

Falsely Praising the Lord?

The restoration and authenticity of Gregorian chant

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Introduction:

We have all heard the sounds of monks singing Gregorian chant. We also all have different experiences with it. Some first heard it in its 'natural' setting of the church while others have heard it abstracted from its birthplace on a recording or maybe even on stage. However, even from these entirely different experiences the one thing that this music gives us is a feeling of peace and relaxation while carrying with it a tradition that potentially goes back to the beginnings of the Christian faith. It sounds ancient and deeply rooted in the past. What most of us do not know is that this 'tradition' was broken for hundreds of years and that we do not know how it originally sounded. If it were not for a group of monks resuscitating these lifeless melodies we might not have this music anymore, or it would have sounded much different than it does today. So, the question is begging to be answered: if it was not one long connected tradition, and we do not know how it sounded, is it possible to restore it to its original form? Was there a single form thereof to which it can be restored?

The book *Decadent Enchantments* tells the story not only of the restoration of Gregorian chant but also that of the rebuilding of France's cultural (mainly religious) heritage and the revival of Benedictine practice. Bergeron has focused attention on the abbey of St. Pierre at Solesmes. Her reasons for this are clear; this is where the restoration of plainchant began. However, what Bergeron set out to understand is substantially different than what my current research will attempt to elucidate. She wanted to know who these "cloistered figures" were and how "their work [came] to occupy such a prominent position in the modern university."¹ Although throughout the pages the elephant in the room remains. This is the elephant of authenticity. Did these "cloistered figures" consider their work to be faithful to the original? More importantly, do we consider their work to be a faithful representation of the past?

For some this is a lamentable return to a hopefully forgotten debate. This can clearly be seen in the opening line of Taruskin's article: "Do we really want to talk about 'authenticity' any more?"² He continues by stating that the word has become so bastardized as not to mean what it is supposed to. That when used to describe the "performance of

¹ Katherine Bergeron, *Decadent Enchantments* (California: University of California Press, 1998), xii.

² Richard Taruskin, "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past," in *Authenticity and Early Music* ed. by Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 137.

music...[it] is neither description nor critique, but commercial propaganda, the stock-in-trade of press agents and promoters.”³ What is real authenticity, then?

Taruskin brings up some important points. First, he asks if we want to continue discussing this topic. For once we have a simple answer: yes! Do we actually consider this topic to be finished? It might appear as if the issue of authenticity has been debated thoroughly enough. However, Gregorian chant has been conspicuously absent in these discussions. There are two reasons why I believe this has occurred. First, having been reformed from a broken tradition many of the challenges in being able to perform it (i.e. unclear rhythm, tempo and pitch) make it an easy target to dismiss as inauthentic. Second, it is not included, to a high degree anyway, in the historically informed performance practice (HIP) that has been the debate’s focal point. By that I mean that Gregorian chant is rarely heard ‘on the stage’, instead it is performed as functional music for the church. It is exactly because of this lacuna in the debate that I want to bring the specific issues related to plainchant to light.

Second, Taruskin brings up the point that the word authentic has lost its true meaning. Is it simply a word used to sell more records and augment ticket sales, as Taruskin implies in the above quote? Or is there a more academic definition that needs to be used? Is there a single form of authenticity? Can it be that the object in question is in some respects authentic but not so in others? This is where I will begin, by discussing and defining the terms for the rest of this thesis.

What is authenticity?

Before beginning any argument, it is always a good idea to define the terms of what will be discussed. This is especially important when discussing such a loaded term as authenticity. What is authenticity? It appears as if it can be used to describe anything, from cooking to clothing to church liturgies. If the broadness in usage was not enough to fully shroud what is meant by this single word than it becomes even murkier when the word is used differently in various disciplines, such as moral philosophy and textual criticism.

³ Ibid., 137.

In its simplest, and ethical, form authenticity can be replaced with 'good'. This is the sense that Taruskin was alluding to in the above quote. That press agents and promoters tout a product as authentic, as the 'real deal', in order to say that it is worth buying/selling. In its other sense, the critical one, authenticity is replaced with 'accuracy', "to subject all sources to scrutiny and to arrive at a text that is more correct (i.e. more *authentic*) than any extant source" (emphasis my own).⁴ Taruskin argues that these two definitions exist separately from one another. However, in modern musicology I do not believe that this dichotomy exists: accuracy is equal to goodness. This is expressed by Donald Jay Grout when he wrote: "Historical Musicology, like Original Sin, has given everybody a bad conscience: we worry about historical authenticity in the performance of old music, which is to say that we fear lest we interpret the notation in accordance with the wrong tradition."⁵ Thus, it needs to be accurate in order to be good in order to be authentic. It is not possible to pry this trinity apart in the authenticity debate.

The problem thus becomes how to judge something as authentic. Grout has laid out three questions to ask in order to answer this problem. They are as follows: "[w]hatever the tradition was, can we rediscover it?", "[s]uppose, however, that we do find out the tradition: can we apply it?" and lastly "[h]ow definite was the tradition?"⁶ All three of these questions are relevant and important to ask in order to determine the authenticity of Gregorian chant. By asking these three questions I will attempt to arrive at a solid answer for the authenticity of Gregorian chant.

History of "Gregorian" chant:

As Pope Gregory I sits on the papal throne, a dove perched on his shoulder singing the melodies into his ear so that he could subsequently dictate them to a scribe. This story paints a beautiful picture. However, it would be hard to imagine anyone in our present age that could actually believe this fable to be true. Furthermore, this story was one of the factors that ultimately led to the solidification of this repertoire to be called "Gregorian"

⁴ Richard Taruskin, "The Authenticity Movement Can Become a Positivist Purgatory, Literalistic and Dehumanizing," *Early Music*, 12 (1984), 4.

⁵ Donald Jay Grout, "On Historical Authenticity in the Performance of Old Music," in *Essays on Music in honor of Archibald Thompson Davison by his associates*, N.p., 1957, 342-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 343-5.

chant. In other words, this is the chant that came from Pope Gregory I through a holy medium (i.e. the dove) and its verity was thus not questioned. This is what Willi Apel calls the “central problem” of Gregorian chant: where did this repertoire come from and how did it receive the name that it has been given?⁷

The history of Gregorian chant begins simultaneously with the invention of musical notation. At the time, no one thought it important to take note when this first occurred. Therefore, we cannot state with certainty when the change between a purely oral practice to a mixture of one that is both oral and literate took place. However, the earliest manuscripts of which we have knowledge with musical notation date from around 900 CE. It must have already existed before this as the earliest manuscripts contain a rather advanced form of notation. Therefore, it was, most likely, not the starting point but already a later development in the evolution thereof.⁸ This is, as Taruskin states, the raising of the curtains for Gregorian chant, and the history of Western music in general.⁹ Unfortunately, we are thus thrust into the middle of the show when it has been already playing behind the curtains. Hence, we subsequently must intuit what was happening before from later evidence.

There have been many theories presented as to the manner in which this repertoire developed and scholars are not unanimous as to how that happened. Although, there appear to be some things that are, as for now, indisputable. Before the Gregorian repertoire came to prominence (or was created?) there were diverse regional liturgical rites throughout Europe. Each of these rites also contained their own form of liturgical chant.¹⁰ However, when Charlemagne took control of the empire in 800 CE, he abolished the practice of these other rites so that the entire Christian world would practice in the same manner.

This manner also happened to be the Roman form of worship. The fact that it is the Roman rite is, of course, not coincidental. Rome was the cradle of European Christianity (Jerusalem, obviously, resides as the seat of the religion as the ‘holy city’); it was a “powerhouse of prayer, not unlike a large Carolingian royal monastery, except that its

⁷ Willi Apel, “The Central Problem of Gregorian Chant,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Vol. 9 (1956): 118.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁹ Richard Taruskin, “The Curtain Goes Up,” in *The Oxford History of Western Music* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.

¹⁰ Such as Ambrosian, Iberian, Sarum, among others. These will not be discussed here any further.

prayer was more efficacious than that of any other sacred site, for this was where apostles and martyrs had lived, died and been buried.”¹¹ Thus, if something was connected with Rome it carried a stamp of authority, an elevated status. This authority did not necessarily have to do with the city itself, rather with the idea, or perhaps the mythology, of the city. This is also well expressed by de Jong when she states that it did not matter whether it was truly Roman but it did “...[matter] that it was perceived as Roman, and therefore as a text that connected God’s people with its origins in the early, pristine church thought to be preserved and still present in Rome.”¹²

So, as you might be wondering, and also presumably suspecting, that the chant used for the Roman rite is not, in fact, Roman. There is much evidence supporting this thought. For example, none of the early manuscripts containing Gregorian melodies that we know of come from Rome. However, they come from what would have been Gaul, and mainly from modern-day France. There is a small collection of manuscripts containing melodies found in Rome that contain a repertoire completely different from the Gregorian one, namely what is called (old) Roman chant. So the question arises: is Gregorian chant Roman or, as de Jong implies, does its importance come from its association with Rome? In order to answer this we need to investigate the reasons why the Carolingians would want this to be. Here, yet again, there are various reasons given as to why this is suspected but all of them point to extra-musical factors and namely political ones. Apel believed that the motivation was caused by a desire to strengthen the bond with the Roman church.¹³ While Crocker believed that this motivation came from a more general desire “not just to do things the Roman way, but to *be* Roman, not as denizens of the city, but as citizens of the empire.”¹⁴ Many scholars nowadays argue that Gregorian chant was created out of a mixture of Frankish and Roman melodies. This could have been deliberately done for a number of reasons, such as in order to appeal to the Romans or in the same vein as above in order to give the Franks a false reality that they were Romans.

¹¹ Mayke de Jong, “Charlemagne’s Church,” in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 116-7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 118.

¹³ Apel, 124.

¹⁴ Richard L. Crocker, *An Introduction to Gregorian Chant* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 75.

What this leads us to is a picture of Gregorian chant that arose out of extra-musical, political reasons. Thus, the music does not appear to stand on the forefront of importance but rather that it had a perceived link to the authority of Rome. One can already begin to create an idea of Gregorian chant in which the music itself is not authentic, even in its creation. Rather, its authenticity lay in the function and the false reality that it created for the practitioners and listeners; that it was Roman and therefore good.

Problems of restoring Gregorian chant:

The four questions listed above might appear to be sufficient in order to establish authenticity. However, what it does not take into question is just how many problems restoring Gregorian chant carries with it. Unfortunately, it is not an easy, clean or algorithmic process to establish. Authenticity is a difficult quality to describe or demonstrate; this is especially the case with Gregorian chant. The main reason for this is that the data that we have recovered (e.g. manuscripts, treatises, personal accounts) contain different kinds of data than what might be taken as self-explanatory in the study of music from other periods. Such as an established tempo, rhythm, and sometimes even the pitch; as well as the intentions of the composer, when there is no known composer (and maybe no real intentions for how their melodies needed to be performed); and lastly that it was an oral tradition that easily could have changed drastically and these changes have not all trickled down to us through the ages.

The areas that have received the most attention in restoring plainchant are the more prosaic subjects listed above: tempo, pitch and rhythm. This is, obviously, important and needs no explanation as to why they have attracted so much attention. However, they only carry one so far in the performance of the music and, more importantly, implicitly contain a major flaw. This is the flawed belief that states that Gregorian chant remained in the same state for the hundreds of years that it was practiced in the medieval Christian rite. Bergeron made a compelling argument for this fact by comparing the restoration of Gregorian chant with Viollet-le-Duc's restoration of the Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris. She states:

“To restore an edifice, Viollet-le-Duc argued, ‘means neither to maintain it, nor to repair it, nor to rebuild it; it means to reestablish it in a finished state, which may never have actually existed at any given time.’ The

point, he maintained, was not to return the edifice to an original condition, but rather to return it to history, a history that was itself a modern phenomenon.”¹⁵

Bergeron, and Viollet-le-Duc, raise an exceedingly important issue. What is one, in fact, restoring? The most obvious point to home in on is the earliest recorded samples we have dating from around 800 CE. However, this is just one period of its history and does not reflect the entire practice. Are we supposed to arbitrarily decide on a period of time in its history and call this *the* Gregorian chant? This brings with it all the problems of how to deal with tropes, sequences and later additions to the repertoire, as well as regional differences and variations. Or are we supposed to attempt to restore it in every conceivable form, if that is even possible?

This last point has been an obstacle since the beginning of the restoration. As appealing as it is to solely focus on the earliest manuscripts available as the one true form of the repertoire, it is, for a few simple reasons, fallacious. Those being, as will be discussed below, that the earliest manuscripts do not signal the beginning of the repertoire but emerged at some later point in Gregorian chant’s development; and secondly, that the repertoire underwent various changes throughout its practice. This is in the form of the issues discussed in the previous paragraph (i.e. tropes, sequences, later additions and varying regional practices; these will be discussed more in depth below). However, this has not always been evident, leading many scholars to use this fallacy as a starting point for their research.

As stated above, Gregorian chant underwent various developments in its evolution. Some of these were more musical in nature while others arose out of the need to fit the developments of the rite. An interesting case of such development is in the practices known as tropes (either a textless melisma, the later addition of new text to an already existent melisma or adding new text as well as new music within a chant) and sequences (new self-standing chants based on original text and music that generally has to do with a particular season, feast or saint’s day). These additions to the repertoire would not be included in the earliest manuscripts because they were composed at a later date. However, they were performed in church and served as part of the later medieval rite. This shows that even

¹⁵ Bergeron, 8.

though the church attempted to create a fixed, unchanging rite it did not prevent people from augmenting it. Should these be included in the authentic Gregorian chant repertoire? Where do we draw the line for what is to be included? After all, these played a role in medieval practice and according to Crocker were “...important because of [their] intrinsic musical values as well as [their] historical significance for the development of style in general.”¹⁶ This also points to the problem stated above in that restoring something inevitably means creating a modern hodgepodge of older practices (that were potentially incompatible at that time) that are fused together to create a version that never originally existed.

One last issue to be discussed surrounding the topic of the developing repertoire deals with regional varieties and differences. Jennifer Bloxam takes as an axiom of her argument that plainchant changed through time. She stated this clearly when she wrote that the “degree of variation between the innumerable usages that proliferated in Western Europe during the late Middle Ages was immense, ranging from differences in the large-scale structure of the liturgical year to discrepancies in the small-scale details of a particular plainchant’s text or tune.”¹⁷ One of the main reasons for this, she states, was the process of honoring local saints new services and music were created, much in the manner of the sequences discussed above. These differences would have influenced one’s perception of the liturgical year and consequently their faith. It would be easy to intuit that a particular local celebration was important to the burghers of that city/town. Thus, should these local melodies be discarded as non-Gregorian fluff that did not have anything to do with the real rite? Or on the other hand, should we take these into consideration because they were, most likely, considered to be important for those cities/towns that used them?

The last issue to be taken into account is the extra-musical aspects of this music. It can be argued, and has already been, that all music is functional (this point will not be discussed further in this thesis). However, the added functionality of ritual music needs to be taken into account. This is a music that serves a purpose; it plays a role in a complex

¹⁶ Richard L. Crocker, et al. "Sequence (i)." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25436> (accessed April 13, 2012).

¹⁷ Jennifer Bloxam, “Sacred Polyphony and Local Traditions of Liturgy and plainsong: reflections on music by Jacob Obrecht,” in *Plainsong in the age of polyphony*, ed. Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 141.

much larger than itself. Because of this it cannot be studied in the same manner as concert music. Are we attempting to restore this music so that it can be performed on stage or so that it will fulfill its original function? As hinted at above, is it possible that this music is authentic in one way while failing simultaneously in another? In other words, that the music itself is not authentic, however, the function it fulfills is.

Oral transmission:

One aspect of Gregorian chant that is, potentially, difficult to wrap one's head around is that it was primarily an oral/aural practice. It was created, learned and performed (mainly) without the aid of written sources. This appears to be an Olympian feat when one really takes the time to ponder this in the light of Kenneth Levy's work in which he "calculated that if one adds" the roughly 560 chants in the 8th and 9th century Graduals "to...the Office Propers, we 'might come to seventy-five or eighty hours of memorized matter. This would correspond to the selection of Beethoven's instrumental works plus the full Wagnerian canon.'"¹⁸ Even in times where such mnemonic gymnastics were, at least, more common it would be difficult to imagine that such a large oeuvre would go unchanged throughout its lifespan of several centuries while being passed down to subsequent generations in such a manner. So, how stable was this repertoire then? What was the role of memory and orality in the practice and transmission of Gregorian chant? Further, what consequences did this have on the repertoire?

The first question that needs to be addressed is how rigid, or flexible, the tradition was. In other words, how (un)stable it was. This appears to be a point that has not been fully agreed upon by scholars. On one hand, we are discussing the Christian church that attempted to set its practices in stone. However, as I discussed above, Bloxam paints a different picture where not only was the rite further enriched by local festivities and traditions but the music varied, as well.

In general, it is agreed upon that we are dealing with a form of orality that is relatively stable. Relatively because of the "small-scale" discrepancies in text and/or melody that Bloxam discussed. This has partly to do with the aesthetics of the church. They

¹⁸ Busse Berger, *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory* (California: University of California Press, 2005), 49.

attempted to create a rite, and thereby chant, that was the same the Christian world over. Thus, if the melody deviated too much from the, perceived, original than it would not transmit its intended authority and thereby lose the false reality it has created. This is in direct contrast to the folk traditions that have been studied for oral transmission. In these genres the individual or regional variations are often praised as good performance practice and perceived as “fascinating”: “[v]ariation, indeed, is one of the chief sources of the endless fascination that lies in this field of study.”¹⁹

Beyond aesthetics, it has remained fairly stable because of its underlying formulaic structure. Such formulas are utilized for various purposes in oral art forms, such as to ease memorization and recall. This is analogous to language. All speakers of the same language have learned the grammar, or the rules, of that specific language. However, every speaker has his own manner of speaking, or idiolect. That does not mean that the individual is speaking a different language, even if he occasionally breaks the rules of grammar. Further it would be easy to argue that the use of English, for example, in the 19th century is different than its use in the 21st century. Yet we recognize them both as being contained within the same basic structure. There are, for sure, minor discrepancies but on the whole it is the same language or, in this case, melody.

Another aspect of the practice of plainchant that cannot be overlooked is the role played by memory. This repertoire was memorized by those who sung it. Although it may appear paradoxical, this continued even after the repertoire had been committed to paper. Anna Maria Busse Berger has argued this point when she stated that:

“...musical notation, like writing, does not replace performance from memory, but, on the contrary, may be used to aid it. The fact that something was written down does not have to mean that it was no longer transmitted orally as well, for written texts and oral transmission may well coexist.”²⁰

This point is also found in the earliest examples of musical notation, namely the non-diastematic neumes. They were originally used as a mnemonic device because without a fixed pitch, or rhythm, one had to already have learned the melody in order for that style of

¹⁹ Bertrand H. Bronson, “Melodic Stability in Oral Transmission,” *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 3 (1951): 50.

²⁰ Busse Berger, 45.

notation to be helpful. Thus, what we are faced with is a tradition that is written in record, but oral in practice. Gregorian chant performance remained to be executed from memory even into the late middle ages. In 1662 the *Caeromoniale Parisiense* was written stating that “[t]hings should be sung by memory following the example of the metropolitan church of Paris and other cathedral churches of the realm; in which church of Paris the singers always sing by memory whatever they have to sing both at Mass and at the hours...”²¹ This immediately leads one to contemplate all the aspects of performing Gregorian chant that did not make it into writing and remained in the realm of orality only to be later forgotten when the tradition disappeared.

So, it appears that oral transmission did not have wide ranging effects on the fixity of Gregorian chant. It did, most certainly, leave a mark on the compositional process. However, these minor discrepancies were present and if a singer traveled to a different church, he would have needed to learn the style of singing at the new church.²² So, regardless of how minor they were, they still added to the experience and should thus not be ignored or argued away as mere minor variations that deviate from some proto-melody.

The purpose of Gregorian both past and present:

Above, while discussing the history of Gregorian chant I touched upon the idea that the true purpose of this repertoire dealt with extra-musical functions. This is another stumbling block for the modern mind because we are, in general, still influenced by the Romantic notion of autonomous art, and therefore music as well. In other words, music for music’s sake. However, what about the idea of music for political reasons? Or music utilized for creating a community? Music is not as benign as the 19th century romanticists would have us believe.

Firstly, I believe that one of Gregorian chant’s purposes is political in nature. By this I mean that it was used in the wider context of church ideology and not necessarily lauded for its aesthetic beauty. In the middle ages, this is exactly how it received its name “Gregorian”, as discussed above. The reasons for this were to solidify its authority by evoking not only the well-respected Pope Gregory I but also arising out of divine

²¹ Ibid., 48.

²² Bloxam, 142.

intervention by being transmitted by the dove. This is in addition to its association with Rome through usage of the Roman rite and its purported origin in Rome, this is, after all, where Pope Gregory I was located. As I stated previously, the Carolingians attempted to create a false reality in which the Franks were acting as Roman citizens.

In more modern times, the restoration began as an attempt to resuscitate the Benedictine order. This meant that the proper liturgical music needed to be resuscitated, as well. This process of restoration led to the creation of a community. A community that practiced the art of Gregorian chant daily. While the style developed at Solesmes might have its flaws, Pierre Combe made an intriguing argument for its success:

“The success of the Gregorian singing style made famous by Dom Mocquereau and Dom Gajard plainly corresponds to the practical needs of daily liturgical life as well as the contemporary musical perceptions and sensitivities of great numbers of people. These two qualities remain of primary importance for any living practice of Gregorian chant according to the mind of the popes of the twentieth century and of the last Vatican Council, and for that reason they rank higher, in case of doubt, than the demand for any historical authenticity.”²³

Thus, its purpose, as here reported, also does not deal with the music itself but its function in Christian worship. However, this restoration carries with it an implicit political agenda. This agenda is the grounding of Christian faith in the distant past so that it carries with it the weight of the early church (similar to the Carolingian thought about the “early, pristine church” that is preserved in Rome?).

What both instances created was solidarity of practitioners and believers of both Christianity and also of plainchant. This was a topic often ignored by scholars. This is almost touched upon by Taruskin when he stated: “Many, if not most, of us who concern ourselves with 'authentic' interpretation of music approach musical performance with the attitudes of textual critics, and fail to make the fundamental distinction between music as tones-in-

²³ Pierre Combe, *The Restoration of Gregorian Chant: Solesmes and the Vatican Edition*, trans. Theodore Marier and William Skinner (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), xix.

motion and music as notes-on-page.”²⁴ I would like to take this one step further and state that many fail to make the distinction between “tones-in-motion” and the effect that the music has on all participating parties (listeners included). This is no different than when people use music as a means of personal expression. In another way, singing or hearing this music while one is in church can transmit an experience only shared by those participating. Thus, creating community through experience.

These extra-musical aspects cannot be ignored while dealing with music that is as functional as liturgical music. Not to detract from this repertoire as music, as an aesthetic object to be enjoyed for its own inherent pleasure. However, it has always had an important role in a much larger complex that has, in turn, shaped its creation and performance.

Conclusion:

Let us briefly review the three questions outlined above in order to establish authenticity. These were: “whatever the tradition was, can we rediscover it?”, “suppose, however, that we do find out the tradition: can we apply it?” and “how definite was the tradition?” I now want to review these three questions in light of what I have discussed above.

Whatever the tradition was, can we rediscover it? We can discover large parts of it and certainly enough in order to be able to perform it. However due to its oral nature, many aspects were, most likely, either never written down or, if they were, did not survive the last few centuries. For this reason we do not know how the rhythm is supposed to be performed, for example. How definite was the tradition? This question is hard to answer. On the one hand, it was a very definite tradition. However, on the other, it varied (however slightly) from place to place through time. The group Schola Antiqua led by John Blackley have made various recordings in which they focus on a single manuscript and attempt to perform it according to the manner it would most likely have been performed in that location. For example, they made a recording ‘Plainsong and Polyphony from Medieval Germany’ in which they focus on a single 14th century manuscript from the *Thomaskirche* in

²⁴ Taruskin, “The Authenticity Movement Can Become a Positivist Purgatory, Literalistic and Dehumanizing,” 4.

Leipzig.²⁵ As far as historically informed performance practice is concerned, I cannot imagine a better approach considering the multitude of potential variations between manuscripts. This is in contrast to the monks of Solesmes that attempted to create a single monolithic edition.

And lastly, suppose we do discover the tradition, can we apply it? Now we have touched on the heart of the issue, I believe. This is exactly what I have attempted to elucidate in this thesis. The tradition is the single most important aspect of Gregorian chant. This is because, as noted above, it brings practitioners and churchgoers together, creating not only a community in the small-scale sense (a single church or monastery) but also in the large-scale sense (the entire catholic world). Attempting to state whether this music is authentic or not is impossible and missing the point of the repertory. I do not wish to say that researching the manner in which Gregorian chant was performed is futile and useless. Quite the contrary, such research has given us the opportunity to write about such topics as this current thesis and has also enriched the experience of plainchant performance for all. However, we cannot lose sight that this is a music with a purpose that still needs to conform to, as Combe stated, the people's "musical perceptions and sensitivities" in order for it to fully realize its intended goal.

²⁵ Schola Antiqua of New York and R. John Blackley, "Plainchant and Polyphony from Medieval Germany, A Guide to Gregorian Chant and Tenth-Century Liturgical Chant," review by Anthony Milner, *Early Music*, vol. 8, (1980), 115.

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