

Gregorian Chant and St. Hildegard von Bingen

Dr. Alan J. M. Haffa

Hildegard's Biography

- 1098, born in Bermerstein, tenth child to Noble Parents;
- 1112; Oblate at monastery of Disibodensberg with Jutta of Sponheim
- 1136; elected Abbess of Convent
- 1141-51; “Scivias” and “Ordo Virtutum”;
- 1147-48; Pope Eugene II sanctions her writings
- 1150; Moved to Abbey at Rupertsberg near Bingen
- 1150-63; Wrote *Liber Vitae Meritorum* and *Liber Divinum operum*; Idea that Man is God's greatest creation; Man as mirror through which splendor of world is reflected
- 1158-73; wrote *Physica* and *Cause et Curae*
- 1165; Founded Second Convent at Eibingen
- 1178; Conflict with Bishop of Mainz; Interdict put on Convent
- 1179; Dies at Rupertsberg
- Several attempts to Canonize her fail



Brief History of Catholic Music

- Early Church Music Influenced by Jewish traditions; Monophonic; No instruments: Plainchant
- Plainchant was regionally diverse
- Pope Gregory, 590-604, credited with collecting music
- Under Charlemagne, a single repertory was designated, which came to be called Gregorian Chant; Primitive Musical Notation called Neumes
- 11th century: Exact pitches were indicated with use of lines and Staff (Guido d'Arezzo, 1050)
- 13th century: Notation approximates modern with a staff of four to six lines and square or diamond shaped notes
- Polyphonic (two or more melodies together) music; 9-13th centuries; *cantus firmus* was the original melody; parallel melodies added at the fourth or fifth interval of the octave; resultant style was called *Organum*

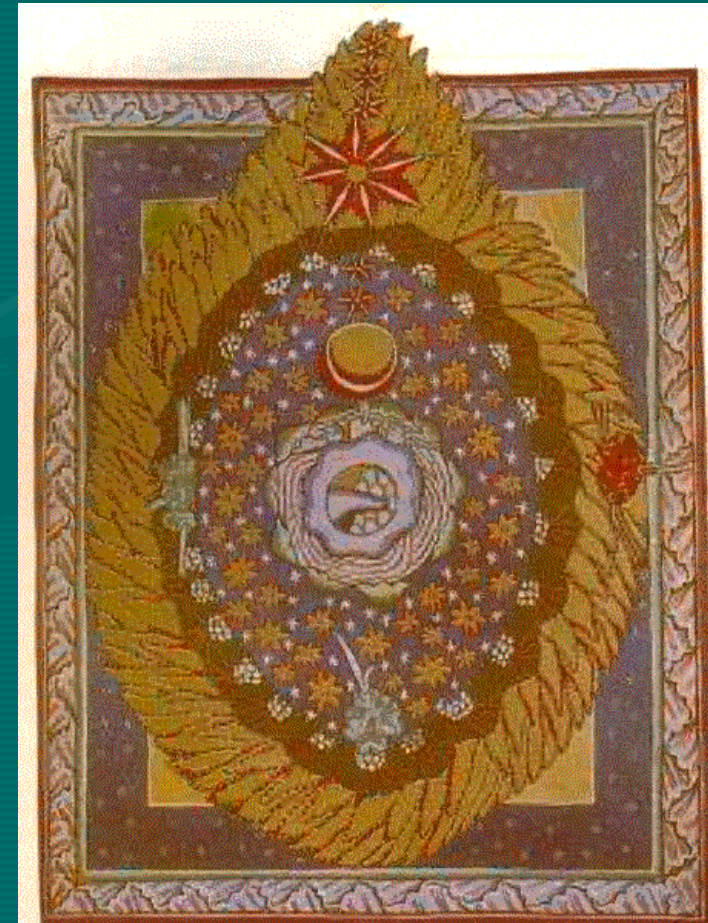
Mass

- Ordinary: parts of the Mass that were always included
- Examples of Ordinary: Kyrie Eleison; Gloria; Credo; Sanctus; Agnus Dei;
- Proper: parts of the Mass that were different for different occasions
- Examples of Proper: Introit; Gradual—Psalm and response; Offertory; Communion
- Music of Ordinary was fixed early; Proper was where musical innovation was allowed

Hours

- Matins -- during the night
- Lauds— at cockcrow (3 a.m.)
- Prime—6 a.m.
- Terce—9a.m.
- (Mass—10a.m.)
- Sext—Noon
- None—3 p.m.
- Vespers—6 p.m.
- Compline—at nightfall

(Music in the Medieval World, Albert Seay, 1965)



Melody Types and Modes

- Syllabic; one note per syllable
- Neumatic; two to five notes per syllable
- Melismatic; elaborate runs of six or more notes decorating several syllables over the course of the song.

There were 8 modes named after Greek modes, incorrectly, and they were classified based upon melodic range, the “final” or central note upon which the piece usually ended.

Iudicii Signum “Sign of Judgment”

- Example of monophonic plainchant, 10th century
- Sung by priest dressed as an old woman on Christmas Eve in Spain to convince the non-believers.
- Later became a Medieval play
- St. Augustine mentions the sibyls prophecy (City of God, Book 18) of the Apocalypse, using the phrase that serves as the refrain

- Iudicii signum

Tellus sudore madescet.

E celo rex adveniet

Per secla futurus

Scilicet in carne presens

Ut iudicet orbem.

Et coram hic domino

Reges sistentur ad unum

Decidet e celo ignis

Et sulfuris amnis.

- The sign of judgment:

The earth shall become wet with
dew.

From heaven shall arrive

He who shall be king for all ages,

Present in flesh, it is clear,

To judge the world.

And here before the Lord,

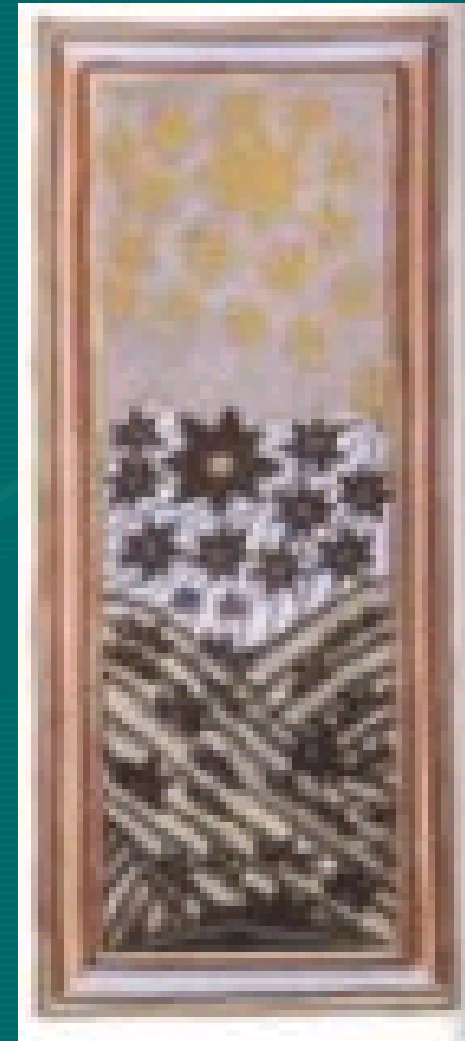
Kings without exception shall be
made to stand;

A river of fire and sulphur

Shall flow down from heaven.

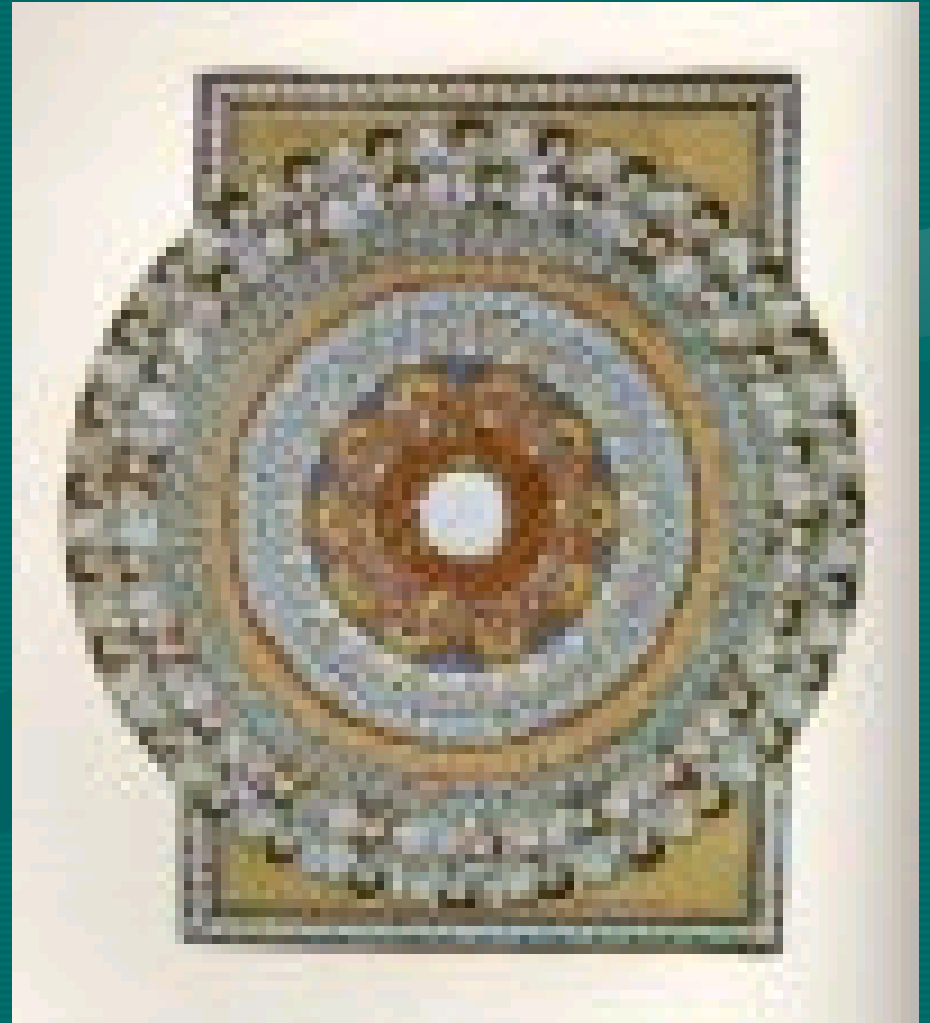
Medieval Variations to Basic Liturgy

- Hymns (Hours) and Antiphons for new Feast Days
- Trope: adds new textual and musical material to existing liturgy
- Sequence: a separate choral piece that follows the Alleluia in the Mass
- Liturgical drama
- Conductus; repeats music for each successive stanza of poetry; accompanied some sort of liturgical action involving motion
- These sometimes non-Biblical accretions and variations to the common liturgy allowed poets and musicians the freedom of expression desired by Medieval spirituality



Instruments and Notation

- Instruments: Extensions of voice; used to support or double the voice
- Primitive: notes were dots, lines and squiggles



Laudes de Sainte Ursule

- Legend derives from a 5th century inscription in Cologne, which mentions the martyrdom of a number of maidens
- By 9th c. story grows to become thousands, allegedly martyred by Emperor Maximian in 3rd century.
- Number grew to 11,000 martyrs in 10th c.
- 1155, discovery of a Roman burial ground at Cologne; cult of Ursula grew; cult suppressed by papacy.

Ursula Story

- Christian maiden from Brittany promised to pagan, King of Britain. Won't marry unless he converts after a three year pilgrimage to Rome.
- Accompanied by 10 virgin noble girls
- Each of the 11 accompanied by a 1000 maidens
- Sail up the Rhine to Cologne and then on foot to Rome.
- The pope accompanies them back.
- Martyred, along with Pope, by Huns, whose leader lusts after Ursula

Antiphona

Studium divinitatis in laudibus excelsis,
Osculum pacis Ursule virgini cum turba sua,
In omnibus populis dedit.

The lovingkindness of the Divinity in high praises
Hath given unto the virgin Ursula and even unto her
companions,
Among all the peoples, the kiss of peace.

Hymn, Cum Vox Sanguinis

Cum vox sanguinis Ursule et
innocentis turbe eius,
Ante thronum Dei sonuit,

Antiqua prophetia venit per radicem
Mambre,

In vera ostensione Trinitatis et dixit:

Iste sanguis nos tangit, nunc omnes
gaudeamus.

When the voice of the blood of
Ursula and of her innocent band,
Resounded before the throne of
God,

The ancient prophecy was made
manifest through the root of
Mambre

In the true revelation of the Trinity,
and it proclaimed:

This blood hath touched us, now let
us all rejoice.

Conclusions

- Gregorian Chant was standardized by the Carolingians, not Pope Gregory I.
- Early plainchant was monophonic and syllabic.
- In the 9-12th centuries plainchant added polyphonic and neumatic elements. While the Mass was set, composers elaborated the parts of the Mass and added new compositions for the Hours. Laudes de Ursula is an example
- Hymn “Cum Vox Sanguinis” is an example of polyphonic and melismatic chant. It also exemplifies the emotional quality of Hildegard’s compositions and the vocal range, which was not typical.