

CORPVS SCRIPTORVM DE MVSICA

24

EPISTOLA S. BERNARDI

DE REVISIONE CANTUS CISTERCIENSIS

et

TRACTATUS

Scriptus ab auctore incerto Cisterciense

CANTUM QUEM CISTERCIENSIS ORDINIS ECCLESIAE CANTARE

Editus a Francisco J. Guentner, S.J.



AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICOLOGY

1974

CORPVS SCRIPTORVM DE MVSICA

Gilbert Reaney

General Editor

LETTER OF SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX  
ON REVISION OF CISTERCIAN CHANT

&

THE TREATISE *CANTUM QUEM CISTERCIENSIS  
ORDINIS ECCLESIAE CANTARE  
CONSUEVERANT*

By an Anonymous Cistercian

Latin and English texts

Edited and Translated

by

FRANCIS J. GUENTNER, S. J.

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MUSICOLOGY

Armen Carapetyan

Director

© 1974 BY ARMEN CARAPETYAN

*TABLE OF CONTENTS*

	Page
I. Introduction . . . . .	9
II. Authorship . . . . .	14
III. Acknowledgements . . . . .	20
IV. <i>Prologus [Epistola Sancti Bernardi] et Praefatio [Cantum quem]</i> . . . . .	21
V. English translation of the <i>Prologus</i> and <i>Praefatio</i> .	43
VI. Appendices . . . . .	61
VII. Bibliography . . . . .	64

## INTRODUCTION

Students of the works of St. Bernard, as well as inquisitive theologians and medievalists, will have noticed an *Opusculum* included in the Mabillon editions of the Bernardine *Opera omnia* and in the Migne reprint of this work in the *Patrologia Latina*, 182: 1121-1132. This opusculum consists of two parts:

*Epistola S. Bernardi* (Incipit: “Bernardus humilis abbas Clarevallensis”)

*Tractatus de ratione cantandi Antiphonarium* (Incipit: “Cantum quem Cisterciensis Ordinis ecclesiae”)

This material, which deals with a reform of the Gregorian Antiphonary made in the 12th century by a group of second generation Cistercians, has received only scattered attention from musicologists because it pertains to a rather restricted area of musical theory. At the same time, as every medievalist is aware, to study the Middle Ages means to study the rise and phenomenal expansion of the Cistercians, and from that point of view the musical revision undertaken by the early Cistercian abbots c. 1147 is important. It provides yet one more insight into their single-mindedness and their total commitment to live “by the Rule.”

The basic reason for the Cistercian reform of the Antiphonary is stated in the *epistola* of St. Bernard: the founding fathers of the Order placed high among their priorities an authentic version of Gregorian chant (for use in the Divine Office); they sent men to bring back a copy of the Metz Antiphonary, but were bitterly disappointed to find that it was a very faulty edition. After using the Metz version for some time, criticism mounted to such a peak that the various Abbots decided a corrected edition should be made; St. Bernard was appointed as supervisor of the project. He delegated the actual task of correction to a group of the more skilled musicians in the Order; the corrected edition was accep-

## AUTHORSHIP

Although there is ample ms evidence ascribing the *Prologus* to the pen of St. Bernard, there is no direct ms testimony concerning the authorship of the *Praefatio*, i.e. the treatise *Cantum quem*, which is attached to St. Bernard's promulgatory letter.<sup>1</sup>

The reform principles were evidently agreed upon by a group of musicians. St. Bernard states specifically that he summoned the more learned and experienced among the Order's singers, and the treatise frequently makes use of "we," in explaining how various decisions were arrived at. Nevertheless the document appears to have been written by a single author, or at least to have been collated by a single hand: stylistically it reads as the work of one man, and in several places the singular "I" is employed, especially in sentences 71-72 (of the present edition).

In order to establish the identity of the probable author, we must follow a somewhat circuitous route. The name of a certain Guido is associated with Cistercian music in several early documents. In B. M. Lansdowne ms 763, for instance, we find in the midst of a *Tonale* (f. 19r): "Quod utique vigilancius perpendens Guydo iunior cognomento Augensis cuius industria Cisterciensis ordinis cantus regulariter est correctus."<sup>2</sup>

Although the *Tonale* was a common medieval form of musical

- 1 Of the various historians who have concerned themselves with the problem of authorship, three have devoted the major research to it: S. R. Marosszéki, S.O.Cist. [Ralph March, S.O.Cist.] in his "Les origines du chant Cistercien" p. 10-14; Maur Cocheril in his article "Du «de cantu» au plain-chant mesuré" (*Citeaux*, Tomus X, 1959) p. 180-195 and in his entry on "Gui de Longpont (d'Eu)" in *Encyclopédie de la musique*, II, p. 372; and José Canal, C.M.F. in his "Sobre el autor del antiphonario Cisterciense", p. 36-37. They agree that because of ms evidence, Guy de Cherlieu was involved in writing the treatise. However, owing to the erroneous reading "quam ad januam habes" instead of "habet," they postulate the existence of a Guy de Longpont as a co-author, though Cocheril admits "Quant au véritable artisan, le moine de Longpont, son nom tomba dans l'oubli."
- 2 Quoted in Jos. Smits van Waesberghe's edition of "Guidonis Aretini Micrologus" in *Corpus Scriptorum de Musica*, Vol. 4 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1955), p. 31.

## PRAEFATIO

### [I. Introductio.]

<sup>11</sup>Cantum quem Cisterciensis ordinis ecclesiae cantare consueverant, licet gravis et multiplex obfuscat absurditas, diu tamen canentium commendavit auctoritas. <sup>12</sup>Sed quia penitus indignum videbatur, qui regulariter vivere proposuerant, hos irregulariter laudes Deo decantare, ex eorum assensu cantum ita correctum inuenies quatenus eliminata falsitatum spurcitia, expulsisque illicitis ineptorum licentiis, integra regularum veritate fulciatur, aliorumque cantibus quibus erat deterior ad notandum et cantandum commodior habeatur. <sup>13</sup>Dignum siquidem est ut qui tenent regulae veritatem, praetermissis aliorum dispensationibus, habeant etiam rectam canendi scientiam, repudiatis eorum licentiis qui similitudinem magis quam naturam in cantibus attendentes, cohaerentia disiungunt, et coniungunt opposita: sicque omnia confundentes, cantum prout libet non prout licet incipiunt et terminant, deponunt et elevant, componunt et ordinant. <sup>14</sup>Unde nemo miretur aut indignetur si cantum aliter quam hucusque audierit in plerisque mutatum invenerit. <sup>15</sup>Ibi enim aut irregularis est progressio, aut progressioni sive dispositioni reclamant compositio, aut compositionem dissolvit oppositio. <sup>16</sup>Haec omnia, cum vitia sint regularum perfectionem magis exterminantia quam determinantia, procul,

---

11 sueverant *in text*; con *in marg* **R**/ /commendat *pro* commendavit **J**/

12 consensu *pro* assensu **P**/ /((assensu) canticum *pro* cantum **S**/ /((ineptorum) musicorum *add* **J**/

13 (disiungunt) et *om* **J**

14 sic *pro* si **R**

15 dissolutionis oppositionem *pro* dissolvit oppositio **J**

16 (omnino) procul *om* **P**

## THE LETTER OF SAINT BERNARD

Bernard, humble Abbot of Clairvaux, to all who will transcribe this Antiphony or sing from it:

Among the various endeavors in which our fathers, the founders of the Cistercian Order, strove to excel was one to which they paid the most scrupulous and zealous attention: that in the divine praises they should use that chant which was found to be the most authentic. To this end they sent several men to transcribe and bring back the Antiphony of the Cathedral of Metz, for it was said to be "Gregorian." But they found matters to be far different from what they had heard. For upon examining it, they were disappointed because in respect to both music and text it was discovered to be corrupt, very poorly structured, and despicable from almost every point of view. Nevertheless, because they had begun, they continued to use it, and they retained it until our time.

At last, however, since our brother Abbots of the Order could no longer endure it, and since they decided it should be revised and corrected, they committed the task to my supervision. For my part, summoning some of these very brethren who have been found to be better instructed and more skilled in the theory and practice of chant — together we have finally collected from many and diverse sources a new Antiphony, the attached volume. It is, we believe, irreproachable in both music and text. And anyone who sings it, if he be knowledgeable about chant, will testify to this. Hence we desire that in our monasteries it be everywhere kept both in text and melody exactly as it has at length been revised and is contained in this volume. And by the authority of the entire Chapter, where it was unanimously accepted and confirmed, we forbid that it be changed in any respect by any person.

Finally, if anyone desires clearer and fuller knowledge of the reasons and principles behind the present revision, he should read the attached Preface, which the above-mentioned revisers