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# The Canticle of the Three Children as a Chant of the Roman Mass

RUTH STEINER

It is to Wulf Arlt that we are indebted for the most detailed examination of the work of those medieval liturgists who on occasion flaunted the general rule that the form and style of a chant are determined by liturgical function.<sup>1</sup> As Professor Arlt has shown, what they did was to substitute chants in incongruous styles for the «official» chants of a service. It is days between Christmas and Epiphany that are affected – days reserved for special celebration by the clergy – and the sources in which such substitutions are most abundant are relatively late and come from northern France: Sens, Beauvais, Laon. A key principle is that the text of the substitute chant is either the same as, or a paraphrase of, that of the regular chant. The sense of the words must coincide with that of the original; everything else – including the words themselves – can be changed.

These substitutions have long been recognized as manifestations of ecclesiastical exuberance that could be tolerated because the time when they occurred was one in which all Christians had good reason to rejoice. By providing texts with melodies that were more elaborate than their usual ones, they enhanced the richness of a service.

What appears to be another instance of substitution occurs in a very different context. It is the settings of the Canticle of the Three Children as the chant following the fifth lesson in Masses of Ember Saturdays. Four different musical settings are involved, and at least four different texts. All have the same liturgical function, and the meanings of the texts overlap, when they do not coincide precisely. Yet they are musically quite different. Where did these chants originate, which of them is the oldest, why do the sources differ so much in the way they present them?

The Canticle of the Three Children is part of a long interpolation into chapter 3 of the book of Daniel.<sup>2</sup> The first part of the interpolation (Daniel 3:24–45 in the Vulgate numbering) is known as the Prayer of Azariah; it is followed by a brief prose narrative (Vss. 46–51). Next comes the first section of the Canticle of

1 *Ein Festoffizium des Mittelalters aus Beauvais* (2 vols.; Köln, Arno Volk Verlag, 1970). See also H. Villetard, *L'Office de Pierre de Corbeil* (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard & Fils, 1907), D. Hughes, «Music for St. Stephen at Laon,» *Words and Music: The Scholar's View*, ed. L. Berman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 137; and «Compline,» *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 4:598–9.

2 The best introduction to the book of Daniel is that of Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, in *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 23 (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1978). See also M. Delcor, *Le Livre de Daniel* (Paris, 1971). For the Latin text of the Canticle see *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. R. Weber (2nd ed., rev.; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975), Vol. II, pp. 1348–1351. Concerning the interpolation see Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: the Additions* (*The Anchor Bible*, vol. 44; Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 39–76. Moore presents a detailed review of the scholarly literature, one that the reader of the present study will undoubtedly find enlightening. For his bibliography, see pp. 35–8.

the Three Children (Vss. 52–56), which begins «Benedictus es Domine Deus patrum nostrorum», exactly as does the Prayer of Azariah. It has a refrain in which the wording is varied in each use. The second section (Vss. 57–90) is known as the «Benedicite», and has an almost completely regular refrain.

Although no ancient Semitic version of these texts has been preserved, there is a modern translation of the «Benedictus es» and the «Benedicite» into Hebrew verse. The translation works so well that it permits «the presumption of a Hebrew original.»<sup>3</sup> According to Moore, it is difficult to date the texts on internal evidence, and to guess just when they were incorporated into the Daniel narrative; but the effect of the interpolation is to shift attention from Nebuchadnezzar to the three young men, and from what they did to what they believed. Setting the prayer at the head of the series of interpolations came later, and it led to some inconsistencies in the telling of the story.

The «Benedicite» is a long and beautiful song of praise to God, one that seems originally to have been composed for use in public worship. Here it represents the response of the children of Israel to yet another miracle, their preservation in the face of certain doom. The whole story of the fiery furnace, especially the response of the three men to the king's threat, is an expression of religious pacifism, an ideology that was strong among Hasidim even at the time of the horrifying persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, which reached its climax between 167 and 164 B. C., and came to an end only with the revolt of the Maccabees. Thus the editing of the first six chapters of Daniel is thought by many to have occurred during this period.<sup>4</sup> And for the early Christians, too, suffering persecution, parallels between their plight and that of the Three Young Men must have been evident; the motif appears again and again in wall paintings in the Catacombs.<sup>5</sup>

Our understanding of the liturgical practices of early Christian communities is still imperfect; we do not know every one of the stages by which the development proceeded, from «psalms, canticles, and spiritual songs» to the official public worship according to established formulas of later times. But references to the Canticle of the Three Children are so numerous in accounts of the customs of widely separated religious groups that it must have been used almost as often as the psalms, and known at least as well as they.

In a series of lectures published under the title *Comparative Liturgy*, Anton Baumstark called attention to the wide use of the «Benedicite»: he spoke of its appearance on a fragment of papyrus representing «an ancient Egyptian office book,» in the night office of the Copts and that of the Maronites, in the Sunday Matins of the Nestorians, and in the Matins of the Armenians.<sup>6</sup>

3 Moore, p. 48.

4 Hartman and Di Lella, pp. 43–5.

5 The classic study is that of H. Leclercq, «Hebreux (les trois jeunes),» in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, VI.2 (Paris, 1925), cols. 2107–2126. See also Carlo Carletti, *I tre giovani Ebrei di Babilonia nell'arte cristiana antica* (Brescia, 1975), and the review of that work by Marguerite Rassart-Debergh in *Byzantion*, 48 (1978), 430–455.

6 Anton Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, trans. by F. L. Cross from the 3rd French edition, rev. by B. Botte (Westminster, Md., 1958), pp. 35–6.

Indeed, it would be very interesting and, no doubt, highly rewarding to study all of the liturgical uses of the «Benedicite»: in the East and in the West, in the Mass and in the Office. But for the purpose of this discussion it is necessary to focus on a single topic; the one I have chosen is the use of the «Benedicite» as a chant of the Mass of the Roman rite – specifically, as the chant following the fifth of the six lessons on Ember Saturdays.

These Ember Saturday services are well represented in the Mass antiphonals studied by Hesbert in *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex*, as they are in the earlier lectionaries and sacramentaries.<sup>7</sup> The sources agree in indicating that the fifth lesson on all four days is drawn from the third chapter of the book of Daniel, leading directly into the chant. The one exception is the Würzburg lectionary, the earliest source of the distinctively Roman lectionary; its omission of the Daniel lesson indicates – according to Hesbert – that neither it nor the Canticle was included in the Mass for Ember Saturdays as originally formulated in Rome.<sup>8</sup> Their introduction into these services in manuscripts prepared for use in France reveals an influence of the Gallican liturgy. In the Mozarabic sources, where the Canticle was regularly sung in the Mass on Sundays and feast days, its text is presented in a number of different arrangements, which have been surveyed by Brou.<sup>9</sup> Only one of the antiphonals of the Roman Mass surveyed by Hesbert in *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* gives the text of the «Benedicite» in full, preceded by the verse, «Benedictus es in firmamento caeli et laudabilis et gloriosus in saecula» – that is, in essentially the same form as that in which it appears in the earliest sources with musical notation.<sup>10</sup> One of the other sources gives the incipit of the chant, preceding it with the rubric «*Lectio Danihel Prophetae*», and the beginning of that lesson, «*In diebus illis Angelus Domini*». One manuscript never refers to the chant at all; the other three refer to it by the title «*Benedictiones*», using this term in a context which bears description.

It is to be remembered that among the other chants for these Ember Saturdays are fourgraduals. These are written in full (or given in incipit, according to the procedure generally followed in the source) in the Ember Week of Advent – the first time they appear in the liturgical year. Thereafter (in the later Ember Weeks), references to them take the form, «*RESP. GRAD. IIII*». There is no mention of any form of the Canticle of the Three Children in the Ember Week

7 R.-J. Hesbert, *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* (Brussels, 1935; reprint ed., Rome: Herder, 1967), pp. XXXIX–XLIV.

8 Hesbert, p. XLIII, fn. 2. The early history of the Ember Weeks is examined by G. G. Willis, in *Early Christian Liturgy* (London: S. P. C. K., 1964), pp. 51–75. Until the end of the 5th century at Rome there were ordinations only in the December Embertide, making it the most important one. It is evident from early references to the Embertides, and also from the texts employed in the liturgy – particularly Gospels and Communions – that the Lenten Embertide (the fast of the first month) was a later addition (Willis, pp. 53–57). The manner in which the Embertides are presented in the Gelasian Sacramentary (of *ca.* 560) makes it appear that the Lenten Embertide «was coming in about that time» (Willis, p. 57). Nonetheless, the manner in which Ember Weeks are presented in the Mass antiphonals (none of which is earlier than perhaps the end of the eighth century) often makes the Lenten Embertide seem more important than the others.

9 L. Brou, «Les ‘Benedictiones’ ou cantique des trois enfants dans l’ancienne messe espagnole,» *Hispania sacra*, 1 (1948), 21–33.

10 The manuscript in question is the Compiègne Antiphonal, Paris, Bibl. nat., lat. 17436; see Hesbert, pp. XLI and 61.

of Advent in any of these MSS; this is particularly striking in view of the fact that – as I said – the *graduals* are written in full.

The three manuscripts that use the term «*Benedictiones*» without providing a text incipit (in Ember Weeks other than that of Advent) do so by simply adding it to the rubric that I have just given, so that it takes the form «RESP. GRAD. IIII ET BENEDICTIONES.» One infers that, just as the singer is expected to know what the *graduals* are (because he has seen them earlier in the book), he is also expected to know the «*Benedictiones*.» But where is that chant given?

What the reference to the Canticle of the Three Children, in one form or another, under the title «*Benedictiones*,» suggested to Hesbert is that it was not a chant in the usual sense of the word – not something to be included in a book intended for the use of cantors. The reason is that what is involved in the lesson and the Canticle is a single passage from Daniel, of which the first part is read – to the customary lesson tone – while the second, of which the text is in the style of a lyric, is given a somewhat more elaborate musical setting. References in some other manuscripts indicate that here and in other passages of similar dual character a single lector performed both sections, chanting the first, singing the second.<sup>11</sup>

The manuscripts surveyed in *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* thus may give evidence of two different phases in the development of this chant – one, in which the Canticle was performed by the lector, to a formula only slightly more elaborate than that he had used for the lesson preceding it; and another, in which the Canticle had been given a more fully developed musical setting, and entrusted to the cantors for performance. (In the first phase, where the lector executed the Canticle, I see no reason not to imagine the congregation participating in its performance, chanting the fixed refrain, «*Laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula.*»)

I should like to propose to my colleagues in the round table yet a third explanation of the term «*Benedictiones*» as employed in these manuscripts. If, as Hesbert has suggested, the inclusion in the service of the Daniel lesson (and a chant to accompany it) was made out of deference to local custom in the Frankish Empire, in an effort to find a place for materials that were traditional there, then Gallican settings (or adaptations) of the *Benedictiones* may have been employed. Now one of the things that characterizes the treatment of the *Benedictiones* in the Mozarabic rite (and very possibly also the Gallican, though here the evidence is less abundant) is a multiplicity of settings of the Canticle, texts selected and arranged in many different ways: there are 26 different *Benedictiones* in the Leon Antiphoner. In an act intended to show deference to local custom, making a choice of one or another (of the *Benedictiones*) would have struck exactly the wrong note: the general term «*Benedictiones*» may indicate that here some choice is possible, the choice to be made from a local repertory which had no place in a book of official, «*Roman*» chant.

Let me pass on now to a consideration of what we find in manuscripts that present the Proper chants of the Mass with musical notation. The form of the Can-

11 Hesbert, p. XLII, including fn. 1.

title that one finds in the early chant manuscripts is a setting of the whole of the «Benedicite» preceded by the verse, «Benedictus es in firmamento caeli.» The setting is elaborate and formulaic; analyses by Wagner and Ferretti have identified the structure of the tone and the points at which it is enriched by melismas.<sup>12</sup> The refrain, which begins in this setting with the words, «Hymnum dicite,» is set after every third blessing, rather than every single one, as in the Bible. There is a good deal of detail in the rhythmic notation of it in such manuscripts as Laon 239 and Einsiedeln 121: it is clear that it is a chant for the cantor, and an occasion for particularly brilliant vocal display. It is this form of the «Benedicite» that one is most likely to find in the early Gregorian Mass manuscripts: it is the only one in Laon 239 and Chartres 47; and when there is reference to others in St. Gall 359, that comes in a later hand.

Another chant used to follow the Daniel lesson in Masses for Ember Saturdays begins «Benedictus es Domine Deus patrum nostrorum,» that is, with verse 52 of what we have called the «Benedictus es.» It continues with a series of blessings, «Benedictus es in templo sancto gloriae tuae,» «Benedictus es super thronum sanctum regni tui,» and so on, that are not, at least in part, exact Biblical quotations, and which vary both in their number and in their order from one source to another. In numbering the verses of this chant as it appears in Einsiedeln 121, I have set aside the opening, and I am not taking into account the ending, which varies too much from one source to another to be dealt with effectively here.

Table 1

The chant «Benedictus es Domine Deus patrum nostrorum»  
ORDER OF INNER VERSES

1 2 3 4 5 6 7:	Einsiedeln 121 (St. Gall? beginning of 11th c.) Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 807 (Klosterneuburg, 12th c.) Leipzig, Univ., St. Thomas, 391 (Leipzig, end of 13th) Leningrad, O v I 6 (use of Bec, 12th c.) London, B. L., Add. 12194 (Sarum, ca. 1275)
1 2 4 5 3 6 7:	Ediger/Mosel, Pfarrarchiv (Rheinland, end of 12th c.)
1 2 3 5 4 7 6:	Durham, Univ., Cosin V V 6 (Canterbury, Durham, ca. 1080)
1 2 4 3 5 6 7:	Paris, B. n., lat. 1087 (Cluny, 11th c.) Brussels, Bibl. roy., II 3823 (Souvigny [Cluniac], beg. of 12th c.) Paris, B. n., lat. 1107 (St. Denis, 13th c., 2/2)

12 P. Ferretti, *Esthétique grégorienne* (Solesmes, 1938), pp. 203–212; P. Wagner, *Gregorianische Formenlehre (Einführung in die gregorianischen Melodien, III)* (Leipzig, 1921), pp. 361–366.

1 x 2 3 4 5 6 7: Rome, Bibl. Angelica, 123  
(Bologna, beg. of 11th c.)

1 2 x 3 4 6 5 7: Paris, B. n., lat. 776  
(St. Michel de Gaillac, 11th c.)

1 2 3 x 5 4 6 7: Monza, Bibl. cap., 12/75  
(Monza, beg. of 11th c.)

1 2 5 3 y 4 6 7: Modena, Bibl. cap., O I 7  
(Forlimpopoli [Ravenna], 11th or 12th.)

1 2 x 3 4 3 6 5 7: London, B. L., Harl. 4951  
(Toulouse, 11th c.)

If the order of the inner verses in Einsiedeln 121 is taken as the standard (this is not to imply that it is necessarily the earliest or best) and that of the other sources is compared with it, the lack of consistency is immediately apparent. (See Table 1.) Some later sources from German-speaking regions, such as one from Klosterneuburg, agree with Einsiedeln; but the gradual of Ediger – an Augustinian source from the end of the 12th century, the earliest gradual from the Rheinland that has come down to us – gives the verses in a very different order. A Leningrad manuscript that represents the use of Bec agrees with Einsiedeln, as does the Sarum Gradual; but a source copied at Canterbury and sent to Durham around 1080 gives the verses in an order that did not occur elsewhere among the sources consulted for this study. Two Cluniac sources and a St. Denis missal agree. An additional verse, «Benedictus es super sedem sanctam divinitatis tuae» (or «Benedictus qui sedes super sedem,» etc.) is sometimes added to the chant; it is designated as x on the chart. You will note that it may come second in the series (in Rome, Angelica 123), third (in lat. 776), or fourth (Monza 12/75). There is a different additional verse – designated y on the chart – in a manuscript from Forlimpopoli. Can we infer that «Benedictus es Domine Deus» did not originate as a chant with a fixed text and a definite length, but as an open-ended series of benedictions – a well-known kind of prayer, one that might be developed differently on different occasions, in response to circumstances and the sense of the congregation, though its central theme would always remain «Blessed art thou, O Lord God of our fathers»? The musical setting is a variant of the 7th-mode psalm tone.

If the inference is correct, that this was once an open-ended text, it was the only one in the chants used in this liturgical role. The other forms of the «Benedicite» used after the Daniel lesson on Ember Saturdays follow the «Benedicite» closely, either in exact quotation or in paraphrase. But this is not to say that there are no differences between the Vulgate edition of the «Benedicite» and the form in which it appears in its chant settings. There are differences, here and there, and particularly in what might be called the second stanza of the text, Daniel 3:64–73. This organization into stanzas is roughly regular in terms of number of lines, and follows content. As Moore expresses it,<sup>13</sup> in the first stanza it is said

13 Moore, pp. 42–3.

that creations in the highest heavens should praise God, in the second, that elements coming from heaven should praise God, in the third, earthly creations, and in the fourth, all mankind.

Table 2

Vulgate	Chant	Theodotion B
64 imber et ros	64 imber et ros	
65 omnis spiritus	65 omnis spiritus	
66 ignis et aestus	66 ignis et aestus	66
67 frigus et aestus	71 noctes et dies	71
68 rores et pruina	72 tenebrae et lumen	72
69 gelu et frigus	69 frigus et cauma	69
70 glacies et nives	70 pruina et nives	70
71 noctes et dies	73 fulgura et nubes	73
72 lux et tenebrae		
73 fulgura et nubes		

In Table 2, I have contrasted the order of elements in the second stanza with their order in the chant. I have used the third column to show the order in which they are given in one early Greek version of the text, the one referred to in scholarship in this field as Theodotion B.<sup>14</sup> The point is clear: the chant text follows an ancient edition of the Canticle in which things are arranged differently than in the Vulgate. There is no need to blame the composer of the chant for rearranging the text, or to credit him with doing so. And there is evidently a parallel in this to the borrowing of texts from the earlier, Roman psalter, rather than the later Gallican psalter, for musical settings in the classic repertory of Mass chants. The word «cauma» in verse 69 comes straight from the Greek.<sup>15</sup> The word is not unknown in Latin; but (according to Fischer) it occurs just once in the Vulgate, not in the «Benedicite» but in the book of Job.<sup>16</sup>

The most familiar substitute for the «Benedicite» in the Mass is the Alleluia that stands in its place in those Mass formularies for the Ember Saturday after Pentecost that have as their lesson chants five Alleluias and a tract. To trace this development adequately would be impossible here. I should like to go on directly to another substitute for the «Benedicite,» a paraphrase of it in verse – in accentual Adonics – that is attributed to Walafrid Strabo (809–ca. 849), Abbot of Reichenau and advisor to Louis the Pious.<sup>17</sup> It begins, «Omnipotentem semper adorant,» and, as I have suggested, follows the «Benedicite» very closely. In what corresponds to the second section, there is inevitably some rearrangement of the elements, for the sake of the meter, but the use of «cauma» indicates that the model is the chant of the Benedicite, rather than the Vulgate text:

14 Moore, pp. 71, 30–33.

15 Moore, p. 71, in the note concerning v. 45. For a reconciliation of Moore's numbering of the verses with that of the Vulgate (employed here), see pp. 66–9.

16 Bonifatius Fischer OSB, *Novae concordantiae Bibliorum sacrorum* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1977), 1:735.

17 The poetry of Walafrid Strabo is discussed by F. J. E. Raby in *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry* (2nd ed.; London, 1953), pp. 183–9.

Sic quoque limphe queque superna ros pluvieque spiritus omnis  
Ignis et estus cauma geluque frigus et ardor atque pruina  
Nix glaciesque noxque diesque lux tenebreque fulgura nubes

The opening section is repeated, in full or in part, as a refrain after each of the verses, which are all sung to the same melody.

The work appears in a number of manuscripts, not always with the same music. Bruno Stäblein gives two melodies for it in his collection of medieval hymns.<sup>18</sup> The oldest source to present this text with musical notation has recently been identified by Peter Jeffery as the front flyleaf of the manuscript Laon, Bibl. municipale, 266, which dates from the last quarter of the ninth century; it is also the oldest source that assigns this text a role in the liturgy.<sup>19</sup> The melody there is neumatic, and more or less matches that given in the Einsiedeln manuscript, where it is in an appendix – not in place in the liturgical year. London, B. L., Harley 4951 also gives essentially the same melody; but lat. 1121 has a different setting, one that is in almost entirely syllabic style, in which the refrain is called for after every half-verse.

The presentation in lat. 1121 of the «Benedicite» and its alternates follows an organization of the liturgical year that ends in Advent, rather than beginning there.<sup>20</sup> «Benedictus es in firmamento» is given first, then «Benedictus es Domine Deus,» for «Secunda Sabbato, in Iunio»; then «Omnia opera Domini Deum benedicite,» «In autumno»; and finally, «In hieme» (in winter, that is, Advent), «Omnipotentem semper adorant.»

The same organization of the year underlies the way in which «Benedictus es in firmamento» and the «Benedicite» are divided up among the four Ember Saturdays in some Beneventan manuscripts: the beginning of the text is sung on the Ember Saturday of Lent, the next section on that after Pentecost, the next in the fall, and the last, in Advent, with the full antiphon beginning the chant each time.<sup>21</sup> (The four sections into which the «Benedicite» is divided do not coincide with what we have called the stanzas: Lent has rather more than its share, and Advent the smallest part. But grouping the blessings in threes makes following that scheme exactly impossible in any case.)

In lat. 1121, the chant for the fall, «Omnia opera Domini,» is an antiphon that introduces the «Benedicite» chanted to a formula that is practically a psalm tone. (It is shown in Plate 1.) But «Omnia opera Domini» is not one of the hundreds of antiphons collected and edited by Hesbert in *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii*; and Randel's index of Mozarabic chant leads us to an antiphon with almost the

18 *Monumenta monodica medii aevi, I.: Hymnen (1)* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1956), pp. 489–90, with commentary on p. 620.

19 Peter Jeffery, «An Early Cantatorium Fragment Related to MS Laon 239,» *Scriptorium*, 36 (1982), 245–252.

20 This may reflect a system of arranging the Ember Weeks according to the civil (rather than the liturgical) year, setting them in the first, fourth, seventh and tenth months. For the connection between the Ember Weeks and the Roman seasonal fasts observed at the time of sowing and of harvesting corn, and of harvesting grapes, see Willis, pp. 53–4.

21 [R.-J. Hesbert], «La tradition bénéventaine dans la tradition manuscrite,» *Paléographie musicale*, XIV (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1931), pp. 223–4.

Benedicurz omnes angeli et sanctani **L**audabi  
lem gloriosum in secula. **G**loria patris in secula  
**L**audabili gloriosa sancta. **S**icut erat in principio et nunc  
et semper in secula. **A**men. **B**enedic ueritatem deum  
et in ueritate doce me deum. **I**nvictum  
benedic ueritatem. **B**enedic ueritatem aperte deum  
de domino. **B**enedic ueritatem angelis domini deo  
**O**mnia. **B**enedic aequum super celos sunt  
de domino. **B**enedic ueritatem super terram de domino deo  
**O**mnia. **B**enedic ueritatem soli luna et domini deo  
benedic ueritatem sellae et domini. **O**mnia. **B**enedic ueritatem

Plate 1: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, ms. latin 1121, fol. 88<sup>v</sup>

same text but a different melody.<sup>22</sup> The only other source that has yet come to light for this antiphon is an 11th-century Aquitanian antiphonal – Toledo, Bibl. cap. 44.1 – in which it lacks notation.

To sum up, what lat. 1121 shows is three chants based on the «Benedicite» (Daniel 3:57–90). One presents the text in paraphrase; each of the other two provides an introduction and refrain for it, and states it completely. It also has one chant that takes «Benedictus es» (Daniel 3:52–56) as its point of departure. The texts are not identical in character, and the differences between them are significant. «Benedictus es» is a prayer of the type known as «berakah,» or benediction, in which God is blessed; there are many examples of this type of prayer in the Old Testament.<sup>23</sup> The form is flexible, and may be developed in a number of different ways. The «Benedicite,» on the other hand, is like a poem (Moore refers to it as a hymn); in it a systematic organization rules the length of sections and their development. In light of that, it is not surprising that in the Gregorian manuscripts the «Benedicite» is given complete rather than reduced to a series of excerpts. But how can the diversity of musical styles be explained, and the fact that one finds sometimes one of these texts, sometimes the other?

Perhaps the explanation lies in the relatively late date at which the Daniel lesson became part of the service for Ember Saturdays. But there may be another reason, one having to do with the meaning of the text. The effect of the interpolation in chapter 3 of the book of Daniel, as has been said earlier, is to shift attention from what the three young men did to what they believed. It was a miracle of faith that enabled them to live to sing the praise of God in the fiery furnace. Can the diversity of forms for their prayer, and of musical settings for their hymn, have been the product of reluctance to establish one set way of representing in the liturgy a turn of events that is as astonishing and dramatic as any in sacred literature?

22 R.-J. Hesbert, *Corpus Antiphonalium Officii*, III (Rome: Herder, 1968); Don Michael Randel, *An Index to the Chant of the Mozarabic Rite* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 305.

23 Paul F. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church* (London: Alcuin Club, 1981), pp. 11–18.