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Biblical Commentary in the Old Hispanic Liturgy: a Passiontide case study.

Between the seventh and eleventh centuries, Christian worship on the Iberian Peninsula was structured by rituals of great theological depth and musical richness, called the Old Hispanic (or Mozarabic) rite. With a few exceptions, the Old Hispanic chant is preserved only in neumatic notation that shows the rise and fall of the melody and the number of notes per syllable, but not specific pitches or intervals. Thus the melodies cannot be not sung or heard. The neumes nonetheless have much to tell us about the expressive content of the Old Hispanic chant. The meaning of this music is best accessed first through its texts, reading them in the light of the other liturgical elements that surrounded them, and through the traditions of biblical exegesis that were known on the Iberian Peninsula. This better positions us to analyse the notation and how it might relate to the text. Through this method, we can begin to form a picture of what the chant texts meant to participants in the liturgy and how the melodies helped to convey this meaning.

A particularly important source for this endeavour is the early eighth-century prayer book, Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare Cod. LXXXIX, known as the Orationale of Verona (hereafter OV). It contains office prayers from the Old Hispanic rite, thought to have been compiled in the late seventh century.¹ These prayers are accompanied by marginal cues to chant texts. These cues provide us with the earliest witness to a full chant repertory in the West, since the earliest source for the Gregorian chant texts date

¹ J. Vives (ed.), *Oracional Visigótico* (Barcelona, 1946). On the date and place of origin, see M. Díaz y Díaz, 'La fecha de implantación del oracional festivo', *Boletín arqueológico órgano de la Real Sociedad Arqueológica Tarraconense* 113 (1971-72), pp. 215-43, at pp. 224-25. Extensive bibliography on the orationale is given in A. Millares Carlo *et al*, *Corpus de codices visigóticos*, vol. 1 (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1999), item 344; M. Vivancos, 'El oracional visigótico de Verona: notas codicológicas y paleográficas', *Cuadernos de Filiología Clásica* 26 (2008), pp. 121-44.

from the late eighth century (and most are from the ninth century).² The chants in the Verona prayer book correspond closely to those of the extant Old Hispanic chant manuscripts, which date from the late ninth century onward.³ Each prayer is based on the text of the preceding chant and provides a concise commentary on it, often reflecting broader traditions of patristic bible interpretation.

To illustrate how we can penetrate this material, we shall consider one short service, Terce, an office sung at the third hour, and one of the hours which made up the daily liturgy.⁴ The particular service we explore was sung on the first Wednesday of Passiontide, the three-week period commemorating Christ's passion that preceded Easter in the Old Hispanic rite. The earliest source to preserve the chants for this service is the famous León Antiphoner (hereafter León 8), copied 900 and 905, possibly at the monastery of Cosmas and Damian in Abellar, north of León.⁵ The prayers may be found

² S. Rankin, 'The Making of Carolingian Mass Chant Books', in *Quomodo cantabimus canticum. Studies in Honor of Edward H. Roesner*, eds. Rena Mueller and John Nadas (American Institute of Musicology, 2008), pp. 37-63.

³ For a comparison of repertory and liturgical assignments, see L. Brou, 'Le joyau des antiphonaires latins', *Archivos Leonenses* 8 (1954), pp. 7-114, at pp. 11-13; Idem, 'L'antiphonaire wisigothique et l'antiphonaire grégorien du VIIe siècle', *Anuario musical* 5 (1950), pp. 3-10; W.S. Porter, 'Studies in the Mozarabic Office', *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 (1934), pp. 266-86.

⁴ The Terce service under consideration here is on ff. 137v and 138 of León, Cathedral Archive MS 8 and OV, f. 73-73v. We have taken the OV text from the edition, *Oracional visigótico*, ed. J. Vives (Barcelona, 1946), 198-99.

⁵ León 8 is the earliest securely datable Old Hispanic source with notation. It is persuasively dated to 900-905 by Elsa De Luca, 'Royal Misattribution: Monograms in the León Antiphoner', *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* (2015); DOI: 10.1080/17546559.2015.1101521; and De Luca, 'Musical Cryptography and the 'Early History of the León Antiphoner'', forthcoming in *Early Music History* 26 (2017), and De Luca proposes Abellar as a possible place of origin. Previous estimates of the dating range from first third of the tenth century (Díaz y Díaz, 'Some incidental notes on music manuscripts', *Hispania Vetus: Musical-liturgical Manuscripts from Visigothic Origins to the Franco-Roman Transition (9th-12th centuries)*, ed. S. Zapke (Bilbao, 2007), pp. 93-111, at pp. 94-5 and 99) to mid-eleventh century (S. Zapke, 'Dating neumes according to their morphology. The Corpus of Toledo', *The Calligraphy of Medieval Music*, ed. John Haines (Musicalia Medii Aevi, 1: Brepols, 2011), pp. 91-100, at p. 94).

in the Verona prayer book. The Passiontide chants and prayers coincide in their central themes: the enemies and persecutors of Christ; the enemies of the Church, especially heretics; and the unity of Christ and the Church in suffering.⁶ We start by exploring the textual themes of the Terce service for the first Wednesday in Passiontide, and then turn to the music.

The surviving parts of this service consist of a responsory and three antiphons, each followed by a prayer, then a closing prayer and benediction.⁷ The seventh century in Spain was a period of great learning, and much of the intellectual culture was built on patristic theology.⁸ The monks, nuns, and clergy who participated in the liturgy would therefore have heard these texts through the filter of patristic biblical commentary. The four Proper chants in the service are thematically related, forming a trajectory that moves from the persecution theme common across Passiontide to the theme of the salvation made possible through Christ's passion. The responsory *Haec dicit* (Table 1) is an abbreviation of a longer passage from Hosea, in which the prophet admonishes those who have turned against the Lord. The chant compiler has selected specific excerpts referring to those who have told lies against the speaker. Early Christian commentators relate this

⁶ E. Hornby and R. Maloy, *Music and Meaning in Old Hispanic Lenten Chants: Threni, Psalmi, and the Easter Vigil Canticles* (Woodbridge, 2013), esp. chapter 1.

⁷ OV, pp. 193-194. The readings for this particular service are unrecoverable (the *Liber commicus*, Toledo, Biblioteca Capitolare Cod. 35-8, which does include readings for Lenten offices, has a lacuna for almost all of Passiontide; see J. Pérez de Urbel and A. González y Ruiz-Zorrilla, *Liber commicus. Tomo I: edición crítica* (Monumenta Hispaniae Sacra. Serie Liturgica II: Madrid, 1950)). There are several candidates for the weekday Passiontide hymn, preserved in two *libri horarum* (books containing the monastic hours) and a hymnal: *Certum tenentes (liber horarum, Santo Domingo de Silos, MS 7)*; *Benignitatis fons deus (liber horarum, Toledo cathedral, MS 33-3)*; or *Fabens redemptis voto abstinentie* (hymnal, Madrid, BN, MS 10001).

⁸ See, *inter alia*, Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Oxford and Malden, Mass., 2006), 147-73. U. Domínguez del Val, 'Características de la patrística hispana en le siglo VII,' in *Patrología Toledano-Visigoda*, 5-36. Madrid, 1970; J. C. Martín-Iglesias, 'La biblioteca cristiana de los padres hispanovisigodos (siglos VI-VII)', in *Veleia* 30 (2013), 259-88.

passage of Hosea in various ways to Christ and Christians. Typically, they interpret scriptural deceit as referring to heretics. In the earliest Christian commentary on this passage of Hosea, Jerome associates its liars with promoters of false doctrine.⁹ Through this tradition, this Hosea passage is connected to the texts chosen for many other Old Hispanic Passiontide chants, interpreted as being about persecution of Christ and heresy.¹⁰ In seventh-century Iberia, however, this Hosea text had more specific anti-Jewish connotations. In *De fide catholica contra Iudaeos*, Isidore of Seville cites Hosea 7:13 as proof that Jesus was accused by false witnesses in his passion, which places Hosea 7:13 in the voice of the suffering Christ and providing a seventh-century Iberian context for its role in the Passiontide liturgy.¹¹ For Isidore, this passage also prefigures the defeat and dispersal of the Jews as punishment for rejecting Christ.¹² In the late seventh century, Julian of Toledo would take up this theme in his *De comprobatione sextae aetatis contra Iudaeos*, a work that takes putative Jewish proselytizing as its rationale.¹³ For Julian, Hosea 7:13 refers to Jewish unbelief and persecution of Christ.¹⁴ Many participants in the Old Hispanic liturgy were undoubtedly familiar with these anti-Jewish uses of this Hosea text.

⁹ Jerome, *Commentarii in prophetas minores. In Osee* ed. M. Adriaen (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina [hereafter CCSL] 76: Turnhout, 1969), p. 79.

¹⁰ Hornby and Maloy, *Music and Meaning*, pp. 36-47.

¹¹ Isidore, *De fide catholica contra Iudaeos*, Patrologia Latina [hereafter PL] 83 (1850), col. 480.

¹² PL 83, col. 514.

¹³ PL 96, col. 539. See also R. González-Salineró, 'Catholic Anti-Judaism in Visigothic Spain', *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, ed. A. Ferreiro (Leiden, 1999), pp. 123-150, at pp. 137-42; C. del Valle, 'El *Comprobatione sextae aetatis libri tres* y el judaísmo español', *Estudios bíblicos* 49 (1991), pp. 251-63, at pp. 254-56. Wolfram Drews proposes a more general apologetic purpose for Isidore's *De fide catholica* in *The Unknown Neighbour: The Jew in the Thought of Isidore of Seville* (The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400-1500, 59: Leiden and Boston, 2006).

¹⁴ PL 96, col. 550.

In typical fashion, the prayer that follows *Haec dicit* (Table 1, columns 5 and 6) begins by paraphrasing the second clause of the chant text, ‘my enemies have sinned against me.’ (These chant paraphrases are italicised in Tables 1-4.)¹⁵ The prayer thus identifies Christ as the voice speaking in the chant, referring to those telling lies against him. It goes on to ask that the church be protected against heretics, ‘so that she may cross through the bows of the deceitful and the darts of perverse dogma with the firm path of faith’. In this way, the prayer refers explicitly both to heresy, the central theme of the biblical commentary on the Hosea text, and to the passion of Christ, being commemorated in the liturgy.

In the Old Hispanic chant, the biblical source text is often abbreviated and modified in ways that give us clues to how it was interpreted by the compilers. The compiler of the chant text has, in fact, adapted the biblical source in ways that connect it to the commentary tradition and to other chants sung during the Old Hispanic Passiontide. These passages are shown in boldface in Table 1. Instead of ‘they have sinned against me’, the chant text reads, ‘my enemies have sinned against me’, a common adaptation in Passiontide chants, where the enemies of Christ recur many times.¹⁶ Although the chant initially omits the beginning of Hosea 7:13, ‘Woe to them because they have departed from me’ (the passage cited by Isidore and Julian), it later incorporates a paraphrase: ‘Woe to them because they have plotted against me’. Similarly, ‘they will be derided in every land’ is changed from the biblical ‘they will be derided in the land of Egypt’. These rewordings and rearrangements make the Hosea

¹⁵ G. Bayes Turull, *Las oraciones de antifonas y responsorios para el tiempo de traditione domini en el oficio hispanico* (Barcelona, 1976), studied the thematic traits of some of the Passiontide prayers but did not fully explore their relationship to patristic exegesis, or how they shape the listeners’ understanding of chants within particular services.

¹⁶ Hornby and Maloy, *Music and Meaning*, pp. 36-40.

passage more specific to the Passiontide liturgical context. Such adaptations are typical of the Old Hispanic chant: the biblical sources are purposefully adapted to their liturgical use and theological purpose.¹⁷

The next chant, the antiphon *Disperdat dominus*, uses verses from Psalm 11 that deal with wicked lips and proud speech (Table 2). Those quoted as saying ‘our lips are ours; who is our God?’ are interpreted in patristic commentaries as being proud and deceitful people. For Augustine, they are general evildoers, and for Jerome and Cassiodorus, they are those who deny Christ.¹⁸ This interpretation links *Disperdat dominus* to the preceding chant, *Haec dicit*, through the theme of deceit. The following prayer, however, takes the interpretation of this psalm verse a step further than the commentary tradition does. After paraphrasing the chant’s beginning, the prayer’s compiler associates the chant text with heretics (‘when they have accomplished a common language of faith with us’), giving it a more specific meaning that connects to the previous chant, *Haec dicit*. After the deceivers are quoted in *Disperdat dominus*, the antiphon introduces a second theme. The words, ‘I will place my salvation over [him] and I will act faithfully in him’ are interpreted by Augustine and Cassiodorus as being spoken in the person of the Father, referring to Christ, who is the Father’s means of salvation.¹⁹

This final passage of *Disperdat dominus* provides a transition to the next chant, *Caro mea* (Table 3). The verses from Psalm 15 that comprise this antiphon are interpreted by all patristic commentators as being in the voice of Christ, speaking of his

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos I-L*, ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont (CCSL 38: Turnhout, 1956), p. 83. Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum I-LXX* ed. M. Adriaen (CCSL 97: Turnhout, 1958), p. 118-19.

¹⁹ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos I-L*, CCSL 38, p. 83; Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum I-LXX*, CCSL 97, pp. 118-19.

human nature. Cassiodorus's commentary resonates most fully with the Passiontide use of this verse: Christ's soul was not abandoned and his flesh did not suffer corruption when it was nailed to the cross, because he was resurrected in the flesh.²⁰ The first part of the prayer is consistent with Cassiodorus's commentary, identifying Christ as the speaker of the words in the chant text, whose soul was not left behind in hell. The second part of the prayer, however, refers to the redemptive power of the cross and the resurrection for the gathered faithful. In this way, the prayer thematically connects this antiphon to the end of the previous one: as mentioned above, the final words of *Disperdat dominus*, 'I will place my salvation over [him]', are interpreted by both Augustine and Cassiodorus as referring to the redeeming power of Christ.

The final antiphon in this office, *Deus meus adiutor* (Table 4) continues this theme of Christ's redeeming power, with the line 'my protector and the horn of my salvation and my redeemer'. In the accompanying prayer, 'redeem us from every corruption' recalls the preceding antiphon and prayer, where Jesus is the one who did not see corruption. Although this text is not thematically specific to Passiontide, the end of the prayer refers to the gathered congregation's contemplation of the passion and its benefits, again adapting the psalm to its liturgical context.

In summary, the four chants of this short office form a thematic trajectory that emerges with clarity only when they are considered together with the prayers that follow them and with the exegetical traditions on which these prayers are based. The listeners are guided on a journey that begins with the persecution theme. The first two chants invoke the lies told against Christ and against the church (in the form of heresy). The redeeming role of Christ and Christ's Passion, introduced at the end of the second chant,

²⁰ CCSL 97, p. 123.

is the focus of the third and fourth chants. The prayers make clear the connections between the chants, and the theme of heresy is once again evoked in the closing prayer of the service, though references to the darts of the enemies.²¹

This textual and liturgical context enriches an analysis of the Old Hispanic chant melodies, as preserved in the León antiphoner. The number of notes on each syllable tells us how the text delivery is paced. Further, some neume combinations that recur within the tradition have identifiable functions, marking, for example, the beginnings or ends of verbal phrases. Passages we have identified as cadences are shown by vertical divisions in Tables 5-8.

In the responsory *Haec dicit* (Table 1), the opening ('Thus says the Lord') was added by the compiler of the chant text to frame the biblical verses that follow. Approximately forty Old Hispanic chant texts open 'Haec dicit dominus', drawing on a limited number of melodic shapes across the repertory. Our terce responsory uses shapes that coincide with 'Haec dicit dominus' elsewhere in León 8 and in other manuscripts (Example 1). In Old Hispanic chant, it is unusual for six consecutive syllables to have exactly the same neume pattern in multiple chants. This passage is thus immediately recognizable, both textually and musically. Together, the words and music place the following passages in quotation marks.

As noted earlier, persecution is a central theme of *Haec dicit* and the prayer that follows, and the biblical text is changed so that the speaker's 'enemies' are specified. In the melody, 'inimici mei' is marked by a change in pacing (see Example 2a, box 1; and Table 5, box 3). Most syllables before this point have between one and five notes;

²¹ OV, pp. 234-5.

‘inimici’ has an eleven-note melisma. Thus the melody lingers on a word that is both central to the liturgical context and is a modification of the familiar biblical text.

Other elements of melodic pacing, such as the 67-note melisma on ‘terram’ (Example 2a, box 2), are not directly related to the exegesis of the prayer, but would nevertheless have shaped the hearing of the text. It is common for an Old Hispanic chant to end with a long melisma. At such moments, when all of the text has been communicated, the singers can enact wordless praise of God (*jubilatio*), reaching beyond the words to bring liturgical participants closer to the divine.²² Both the beginning and the end of the chant, then, participate in a discourse that is not directly linked to the meaning of *this* chant: the melody’s opening links with the wider network of chants that open with the same words and melody, and the closing melisma is an opportunity for praise beyond the text.

Another notable trait in *Haec dicit* is the recurrence of small notational patterns. The pattern shown in Example 3 is found both in *Haec dicit* and in many other chants. It often appears near the beginning of a chant or of a verbal clause (see boxes in Example 4).²³ In some cases, it lengthens connecting words such as ‘quoniam’ (‘because’; *Confortare*) and ‘dicens’ (‘saying’; *Habitatores*). In *Haec dicit*, the figure occurs on ‘propterea’ (‘for this reason’; Example 2a, box 3). It also appears in *Haec dicit* at the

²² On jubilation in the Old Hispanic sacrificia, see R. Maloy, ‘Old Hispanic Chant and the Early History of Plainsong’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67 (2014), pp. 1-76, at pp. 7-9. On the jubilus more generally, see J. McKinnon, ‘The Patristic Jubilus and the Alleluia of the Mass’, *Cantus Planus: Papers read at the Third Meeting, Tihany, Hungary, September 1988*, ed. L. Dobszay *et al* (Budapest, 1990), pp. 61-70; E. Moneta Caglio, *Lo Jubilus e le Origini della Salmodia Responsoriale* (Venezia, 1976-7); W. Wiora, ‘Jubilare sine verbis’, *In Memoriam Jacques Handschin*, ed. Higinì Anglès *et al* (Argenterati, 1962), pp. 39-65.

²³ Similar approaches to the Example 3 figure in an opening context appear in the sacrificia *Sacerdotes offerant* on ‘inmisit’ (León 8, f.231r); and *Omnes viri* on ‘tuae’ (León 8, f.88v). The figure is approached differently when it is used at cadences. One example is the three-note descending figure on ‘maiestatis’ in *Confortare* (Example 4c), also seen *inter alia* in the sacrificium *Accepit librum* at ‘estote’ (León 8, f.160v), and the vespertinus *Confessionem* on ‘sanctitate eius’ (León 8, f.47r).

beginning of a verbal clause on ‘et erit’ (Example 2a, box 4). In such cases, the neumes – strongly associated with openings – combine with the text to act as a rhetorical device, underlining the expectation of subsequent textual and musical completion. Both ‘et erit’ and ‘propterea’ in *Haec dicit* also coincide with an increase in the number of notes per syllable (Table 5), further differentiating these moments from the surrounding melody. Both passages precede textual content that describes the enemies’ fate. ‘Propterea’ occurs just before the ‘people who transgressed against Christ will fall into snares’, and ‘et erit’ just before ‘they will be mocked’. A key message of the text, the fate of the enemies, is introduced twice by this recurring and lengthening musical figure.

As we have seen, the antiphon *Disperdat dominus* (Examples 2a-2b) focuses on the theme of heresy. In an Old Hispanic antiphon, the psalm verse is followed by a return to the red diagonal pen stroke with two dots – in this chant, a repeat from ‘qui dicunt’ to the end (Example 2a, box 5). This is followed by the doxology, followed by the material from the red G (‘fidenter’; Example 2b, box 1) to the end. In *Disperdat dominus*, both of these moments (‘qui dicunt’, Example 2a, box 6) and ‘fidenter’ (Example 2b, box 2) have the ‘opening’ figure of Example 3.

Each section of *Disperdat dominus* includes one or more syllables with nine to twelve notes (Table 6). The exception is the direct speech, spoken by the heretics (Table 6, box 3). This section stands out in style from the rest of the chant, since the whole phrase has only one to three notes per syllable. As shown earlier, the heresy theme was introduced in the previous responsory and prayer, and the musical setting helps to solidify it in the second chant.

The following antiphons, *Caro mea* (Table 7) and *Deus meus adiutor meus* (Table 8), have much simpler melodic flow. *Deus meus adiutor meus* has no more than four notes per syllable throughout. Any moments of particular melodic interest in this chant must have derived from the pitch content, which is not preserved in the notation. *Caro mea*, by contrast, has a 14-note melisma on ‘requiescat’: ‘my flesh **rests** in hope’ (Example 2b, box 3). In the following prayer (Table 3), Christ is identified as the speaker in the chant, whose flesh ‘endured the grave’. ‘Requiescat’, carrying the longest melisma of the three antiphons, evokes the image of Christ resting in the grave, but not abandoned.

The small weekday office examined here illustrates how Old Hispanic chant texts, music, prayers, and their underlying theology can combine to convey meaning. Looking at the texts of a single genre – prayers, antiphons, or responsories – in isolation would miss the theological picture that emerges through considering all of them together, in combination with the commentary tradition that formed their intellectual context. Even without pitched notation, we can see how the chant melodies might have shaped the participants’ liturgical experience, rhetorically, theologically and spiritually. By taking a holistic view, we can gain a vivid impression of the richness of the liturgical experience contained within even a simple daily Terce.