.
\(^{270}\) Gill, Beauty, 216.
and makes the communal act possible. In the state of aesthetic consciousness, there is no spectator. There are only participants in the communion of being. This is the character of genuine communion, according to Gadamer.271 Only the aesthetic mode of communication unites so to form authentic community because only the aesthetic demands the manifestation of a fundamental transformation.272 The aesthetic transforms the static, self-absorbed isolation of death into the ekstatic perichoretic koinonia of life. A transformation of such drastic proportions, however, only comes about in the event that something new is learned which motivates a commitment. The only thing capable of instilling the radical commitment required for transformation ending in community is the amazement of revelation. As Jürgen Moltmann explains the process: The root of all knowing lies in amazement273 which is the inexhaustible source of community.274 "Without knowledge no community and without community no knowledge."275 Amazement, in other words, is the seed of the beautiful because it is the condition for the ekstasis which creates a perichoretic koinonia.

There is nothing greater than the power of beauty, presented in the exitus-reditus of the arts, for sustaining and intensifying the wonderment appropriate in realizing the unification of God and humanity.276 “[T]he work of art,” states Gadamer, “has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it.”277 The artist is both the servant-instrument of God’s creative power and, as the living experience of God, a col-

271 Gadamer, 132.
274 Moltmann, 176.
275 Moltmann, 162.
276 Hepburn, 51-52.
277 Gadamer, 102.
laborator in the saga of the creation of salvation. Beauty, supplied in the interactive process of being, is the gift of the Father in the Son through the Spirit for the salvation of the world.

The knowledge of Beauty is offered only to persons living in community with the explicit goal of attaining the promise portrayed in Psalm 27. The life laid out by Benedict for “the strong kind [of monk]” is just such an orientation. Key to the pursuit of Benedictine monasticism is the search for God through the revelation and doxology afforded by liturgical music. Preferring nothing whatever to Christ, the Icon of Beauty, the ekstatic perichoretic koinonia which is the beauty of the Lord, is made incarnately salvific in monasticism. Knowledge of and participation in Beauty is known now so to be of profit in the end. Only that which has a share in Beauty can be called beautiful and attain everlasting life through, with and in Beauty.

The exitus-reditus nature of Beauty has been demonstrated in this paper as a communal act. The source and summit of the act is the eucharistic liturgy. Music, it has been noted, is a necessary and integral part of the liturgy, a symbol of preeminent importance which contributes to the realization of Christ’s presence in the assembly. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the icon of God and Son of the Father, Jesus Christ is both the revelation and doxology of Beauty—a beauty known only as the communal dynamic relationship of an ekstatic perichoretic koinonia.

---

278 Gill, Beauty, 251.
279 RB 1:13.
280 According to SC 7: Christ’s presence is not simply in the gathered assembly as Church or even by the gathered community in prayer but by the gathered people praying and singing. This proposition goes beyond the Scripture verse cited in support of the claim. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).
Bibliography


