

# Soundings within and without the »Temple«: Liturgical Voices in the Purification Procession

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How did the liturgical voices of cloistered women move across the various boundaries of space and time, both in designated areas of their grounds, certain of which permitted guests, and outward to a world that was on the other side as well<sup>1)</sup>? How did women's understandings of areas within their hallowed grounds shape their lives; what were the relationships between modes of life within the cloister and convent church and those outside the cloister? How did knowledge of other kinds of life come back inside, either literally or allegorically? How did the ways women moved – inside the cloister and outside – demarcate space and time, creating living memories of the past, and connecting the women to their histories? How were the narratives of history worked into the representations of the women's lives and liturgical practices? How might the resounding texts of the chants they sang offer meanings both to themselves and to outsiders who were able to hear the women sing and sometimes even to see them<sup>2)</sup>? To answer these questions, one looks at the documents, but the work then too is to interpret what these ceremonies might

1) For an overview of processions as rituals on the margins of time and space and the power of the liminal, see the essays in *Moving Subjects. Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen ASHLEY/Wim HÜSKEN (Ludus 5), Amsterdam 2001; and *Ceremonial Culture in Pre-Modern Europe*, ed. Nicholas HOWE, Notre Dame 2007.

2) On processions among female religious in England in the Middle Ages, see Anne BAGNALL YARDLEY, *Performing Piety. Musical Culture in Medieval English Nunneries*, New York 2006, esp. at pp. 113–129. For discussion of differing nature of processions in Rome, see Sible DE BLAAUW, *Contrasts in Processional Liturgy. A Typology of Outdoor Processions in Twelfth-Century Rome*, in: *Art, Cérémonial et Liturgie au Moyen Âge*, ed. Nicholas BOCK/Peter KURMANN/Serena ROMANO/Jean-Michel SPIESER (*Études lausannoises d'histoire de l'art* 1), Rome 2002, pp. 357–394; a varied collection on the topic, including study of music for processions, is *Prozessionen und ihre Gesänge in der mittelalterlichen Stadt. Gestalt – Hermeneutik – Repräsentation*, ed. Harald BUCHINGER/David HILEY/Sabine REICHERT/Edith FEISTNER (*Forum Mittelalter. Studien* 13), Stuttgart 2017. The definitive work on processional manuscripts is: Michel HUGLO, *Les manuscrits du processional*, 2 vols. (*International inventory of musical sources. B. XIV*), Munich 1999–2004. The database Cantus will soon be offering inventories of processionals, which will be a boon for their study.

have meant to those involved, realizing all the while that there is no one idealized experience for any individual participant.

This essay looks at these questions and interpretations of the documents from three views of the same feast, examining various ceremonies in motion within and without, with special emphasis on processions and ideas of motion, as sung/proclaimed by two Benedictine communities, that of the Paraclete, in Burgundy and that of Barking Abbey, near London and that of the canonesses of Nivelles in Belgium. The three communities offer contrasting views of the procession: they existed in three different regions, and the documents are earlier for the Paraclete, although the community at Barking is itself older, with the source from Nivelles representing a late thirteen-century use. Each group reveals unique dimensions of the topic »within/without« through the liturgies of female religious, moving from the most restrictive at the Paraclete to the least, at Nivelles, with the situation at Barking, where there was motion outside and some observation of the laity, falling somewhere inbetween. The study shows a variety of understandings regarding inside and outside motion, and so offers an opportunity to observe this variety first hand in the details when considering the ways in which this particular procession was or was not a kind of membrane between the community and the outside world.

I have chosen to focus on the rituals surrounding one of the three greatest processions of the church year, so named by Richard of St. Victor in his treatise *Super exiit edictum seu De Tribus processionibus* (»On the Three Processions«)<sup>3</sup>. As Richard defined them, the three major processions are those for the Feasts of the Purification of the Virgin Mary (February 2), Palm Sunday (Sunday before Easter), and the Ascension (40 days after Easter). The casts of characters are many, and the degrees to which they are all represented or not vary from place to place, but it is clear that all three of the major processions of the church year are *adventus* ceremonies. In these rituals, well established in antique civilizations, the victor enters a place that welcomes him (usually) and celebrates his triumph, a theme that is central to the workings of the Roman rite in general, beginning with the season of Advent<sup>4</sup>. *Ordo Romanus* 20 contains the ritual of the Purification, however

3) Richard of St. Victor, *Sermons et opusculs spirituels inédits*. Vol. 1: Text latin, intro, notes by Jean CHÂTILLON/William-Joseph TULLOCH, French transl. Joseph BARTHÉLEMY (Bibliothèque de spiritualité médiévale), Paris 1951. An essay with points in common with this one, but working with different communities, is Jürgen BÄRSCH, Spätmittelalterliche Prozessionen als anamnetische Figuren. Liturgiewissenschaftliche Beobachtungen zur Lichterprozession am Fest »Purificatio Mariae« (2 Februar), in: *Kritische Berichte. Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaften* 45/3 (2017), pp. 21–30.

4) See especially Margot FASSLER, »Adventus« at Chartres. Ritual Models for Major Processions, in: *Culture* (as n. 1), pp. 13–62; and the discussion of Advent in Margot FASSLER, *The Virgin of Chartres. Making History through Liturgy and the Arts*, New Haven 2010. For the classical antecedents to the medieval practice, see: Michael McCORMICK, *Eternal Victory. Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West*, Cambridge 1986; there is a substantial literature on later centuries, including David A. WARNER, *Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian Reich: The Ceremony of Adventus*, in: *Speculum* 76 (2001), pp. 255–283.

without the processional antiphons that characterize the feast in the later sources; *Ordo Romanus* 50 contains most of the customary chants discussed below<sup>5</sup>).

In many *adventus* rituals one can explore the particular sense of liminality, in the Turnerian sense of the term<sup>6</sup>. In observing such rites one asks where is that space or time when motion from one state to another actually takes place, where is there a crossing of the threshold, or *limen*, at what point in the rite, either actually or symbolically? For each of the three major processions mentioned above this space and time would be very different, and, as the church year advances, both become increasingly larger in scope, more cosmic in proportion: first Jesus is taken from outside the Temple to inside in the Purification, then from outside the walls of Jerusalem to inside the city during Palm Sunday, and finally from earthly to heavenly realms in the Ascension. Falling as it does on February 2, the Feast of the Purification is linked to Christmas: a woman was to be purified 40 days after giving birth, hence the calendrical calculation of the date. It is one of the few feasts that commemorate a stage in the life of Jesus and Mary after the Circumcision on January 1, and before Passiontide. The feast was a significant time marker in the church year, and was thought of as the end of the long period of time between the Nativity and the beginning of the pre-Lenten period. So it might occur either before *Septuagesima*, or within the pre-Lenten weeks of *Septuagesima*, *Sexagesima*, and *Quinquagesima*. As a result, the character of the feast was changeable, depending upon its relationship to the shifting dates of the beginning of the pre-Lenten period, making it sometimes more solemn than joyful. Religious houses with a particularly high Mariology might retain more of the festive elements, including the singing of the sequence, even if the feast fell in the pre-Lenten period<sup>7</sup>. Winifrid Sturman notes that the Feast of the Purification was the time that those who had paid a sum to the nuns of Barking were no longer free to graze their lands, this a kind of tightening reflected in the nature of the church year, too<sup>8</sup>.

The Feast of the Purification, studied here and compared in three houses of religious women, provides an opportunity to observe the celebration of an event from the life of the Virgin Mary, long seen as a type of the church in Christian exegesis. This is the most contained of the three major processions, the smallest in scale, and so offers a chance to

5) The feast, known in the East as *Hypapante* (the meeting), originated in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and two of the processional antiphons sung in Latin descend from Greek originals. See Kenneth W. STEVENSON, *The Origins and Development of Candlemas. A Struggle for Identity and Coherence?*, in: *Time and Community*. In Honor of Julian Talley, ed. J. Neil ALEXANDER, Washington D.C. 1990, pp. 43–80, and Giovanni DI NAPOLI, *L'antifona ›Adorna thalamum tuum‹ tra oriente e occidente*, in: *Marianum. Ephemerides mariologiae* 11/12 (2011), pp. 17–69.

6) The literature on the subject of liminality in ritual is vast; a useful introduction in Victor Turner's terms is found in Victor TURNER, *Frame, Flow, and Reflection. Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality*, in: *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6/4 (1979), pp. 465–499.

7) As the earliest possible date for Ash Wednesday is February 4, the feast could not fall in Lent proper.

8) Winifrid STURMAN, *Barking Abbey. A Study in Its External and Administration from the Conquest to the Dissolution*, London 1961, p. 53.

look at specific details very closely. Also, because the communities focused upon are recently well treated in the scholarship, the rich resources for studying this feast are many, including both customaries and ordinals to supplement processions and other chant sources<sup>9</sup>. Discussion of these ways of processing, of moving, will, of course, include references to other institutions as well, to contextualize the nature of the motion even further.

Every major procession in the liturgical year was associated with a narrative of action, and in the case of the Purification, the characters recreate motion from outside of the Temple to inside, allegorically bringing the light that represents Christ into the church. The fundamental text is Luc. 2,22–40, a tale of the prophet Symeon, who was promised that he would not die until he saw the messiah with his own eyes<sup>10</sup>. Symeon's reception of Jesus in the Temple inspired one of the most liturgically prominent New Testament canticles, the *Nunc dimittis*, a text of prophetic promise, sung at the close of every day in churches and monasteries throughout medieval Europe: *Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; Because my eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.* Focus on this event in the Feast of the Purification would have had rich resonances for both clergy and monastics who were used to singing of the event in their daily lives, becoming blessed like Symeon each night before falling asleep. Christ is concretized as the light in the ceremony by the elaborate use of candles, which have a range of roles to play.

9) The finest collection to date of medieval customaries is *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum* (CCM), ed. Kassius HALLINGER OSB, Siegburg 1963–1994. The CCM now contains 14 volumes.

10) [22] *Et postquam impleti sunt dies purgationis ejus secundum legem Moysi, tulerunt illum in Jerusalem, ut sisterent eum Domino, [23] sicut scriptum est in lege Domini: Quia omne masculinum adaperiens vulvam, sanctum Domino vocabitur: [24] et ut darent hostiam secundum quod dictum est in lege Domini, par turturum, aut duos pullos columbarum. [25] Et ecce homo erat in Jerusalem, cui nomen Simeon, et homo iste justus, et timoratus, exspectans consolationem Israel: et Spiritus Sanctus erat in eo. [26] Et responsum acceperat a Spiritu Sancto, non visurum se mortem, nisi prius videret Christum Domini. [27] Et venit in spiritu in templum. Et cum inducerent puerum Jesum parentes ejus, ut facerent secundum consuetudinem legis pro eo, [28] et ipse accepit eum in ulnas suas: et benedixit Deum, et dixit: [29] Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace: [30] quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum, [31] quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum: [32] lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae Israel. [33] Et erat pater ejus et mater mirantes super his quae dicebantur de illo. [34] Et benedixit illis Simeon, et dixit ad Mariam matrem ejus: Ecce positus est hic in ruinam, et in resurrectionem multorum in Israel, et in signum cui contradicetur: [35] et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius ut revelentur ex multis cordibus cogitationes. [36] Et erat Anna prophetissa, filia Phanuel, de tribu Aser: haec processerat in diebus multis, et vixerat cum viro suo annis septem a virginitate sua. [37] Et haec vidua usque ad annos octoginta quatuor: quae non discedebat de templo, jejuniis, et obsecrationibus serviens nocte ac die. [38] Et haec, ipsa hora superveniens, confitebatur Domino: et loquebatur de illo omnibus, qui exspectabant redemptionem Israel. [39] Et ut perfecerunt omnia secundum legem Domini, reversi sunt in Galilaeam in civitatem suam Nazareth. [40] Puer autem crescebat, et confortabatur plenus sapientia: et gratia Dei erat in illo.*

At Chartres Cathedral in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the community, led by the bishop and his entourage, processed with lighted candles to the chanting of the processional antiphons *Ave Gratia*, and *Adorna thalamum* (see below for the texts of these and other chants). After this motion, representing travel from afar in this case, a station or formal stopping point was made before the »Royal Portal«, with its depiction of the Purification procession into the Temple on the second lintel of the south door. At this liminal point, the bishop intoned the antiphon *Responsum*, the most characteristic chant representing the transition from one state to another<sup>11</sup>. In the case of a cathedral, it seems that the population was directly involved, at least at Chartres. In his sermon for the feast Ivo of Chartres said: *hodierna festiuitate fideles populi cum cereis luminaribus ad ecclesiam procedant [...]* (»today the faithful people process with waxen lights to the church [...])<sup>12</sup>. Monastic communities could be different, and the degrees to which lay people participated varied, although those who gathered in a monastic church could hear the singing, and, in some cases, were witness to ceremonial action. In the case of the Purification procession, then, the motion brought a change to the circumstances of the building by illumining it, moving from dark to light, and this too made a point about transformation, one found in the chanted texts as well. At this point too, in many places, bells were timed to resound, this marking messianic arrival into the space. No medieval Christian community would ignore this narrative, or fail, in one way or another, to recreate in ceremonial fashion the sense of crossing a sacred threshold from without to within in, and moving, somehow, with one particular set of recreated characters toward the waiting arms of yet another.

Other well-known depictions of this event in medieval Western art feature several details of the story also found in the lower lintel of Chartres Cathedral (Fig. 1 and 2): Mary, accompanied by Joseph, brings her firstborn to the Temple, with a sacrifice of two doves (as the family is poor), and with Symeon receiving Christ as a recognized new light coming into the Temple, while the prophetess Anna stands nearby. A much-reproduced illumination in British Library from around 1300 and probably made for the Cistercian house of Notre-Dame-la-Royale at Maubuisson, shows a different kind of Purification procession, with the nuns' chant books open to the text *Suscepimus*, the introit for the feast<sup>13</sup>. The traditional iconography representing the feast often depicts a view of the Temple enframing the scene, and so in this motion from without to within, a woman carries her first born into the ancient edifice and transforms it. Ironies abound: Mary is

11) L'ordinaire chartrain du XIIIe siècle. Publié d'après le manuscrit original, ed. Yves DELAPORTE, Chartres 1953, p. 149.

12) Ivo of Chartres, Sermones, in: MIGNE PL 162, col. 505–610, Sermon XI for the Purification, is at col. 575D–577A, with this quotation at 575D.

13) British Library, add. MS 39843, fol. 13v. For further discussion of this source, see Aden KUMLER, Translating Truth. Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England, New Haven 2011.

subjecting herself to a rite of Purification she does not need, showing her obedience to the law; she has no lamb to sacrifice, and so brings doves, and yet, she has a lamb as well, the *agnus* she carries will be sacrificed later on. She and Joseph come as impoverished and obedient Jews; yet, in Christian exegesis, they bear a king.

The common procession featured the blessing and distribution of candles, which were to be lighted and processed within the church or some part of it<sup>14</sup>). The blessing ceremony also commonly featured the antiphon *Lumen ad revelationum gentium*, which was often sung along with verses from the canticle of Symeon, the text of which is given above, proclaiming the meaning of the blessed candles held in the procession<sup>15</sup>); Luc. 2,32, *Lumen ad revelationem gentium et gloriam plebis tuae Israel* (»A Light to the revelation of the gentiles and the glory of your people Israel«). This makes yet another statement that is ritually ironic, as the gentiles are bearing the light, which is for their own revelation, as in the sung text.

### I. THE PARACLETE

All of the women's communities studied here are distinguished among their types, but perhaps the most distinctive of them all is the Paraclete, established in the lifetime of Heloise (died 1164), its first abbess. Its practices were shaped by Abelard and Heloise while relying on traditions they clearly respected and studied, included those known from the Cistercians. And yet within the traditions of this newly formed and initially dynamic Benedictine community, many of which were formalized by Abelard, Heloise's own voice can also be discerned. Jan Ziolkowski, who provides an evaluation of some of the sources and their interrelationships, says of the corpus of documents that survive regarding this practice: »The array of writings is unparalleled: no other twelfth-century author, male or female, composed for a female religious community anything approaching either the number or variety of these texts«<sup>16</sup>).

Several important documents for the study of this liturgical practice have been edited and studied by Chrysogonus Waddell in publications found in the »Cistercian Liturgy

14) New York, Morgan Library, M 87, a mid-fifteenth-century breviary from Utrecht, depicts a lay man and a woman, each with a candle on the calendar page for February (fol. 5v).

15) For a miracle from the life of St. Dunstan that was situated in the circumstances of this feast, see Margot FASSLER, *Shaping the Historical Dunstan. Many Lives and a Musical Office*, in: *Medieval Cantors and Their Craft. Music, Liturgy, and the Shaping of History, 800–1500*, ed. Katie Ann-Marie BUGYIS/Andrew KRAEBEL/Margot FASSLER, York 2017, pp. 125–150. The *Lumen* antiphon is customarily associated with the very time during which the candles are lighted: see the constitution of Bec, for example, *Consuetudines Beccenses*, ed. Marie-Pascal DICKSON (CCM 4), Siegburg 1967, pp. 116–117 and the early customs of Cluny, *Consuetudines cluniacensium antiquiores cum redactionibus derivatis*, ed. Kassius HALLINGER, OSB (CCM 7), T. 4, 40, Siegburg 1983.

16) Jan ZIOLKOWSKI, *Letters of Peter Abelard. Beyond the Personal*, Washington D.C. 2008, p. 4.

Series (CLS), which he edited and published<sup>17</sup>. These relevant documents include letters in which Abelard and Heloise discuss the rule of life appropriate to the newly founded Paraclete, one of which contains the rule Master Peter created at Heloise's bequest, the collection of hymns written by Abelard for the Paraclete, with fascinating introductory materials, a set of customs which was probably compiled by Heloise (*Institutiones nostrae*), the somewhat fragmentary 15<sup>th</sup>-century »breviary« from the Paraclete, and then, too, the Cistercian documents on which Abelard and Heloise drew in crafting a way of life for her (see note 17 for a listing of these documents).

Waddell's work on the liturgy at the Paraclete makes it possible to understand something of the way the nuns moved in space and in time in their history between the abbacy of Heloise and the writing of the surviving later documents from the late thirteenth (in French) and fifteenth centuries, but also to fathom the ways in which Heloise herself and

17) For this discussion, I have used Fr. Waddell's own descriptions as found in his editions and in Chrysogonus WADDELL, *Cistercian Influence on the Abbey of the Paraclete? Plotting Data from the Paraclete Book of Burials, Customary, and Necrology*, in: *Perspectives for an Architecture of Solitude. Essays on Cistercians, Art and Architecture in Honour of Peter Fergusson*, ed. Terry K. KINDER (Medieval Church Studies 11. Cîteaux. Studia et Documenta 13), Turnhout 2004, pp. 329–340. Fr. Waddell died in 2008, and »Cistercian Influence on the Abbey« was his penultimate published statement concerning the Paraclete documents. The last was his very useful overview of the documents and what they reveal about Heloise's practice: Chrysogonus WADDELL, *Heloise and the Abbey of the Paraclete*, in: *The Making of Christian Communities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Mark WILLIAMS, London 2005, pp. 103–116. For a resume of his immense output, much of it related to Cistercian liturgical practices, see David BELL, *Chrysogonus Waddell (1930–2008). A Bibliography*, in: *Cîteaux. Commentarii cistercienses* 61/1 (2010), pp. 81–98.

Major Documents forming the Paraclete Corpus:

I. All edited by Chrysogonus Waddell:

*Liber Ordinarius*, Paris, BN, MS fr. 14410, fol. 29r–116v; Chaumont, BM 31. *The Old French Paraclete Ordinary and the Paraclete Breviary. Vol. 1: Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Chrysogonus WADDELL (Cistercian Liturgy Series 3), Kalamazoo 1985.

*The Old French Paraclete Ordinary and the Paraclete Breviary. Vol 2: Edition*, ed. Chrysogonus WADDELL (Cistercian Liturgy Series 4), Kalamazoo 1985. The script of the ordinal dates from the very late 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the book is actually a »liturgical customary« (Ordinary. Vol. 1, xiv). The scribe is apparently transcribing and translating from an earlier source in Latin that was itself cluttered with marginalia.

*The Paraclete Breviary. Edition*, ed. Chrysogonus WADDELL (Cistercian Liturgy Series 5–7), Kalamazoo 1983 [...] »more than a diurnal and less than a breviary«, see also, Ordinary. Vol. 1, xvii).

*Hymn Collections from the Paraclete. Vol. 1: Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 2: Edition*, ed. Chrysogonus WADDELL (Cistercian Liturgy Series 8–9), Kalamazoo 1989.

*The Paraclete Statutes Institutiones nostrae. Introduction, Edition, Commentary*, ed. Chrysogonus WADDELL (Cistercian Liturgy Series 20), Kalamazoo 1987.

II. Letters on Liturgical Practices, edited in many collections:

Heloise to Abelard, Letter III.

Abelard to Heloise, Letter VII (EP 7), a history of nuns; Letter VIII, Abelard's »Rule« (EP 8).

III. Sermons: Edited in *I sermoni di Abelardo per le monache del Paraclete*, ed. Paola DE SANTIS (Medievalia Lovaniensia se. 1. Studia 31), Leuven University Press 2002.

Abelard too had major hands in the development of the practice. Waddell summarizes as follows:

»While obviously allowing for an evolution of the Paraclete liturgy after the death of Heloise, most of the evidence points to a liturgy which had attained its characteristic shape during the abbacy of Heloise. She draws heavily on Abaelard; she draws even more massively on the Cistercians; she also draws eclectically on still other sources. She is a free woman who exercises liberty creatively in such a way as to leave her stamp on the Paraclete liturgy up to the time of the seventeenth-century catastrophes [...]«<sup>18</sup>).

The liturgical sources in the Paraclete corpus have been essentially neglected by medievalists, with Waddell's copious notes proving the exception to the rule<sup>19</sup>. Waddell mentions the »dozens« of concentrated studies the corpus deserves. The goal here is simply to provide an overview of the liturgy of the Purification, and the sense of narrative and motion it contained, with attention to ideas of within and without. The Old French ordinal is followed by a list made by the main scribe in Latin of the processional chants sung at the Paraclete (117r–123v); as this quire is incomplete, the list breaks off as well. The customary and the breviary also contain references to processional chants and these too must be consulted to get as full a picture as possible. There is a lack of consistency between the sources, however, and they must be used with care as the chronological differences between them are significant, and clearly some adjustments have been made over time.

Waddell's reconstruction of the church and grounds of the Paraclete is found in both ›Cistercian Influence‹, with a drawing, and also, in even greater detail in ›Cistercian Liturgy Series 3‹, *Excursus* I on the oratory and cloister (313–318) and *Excursus* III, on the Paraclete processions (337–344), the basis for the description to follow<sup>20</sup>. It is clear that although the nuns were enclosed, there were ample opportunities for the outside world to worship alongside them, and even to process with them on a few occasions outside the church and grounds. The cruciform church had three altars. The high altar in the nave was dedicated to the Trinity, and was far enough away from the wall so that the nuns could process around it on the Feast of the Dedication. There was an altar in the left or northern transept chapel dedicated to John the Baptist, and this was connected to the outside by a large door. A number of local nobility were buried in this chapel, this too making a

18) WADDELL, Heloise (as n. 17), p. 111. On attitudes toward administration of the women's community, see Julia Ann SMITH, ›Debitum Obedientie‹. Heloise and Abelard on Governance at the Paraclete, in: *Parergon. Bulletin of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 25 (2008), pp. 1–23.

19) Waddell said of the ordinal and breviary, »If the riches contained in these two little-studied mss are ever to be quarried, some kind of beginning must be made [...]«, *Ordinary. Vol. 1* (as n. 17), p. iii.

20) Abelard's sermon sometimes attached to the Purification through the edition in MIGNE PL 178, pp. 417–425, is actually a work for Sunday within the Christmas octave or for the Vigil of the Epiphany (see *Ordinary. Vol. 1* (as n. 17), p. 386).



powerful connection with life outside the monastery. People could worship there and could also enter the area of the main altar as well, although most of the nave was occupied by the nuns' choir.

Waddell believed that the nuns' grill separated this women's choir from the main area of the altar and also enclosed the other transept chapel on the south, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. If this is correct, the women processed out of their choir into the cloister on the south side of the church through a large door, and then they could return to the church through this same door, turning to the right to make a station in the Lady Chapel, if desired, and then to the left to enter their choir<sup>21</sup>. Clearly their singing would be heard by people in the St. John's Chapel or in the area of the church surrounding the main altar. The act of worship was a major way in which the inner life of the cloister was shared with the outer world, even for customary ordinary services and processions that did not leave the cloister or the area of the church behind the grill. It is also clear from Waddell's discussions that young female students in training at the Paraclete were involved, and even had their own place to sit in the nuns' choir and sometimes roles in other ceremonies. Of course, they may or may not have eventually become consecrated, but they took this ceremonial and musical knowledge with them throughout their lives, schooled in symbolic interpretations from the interaction of music, texts, ceremony, and architecture. This was a way that practices »within« became part of society »without«.

There were a few extraordinary processions, too, and for these, the nuns left their church and went outside. As far as can be told, most of these were related to honoring the dead, and paying tribute to the »little monastery«, the original oratory established by Abelard and Heloise, and where their graves were originally located. Built into these processions was knowledge of the monastery's history. One such procession took place on Low Sunday, the Sunday after Easter, perhaps because Abelard died in Easter Week of 1142. In this act of remembrance, the community honored Abelard and Heloise, actions celebrating those who created much of the texts, music and ritual they had just celebrated. And it must be remembered that these nuns were privileged to have the music of Abelard for the hymns and many other texts he wrote that have been lost. So the sonic landscape of the Paraclete was especially rich with musical remembrance as well. In addition to Low Sunday, there were major processions on Palm Sunday, the Vigil of Ascension, and All Souls. Abelard used the processions of Palm Sunday to create a dramatic entrance, with Jesus lamenting over the city of Jerusalem, a liturgical action unique to the Paraclete<sup>22</sup>. Waddell demonstrates in his analysis that the procession was redesigned, using both traditional and newly composed elements in all probability by Abelard<sup>23</sup>. He says, »so from

21) See the drawing in WADDELL, *Influence* (as n. 17), p. 330.

22) *Ordinary*. Vol. 1 (as n. 17), pp. 87–95.

23) For this elaborate procession in Chartres, which involved the entire city, and with reference to other northern French Cathedral towns, see Craig WRIGHT, *The Palm Sunday Procession in Medieval Chartres*,

the beginning to end the traditional Palm Sunday procession has been refashioned with a view to adapting it more systematically to the gospel accounts [...], as also with a view to adapting it to the concrete Paraclete setting<sup>24</sup>). In many ways, this was true of the Purification as well. We look now at two kinds of processions, those that were characteristic of each Sunday during the time of Abelard and Heloise, and then the celebration of the Feast of the Purification, with emphasis on the ways it was shaped by the hymnody of Abelard, setting up entrance into Jerusalem, and becoming an allegorical statement that involved the entire worshipping community, males and females.

Benedictines customarily had a procession on Sundays, but as Waddell has proven, much of the Paraclete practice descends from Cistercian reforms<sup>25</sup>). So one might not expect this regular feature to be celebrated. In fact, the Sunday procession in its earliest iteration is a ritual that shows Heloise in action as a liturgiologist, departing as it does from the Cistercian practices, which apparently influenced her greatly. In general Cistercian liturgies formed in the twelfth century did not allow processions, with the exception of the Purification and Palm Sunday, with Bernard advocating for the addition of a procession for the Ascension, which was, indeed, added as a result of his influence<sup>26</sup>). Waddell terms the Sunday procession in the *Institutiones nostrae* »revolutionary«, given the Cistercian character of much of the practice. Moreover, the procession was led by the women themselves, and although, this was no longer the case by the time the Old French ordinal was copied in the late thirteenth century when a priest presides, still the procession itself remained (but was shifted to after Terce). Waddell says of the earlier form of the rite, which he assumes was created by Heloise:

»No priest is present. It is the abbess who sprinkles the nuns, not after Terce, but as they file out of chapter, which on Sunday is preceded, as it is on other days, by Prime and the matutinal Mass [...]. This means that the holy water the abbess (or prioress) uses for the sprinkling-rite had been blessed

in: *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages. Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*, ed. Margot FASSLER/Rebecca A. BALTZER, Oxford 2000, pp. 344–371.

24) Ordinary. Vol. 1 (as n. 17), p. 95. For the dramatic liturgy of Holy Saturday and Easter at the Paraclete, see William T. FLYNN, *Letters, Liturgy and Identity. The Use of the Sequence »Epithalamica« at the Paraclete*, in: *Sapientia et Eloquentia. Meaning and Function in Liturgical Poetry, Music, Drama, and Biblical Commentary in the Middle Ages*, ed. Gunilla IVERSEN/Nicolas J. BELL (Disputatio 11), Turnhout 2009, pp. 301–348. See also William T. FLYNN, *Abelard and Rhetoric. Widows and Virgins at the Paraclete*, in: *Rethinking Abelard. A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Babette S. HELLEMANS (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 229), Leiden 2014, pp. 155–186 and Fiona GRIFFITHS, *Brides and dominae. Abelard's Cura monialium at the Augustinian Monastery of Marbach*, in: *Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 34 (2003), pp. 57–88.

25) See especially WADDELL, *Influence* (as n. 17), with full awareness of the ironies of this situation.

26) *Institutiones nostrae* (as n. 17), p. 177. Abelard chastised Bernard in letter 10 for Cistercian disregard for processions, Ordinary. Vol. 1 (as n. 17), p. 337. He referenced processional chant texts and ceremonies in his hymn texts for the Purification, for which see below; a way of including texts and ceremony excluded at the time he wrote.

shortly before at the matutinal Mass [...]. Sunday means a fresh beginning. There are three ministers in the procession, namely, a cross-bearer and two candle-bearers; and these three are nuns, or at least female members of the community [...]. We are dealing with a strictly non-clerical form of procession, one celebrated by the community between chapter and Terce«<sup>27)</sup>.

Cistercian restraint in regard to processions is reflected in the Paraclete documents; apparently the processions for many feasts were included only when that feast fell on a Sunday, for Sundays were the days on which processions were customarily allowed. Exceptions were for feasts of Psalm Sunday, All Souls, the Eve of the Ascension, and Rogations. The Feast of the Purification was important enough to have its own procession according to the Ordinal, but, also according to the more restrictive processions list, this was only if February 2 fell on Sunday<sup>28)</sup>. Abelard's and Heloise's views of liturgical practice are expounded in several places, but most clearly and expansively in the various prefatory materials to the extraordinary tripartite hymnal Abelard crafted for the Paraclete<sup>29)</sup>. One of the aspects of their critique is to argue for the idea that hymns, and by extension, all liturgical materials, should be fitted to careful expression of the particular season, feast, day, or hour to which they are assigned<sup>30)</sup>. In his newly composed texts, which were of many types, Abelard followed this ideal. The service for the Purification at the Paraclete can be outlined as follows, with rubrics from the ordinal and texts from the breviary, and it can be seen that Abelard shaped the texts to be sung in many ways through his own compositions. Unfortunately, with but few exceptions, the music for his extensive campaign does not survive. Also the textual incipits for the processional chants have to be supplied from the ordinal; the breviary does not contain them.

### I.1. Purification, as found in the Paraclete Sources<sup>31)</sup>

The feast has both a vigil and an octave, marking its importance. Abelard's hymns provide commentary on the feast although it is usually not possible to say which hours of the day they were specifically assigned to, with Waddell and Szövérfy in disagreement about the matter<sup>32)</sup>. Only the hymn *Adorna thalamum* is specified for first vespers.

27) *Institutiones nostrae* (as n. 17), p. 178.

28) *Ordinary*. Vol. 2 (as n. 17), pp. 53–54v; and *Ordinary*. Vol. 2 (as n. 17), p. 123.

29) These are gathered and translated in ZIOLKOWSKI, *Letters* (as n. 16).

30) Josef SZÖVÉRFY, ›False‹ Use of ›Unfitting‹ Hymns. Some Ideas Shared by Peter the Venerable, Peter Abelard and Heloise, in: *Rev. Ben.* 89 (1979), pp. 187–199.

31) Except for a few references in the ordinal, the night office is not contained in these documents; the ›breviary‹, is more of a diurnal.

32) For Abelard's hymn texts, see the edition in *Hymn Collections*. Vol. 2 (as n. 17); and the edition Peter Abelard's *Hymnarius Paraclitensis*. An Annotated Edition with Introduction, 2 vols., ed. Josef SZÖVÉRFY (*Medieval classics. Texts and Studies* 2–3), Albany 1975.

## I.2. First Vespers

The palms were sung with the antiphon set *O admirabile commercium*<sup>33</sup>, borrowed from the Christmas season sung for the Purification too in many places.

The great responsory of Vespers is a chant by Abelard: *Tulerunt ihesum in iberusalem, vt sisterent eum domino sicut scriptum est in lege domini*. Versus: *Quia omne masculinum adaperiens vuluam sanctum domino vocabitur*. *Sicut* (this marks the place in the responsory where there is a repeat). Abelard's responsory emphasizes that Mary and Joseph were following the legal practices of their Jewish faith in bringing their first born to Jerusalem for presentation in the Temple.

Hymn: Adorna, Syon, thalamum (by Abelard).

In this text, Abelard references both the processional antiphons *Adorna Thalamum* and *Lumen ad revelationum gentium*, as well as the processional ceremony of bringing candles into the church. But he places these references in the context of the Wise Virgins who trim their lamps as they await the bridegroom for the wedding feast<sup>34</sup>. In this way, he made sure the familiar texts of the procession music sung throughout Europe, but not used by the Cistercians, were present in the hymn he wrote, but he also gave the women a special role in the text, as those who are waiting for the Christ to whom they were betrothed as nuns. The meaning of motion is, then, multivalent, for the hymns make the women able to identify with Mary who brings the child, and with Symeon, who, like the virgins of Matth. 25, awaits the prophetic coming.

Magnificat: *Salve regina*<sup>35</sup>.

Matins: Invitatory: *Fabricantum* (by Abelard; complete text does not survive).

Canticle antiphon: *Populus gentium*<sup>36</sup>.

Three additional hymns for the feast by Abelard survive, at least one apparently for the night office; the ordinal suggests that one of the readings was from either Exod. 13 (offering of first born) or Lev. 12 (the rules for the Purification after birth), and themes from such readings are found in the hymn, which seems most suited to this purpose, *Parentes Christum*<sup>37</sup>. In this hymn Abelard emphasized the obedience of Joseph and Mary to the law, offering their first born to the Lord, and this in spite of their poverty. They have no

33) Can 003985. »Can« plus a number is a designation supplied by »Cantus«, the standard database for office chants: <http://cantus.uwaterloo.ca/> (accessed, July, 2019).

34) Matth. 25.

35) Can 204367.

36) Probably Can 850353b. Waddell did not know this chant and thought it was an error of some sort (Ordinary. Vol. 1 (as n. 17), p. 196). It may be an antiphon sung at Christmas lauds in some places and adapted for this use because of its strong reference to light, a major theme of the feast.

37) See the Paraclete Breviary, p. 232, as referenced in note 17, supra.

actual lamb to bring, and so they bring their son, and, as accustomed among the poor, two doves to present to the priest for sacrifice.

### I.3. Lauds

Antiphon: *Symeon iustus et timoratus expectabat redemptionem Israel et spiritus sanctus erat in eo* (common Lauds antiphon for this feast).

Short responsory: *Filius meus* (by Abelard, borrowed from his text for Christmas Lauds).

Hymn: Although one cannot be sure, it seems the hymn *Qui paupertatem* may have been sung either later in the night office or here at Lauds. The hymn text is based on Ezech. 40; in this mystical text, the prophet envisions the rebuilding of the Temple, by a man who is capable of making proper measurements. In the hymn text, that person is Christ. The theme then is that the »new light« is a transforming space, Sion and the Temple changing by this symbolic action into the church. The crossing of the threshold is a point of no return.

Procession (when the feast fell on Sunday).

### I.4. The Processional Chants: *Ave gratia* and *Adorna thalamum*, with translations

There is only one station before the Lady Chapel in the church, and the versicle and collect there are traditional to Christmas; at the monastery entrance (next to the chapter room portal) the antiphon *Responsum*<sup>38)</sup> was begun<sup>39)</sup>. At this moment, the community entering the church moves the light toward the arms of the receiving prophet; the members of the procession represent the Virgin Mary and Joseph, and they come from outside the monastic church (although from their cloister), stopping to honor Mary en route. By this halting motion before the representation of the Virgin and in her chapel, the procession is charged with her character, and so the women involved might well have been better able to act representationally, honoring the Virgin in the midst of a historical recreation.

The processional chants in English<sup>40)</sup>:

Ritual purpose: defining the characters and their symbolic meanings; Jesus is the Messiah.

38) Can 004639.

39) The ordinal provides only the letter R, which a second hand expanded to *Responsum*. Customary text: *Responsum accepit Simeon a spiritu sancto non visurum se mortem nisi videret Christum domini*.

40) See FASSLER, Virgin (as n. 4), pp. 118–119.

*Ave gracia:* »Hail, full of grace, virgin Genetrix of God: from you has risen the Sun of justice, illuminating those who are in darkness; rejoice you just old man, as you take Jesus, the liberator of our souls, in your arms, while he bestows the resurrection on us«. Ritual purpose: Further explanation of the motion of the procession traveling to the Temple, carrying the »candle« and Mary as both bride and »gate« or door.

*Adorna thalamum:* »Adorn your bridal bed, Sion, and receive the anointed one, the king; embrace Mary, who is the gate of heaven, for she carries the king of glory with new light; remaining ever a virgin, she brings in her hands the Son begotten before the daystar; whom Simeon, taking him into his arms, proclaimed to the people to be the Lord God of life and death, and the Savior of the world«.

Ritual Purpose: Symeon as the receiving prophet who recognizes the messiah and proclaims his identity; this is the customary »threshold« chant.

*Responsum accepit Symeon:* Symeon received an answer from the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Anointed of the Lord; and when they brought the child into the Temple, he took him into his arms and blessed God and said: »Now, Lord, dismiss your servant in peace«.

### I.5. Mass

Both the Matutinal (early morning) Mass and the Mass of the day (after Terce) were the usual series *Suscepimus Deus misericordiam* for the Purification. The Christmas sequence *Voce incunditatis* attributed to Peter Venerable was sung at the main Mass at the Paraclete, if it did not fall in Lent<sup>41</sup>.

### I.6. Second Vespers

The last of the four hymns by Abelard may have been sung here, at the close of the feast, which would seemingly be most appropriate. *Omnes sexus et quelibet* is a song of communal joy: men are to sing; women are to sing, each from his own station; virgins sing; brides sing; John the Baptist proclaims what he sensed within the womb; and Symeon and the prophetess Anna join the throng. The hymn offers a proper ending to the whole.

One special feature of the Purification as celebrated at the Paraclete stands out: the degree to which there is newly composed material by Abelard. His hymn *Adorna, Syon,*

41) *Analecta Hymnica* 48:251/235. The text in *Analecta Hymnica* 48 is taken from Douai, BM, MS 381, a collection of the writings of Peter the Venerable. Unfortunately, the digitized folios of the MS do not include those containing the sequence text. Waddell (*Ordinary*. Vol. 1 (as n. 17), p. 196) provides further commentary on the Mass, especially regarding whether or not the feast falls in the pre-Lenten season.

*thalamum*, is of great significance for contextualizing the materials for processions, which at this early date apparently would only have been sung when the feast fell on a Sunday<sup>42</sup>. As can be seen from comparison of the new hymn text to chants frequently sung for Purification processions, there are many illusions to these common chants built into the fabric of the hymn at second vespers, including the procession with lighted candles. Through the hymns they sang, the congregation of women referenced popular practices and described their meanings, even though the most famous processional antiphons were only rarely sung. Abelard wove their texts and their meanings into the hymns sung at every Purification feast.

We are left to wonder if the lay people who assembled in the chapel of St. John at the Paraclete and moved into the front of the church for Mass were carrying lighted candles. Whether this was the case or not, the woman commemorated this practice indirectly. In addition, the hymns create a narrative for the women to re-enact in their celebration, beginning with the responsory Abelard created for the opening of the feast at First Vespers: *Tulerunt Ihesum in iberusalem*. From afar Joseph and Mary approach the Holy City, with their offering, true to the dicta of the law. When they enter, they are described as poor, giving all they have. The allegorical significance of Christ as builder of the new church, a refashioning of the Temple, is clear too in the hymn texts. And, finally, all are encouraged in their own motion (both actual and allegorical) to join at second vespers in an apparent communal hymn of joy and revelation, made possible by commemoration of crossing the threshold of time and becoming a new kind of gathering in a transformed space. »Outside« to »inside« could make a different »outside« for those who then leave the church to go about their secular lives. But even the women who do not leave their enclosure (except in procession for a few days each year) certainly would come to think through such a ceremony of their own church, the altar, chapels and their choir stalls, as charged with meanings that could have been remembered throughout the year.

## II. BARKING ABBEY

The paltry number of liturgical manuscripts that survive from the ancient and prominent Benedictine Abbey of Barking outside of London includes a complex and richly detailed ordinal, which is highly detailed and so also something of a customary. Nearly all of what is known about this liturgy has to be gleaned from this early fifteenth-century book, which has been much studied<sup>43</sup>. As can be observed from the description of the Purifi-

42) For the sake of convenience, I have referenced the texts from Waddell's transcriptions (Hymn Collections. Vol. 2 (as n. 17), pp. 59–62).

43) Oxford, University College, MS 169. The Ordinale and Customary of the Benedictine Nuns of Barking Abbey, 2 vols., ed. John Basil Lowder TOLHURST (Henry Bradshaw Society 65–66), London

cation ritual, details from the Barking Ordinal are far more detailed than what can be gleaned from sources for the Paraclete. Comparison of some features of the procession can be contextualized as well by examining sources of the Sarum Rite, which, by the time the ordinal was copied, was well-established in the region.

### II.1. Description of the Ceremony at Barking

»At the procession, all come forth ›palliate<sup>44</sup>). After Terce the candles are blessed by a priest, with the assembled nuns seated on their stalls. And then when the blessing is finished, the assemblage of nuns (*conventus*) is asperged; and when the candle of the Abbess in front of the altar has been lit, the antiphon ›Lumen ad revelationem gentium‹ is sung, the priest intoning.

It is to be noted that the candle of blessed Mary is lit with the holy candle by its own chaplain by whom it ought to be carried in her presence. And the candle of the abbess ought to be lit by the appropriate chaplain from the above-mentioned candle and carried in her presence; and in a similar way, the candle of the prioress ought to be managed by the chaplain of the chapter.

Next the sacristan divides the remaining candles given from the custodians of the church for those who will carry them into the choir, first for the Prioress and then to the others who are senior members. Then the abbess begins the antiphon ›Ave gracia plena‹ during which the clergy and priests process in full regalia, and the image of blessed Mary is carried by two priests, with her priest taking the lead with the lighted candle, whom following close after, the assembled nuns into the cloister and into the church singing the antiphon ›Adorna thalamum‹ and the other antiphons which are sung processionally. It is to be noted that whenever the image of Mary passes by a nun, she is to kneel. And when the procession comes into the nave of the church either the abbess or the cantrix begins the antiphon ›Responsum accepit‹, and six of the sisters chosen by the cantrix sing the verse ›Postquam impleti‹. »At this point the Mass ›Suscipimus‹ begins [...] at the offertory [later in the Mass], the Abbess offers bread and wine and then her candle, then the Prioress, then the priest returns to the altar that he might complete the divine sacraments,

1927–1928. See STURMAN, *Barking Abbey* (as n. 8), and Anne BAGNALL YARDLEY, *Liturgy as the Site of Creative Engagement. Contributions of the Nuns of Barking*, in: *Barking Abbey and Medieval Literary Culture. Authorship and Authority in a Female Community*, ed. Jennifer N. BROWN/Donna ALFANO BUSSELL, York 2012, pp. 267–282.

44) The nature of the garment is not clear, but it may have been a vestment particular to the nuns of Barking, and worn for all major processions. On the uniqueness of some of their vestments, see Katie Ann-Marie BUGYIS, *Women Priests at Barking Abbey in the Late Middle Ages*, in: *Taken Seriously. Women Intellectuals, Professionals and Community Leaders of the Medieval World*, ed. Katie Ann-Marie BUGYIS/Kathryn KERBY-FULTON/John VAN ENGEN, Woodbridge 2020, pp. 319–334.



and the priest of the chapter should come to the door of the choir and there remain while all may offer their candles just the senior officers and the students with their teachers. At this Mass all are communicated to whom God will have bestowed the grace<sup>45</sup>).

Just as the plan of processions described at the Paraclete can be contextualized in the architectural sketch provided by Waddell, so too this procession at Barking can be put back into a plan of the abbey, using the work of A.W. Clapham<sup>46</sup>).

From the ordinal, it is clear there was blessing ceremony, first for the candles and then for the entire assembled community. During this blessing, the antiphon *Lumen ad revelationem gentium* was sung (see text above), and so the objects to be carried were charged with their meanings, and placed in historical circumstances, calling to mind the text describing the event from Luc. 2. In addition, the lighting of the candles was brought about by spreading light from the pascal candle, and first to the candle to be carried by the abbess, and then to the prioress and on down the line. The ceremony defined community, for all were treated like the candles, blessed and incensed and then their candles alighted, in order, their roles becoming like that of Mary, who marched with them in the form of an actual artistic representation. Just as the abbess and the prioress each had a chaplain to administer to their ceremonial actions, so too the Virgin, with her chapel, and here her representation, which was carried with great honor, first traveling »outside« in the cloister and then crossing the threshold into the nave. The chants studied above play a similar role here as they did in other churches, but, as in each, the physical circumstances are somewhat different.

## II.2. The Meanings of the Candles

At Barking too an important feature of the ceremony can be seen in play: the offering of the »lamb«, that is of the candles, during the offertory at the Purification Mass. Through this action, the future of the »light« in Christian history is foretold, and just as Lent was about to begin, the ceremony shifts the whole tenor of the church year, from Christmas and Epiphany joy, to the long march of Lenten weeks and the Passion, the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb. Here also the chief administrators of Barking Abbey go first, playing a major ceremonial role. They have become Mary, carrying the child in obedience to the Old Law, and now they place him on the altar of sacrifice in obedience to a New Law. The importance of each member of the community giving up her candle, a precious ob-

45) The Ordinale and Customary, vol. 2, pp. 189–190, transl. Fassler.

46) Donna Alfano BUSSELL/Joseph M. McNAMARA, Barking Abbey. A GIS Map of a Medieval Nunnery, in: Peregrinations. Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture 4/2 (2013), pp. 173–189. Bussell and McNamara make some adjustments but also praise the plan found in Alfred William CLAPHAM, The Benedictine Abbey of Barking, in: Essex Archaeological Transactions 12 (1913), pp. 69–87, which they superimposed on their own GIS map.

ject, was underscored by a story told about a nun in the ›Golden Legend‹, the late thirteenth-century collection of *exemplaria*, made for preaching and study and ordered in accordance with the unfolding of the church year, by the Dominican Jacobus da Voragine<sup>47</sup>). The legend suggests that some participants in the ritual may have wished to not sacrifice their candles, and then ›covers« for their actions as well.

Jacobus says, by way of introduction to the meaning of the procession:

»The third reason for celebrating the feast of Candlemas is to recall the procession that occurred on this day, when Mary and Joseph and Symeon and Anna formed a solemn procession and present the child Jesus in the Temple. On the feast day we too make a procession, carrying in our hands a lighted candle, which signifies Jesus, and bearing it into the churches. In the candle there are three things. These three signify three things about Christ: the wax is a sign of his body, which was born of the Virgin Mary without corruption of the flesh, as bees make honey without mingling with each other; the wick signifies his most pure soul hidden in his body; the fire or the light stands for his divinity, because our God is a consuming fire«<sup>48</sup>).

Then Jacobus tells the story of a devout woman who had her own chapel, but an absent priest, and prostrated herself before the altar of the Virgin on the day of the Purification, and there had a vision. She was in a magnificent church, and there were a company of virgins led by a crowned woman (clearly the Virgin Mary) and a company of men; all were seated in order, and candles were distributed to them, first to the Virgin herself, who had led the procession. Then Mass began, with St. Vincent and St. Laurence serving as acolytes and angels as the deacon and subdeacon and Christ as the priest. At the offertory, all the company went forward to present their candles to the priest, but the lady having the vision refused to come forward and give her candle which she wanted to keep for the sake of devotion, even when the Virgin Mary sent her a message three times saying that she was being rude to keep the priest waiting. Finally, the Virgin said that her candle must be wrested away from her: »Go and ask her again to give up her candle, and if she refuses, take it away from her by force!« In the ensuing struggle between the lady and the messenger, the candle was broken in two, and the lady came to, with half a candle in her hands. »Wondering at this, she offered devout thanks to the Virgin Mary for not letting

47) The great popularity of this text in England is attested by its history in the rise of printed editions in the fifteenth century: see Jessica COATESWORTH, *The Design of the Golden Legend. English Printing in a European Context*, in: *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 91/2 (2015), pp. 21–49. At the time the ordinal was compiled, it would have been available and presumably well-known to the nuns of Barking in Latin; it was translated into English in 1438 by the Augustinian Osbern Bokenham. See Sheila DELANY, *Impolitic Bodies. Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-Century England. The Work of Osbern Bokenham*, New York/Oxford 1998.

48) Jacobus da Voragine, *The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints*, ed. and transl. William GRANGER, introduction by Eamon DUFFY, Princeton 2012, p. 149.



Fig. 1: The South Portal of the West Facade, Chartres Cathedral, mid 12th century (Photo Credit: Henri de Feraudy).



Fig. 2: Detail of the upper Lintel showing the Purification Procession (Photo Credit: Henri de Feraudy).

her go without Mass of the feast day and providing a way for her to participate in the ceremony«<sup>49</sup>).

Although it may be assumed that the nuns of Barking knew the ›Golden Legend‹, yet another view of the Purification ceremony was found even closer to home, that in Nicholas Love's ›Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ‹<sup>50</sup>. Love's description of this ›solemn and worshipful procession‹, based on a work by the Pseudo Bonaventure, also provides a long description of a sacrifice in which Mary offers her son, elevating him, and praying as she does so. Love then acknowledges that this offering was presented up in the courts of heaven and there ›gladly accepted‹. Both these texts emphasize the importance of the sacrifice and the ways the Virgin's role in it was tantamount. Such legends contextualized the candles they held, especially for women in the later Middle Ages who processed, at least during this part of the ceremony, *in persona virginæ*.

With detailed ceremonial concerning the blessing, lighting, processing, and offering up of candles, it is impossible not to speculate about how long they burned and how and when they were extinguished. The candles were precious not only because of the expense, but also because they had been charged with symbolic meanings, much in the way that palms were on Palm Sunday. Such sacramentals had to be treated with care. It is clear that in many places, one candle, usually that of the abbot or abbess, was placed in a prominent place, perhaps on the altar, and continued to burn throughout the Mass liturgy, even after others had, of necessity, been snuffed. This was the case at Trier, for example, as described in the 15<sup>th</sup>-century customaries of St. Matthias and of St. Maximinus, written by the abbot Johannes Rode<sup>51</sup>. This customary also states that the candles were to burn throughout the procession and up until the offertory at Mass, and then they were brought one by one to the abbot, and there his hand was kissed, and then the candles were extinguished, too, also one by one in a pail of water and deposited in a receptacle<sup>52</sup>.

### II.3. The Virgin Mary in a Purification Hymn at Barking

It is not possible to compare the sequences sung in these two Benedictine Purification Mass liturgies, unfortunately. Whereas the sequence by Peter the Venerable sung at the Paraclete survives, that of Barking, *Ysaie prophetatus*, was, as far as can be told, unique to this place, and so perished with the books that once contained it. Like several other se-

49) Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend* (as n. 48), pp. 150–151.

50) Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ. A Full Critical Edition*, ed. Michael G. SARGENT, Exeter 2005, pp. 47–50. A copy of this book was found at Barking, see David BELL, *What Nuns Read. Books and Libraries in Medieval Nunneries* (Cistercian Studies Series 158), Kalamazoo 1995.

51) *Consuetudines et observatiae Monasteriorum Sancti Mathiae et Sancti Maximini Treverensium ab Iohanne Rode Abbate Conscriptae*, ed. Petrus BECKER OSB (CCM 5), Siegburg 1968, pp. 138–139.

52) *Ibid.*, p. 139.

quences in this enormous repertory, we have only the tantalizing textual incipit of the piece in the ordinal; the work was clearly written for Mary, for it was also sung at the Annunciation. It is however possible to compare the hymnody of Barking for this feast with the complex and rich texts of the Paraclete<sup>53</sup>). The hymns for the feast at Barking were all recycled Marian works, save one, *Quod chorus vatum venerandum*, which was written specifically for the Feast of the Purification. The other liturgical book that survives from Barking is a 15<sup>th</sup> century hymnal, and it contains this Purification hymn also specified in the ordinal, *Quod chorus vatum venerandus olim*, with notation<sup>54</sup>). The hymn is Carolingian, often attributed to Rabanus Maurus (died 856), and was extant in Anglo-Saxon England<sup>55</sup>).

Just as Mary is made present in the procession at Barking by a visual replica, so too in this hymn her presence in the historical reenactment of the event is claimed, even though she is known to be in heaven. There is an acknowledged dual reality, a joining of the heavenly and the earthly in such a festive occasion, one expressed in the miracle from the ›Golden Legend‹ as well:

*Quod chorus vatum venerandus olim  
Spiritu sancto cecinit repletus  
In dei factum genetrice constat  
Esse Maria.*

*Haec deum celi dominumque terrae  
Virgo concepit peperitque virgo  
Atque post partum meruit manere  
Inviolata.*

*Quem senex iustum Symeon in ulnis  
In domo sumpsit domini gavisus  
Ob quod optatum proprio videre  
Lumine Christum.*

*Tu libens votis, petimus precantum,  
Regis aeterni genitrix faveto*

53) The nature of the Barking sequentiary is evaluated in Margot FASSLER, *Women and Their Sequences. An Introduction and a Case Study*, in: *Speculum* 94/3 (2019), pp. 625–673.

54) Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS 1226.

55) See Inge B. MILFULL, *The Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church. A Study and Edition of the »Durham Hymnal«* (Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 17), Cambridge 1996, pp. 222–224, who also provides a literal English translation. The text has also been edited in *Analecta Hymnica*, vol. 50, ed. Guido Maria Dreves, Leipzig 1907, pp. 206–207 (Nr. 155).

*Clara que celsi renitens Olympi  
Regna petisti.*

*Sit deo nostro decus & potestas,  
Sit salus perpes, sit honor perennis,  
Qui poli summa residet in arce  
Trinus & unus.*

»All prophets hail thee, from of old announcing,  
by the inbreathed Spirit of the Father,  
God's Mother, bringing prophecies to fullness,  
Mary the maiden.

Thou the true Virgin Mother of the Highest,  
Bearing incarnate God in awed obedience,  
meekly acceptest for a sinless offspring  
purification.

In the high temple Simeon receives thee,  
takes to his bent arms with a holy rapture  
that promised Savior, vision of redemption,  
Christ long awaited.

Now the fair realm of Paradise attaining,  
and to thy Son's throne, Mother of the Eternal,  
raised all glorious, yet in earth's devotion  
join with us always.

Glory and worship to the Lord of all things  
pay we unresting, who alone adored,  
Father and Son and Spirit, in the highest  
reigneth eternal<sup>56)</sup>.

56) English translation by Thomas Alexander Lacey, in *The English Hymnal with Tunes*, ed. W. J. BIRKBECK/Thomas Alexander LACEY/Percy DEARMER/D. C. LATHBURY/A. HANBURY-TRACY/Athelstan RILEY, Oxford 1906, p. 208. The dramatic import of the Purification procession in England can be seen in its survival as a theme in the later plays; see Gail McMURRAY GIBSON, *Blessings from Sun and Moon. Churcing as Women's Theater*, in: *Bodies and Disciplines. Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Barbara HANAWALT/David WALLACE (*Medieval Cultures* 9), Minneapolis 1966, pp. 139–154.

### III. THE PURIFICATION AT NIVELLES ABBEY

The Purification procession can be studied in a range of female houses from the Middle Ages, these ceremonies offering various contexts for the Benedictine practices described above. But in conclusion, we examine one of a quite different character, that of the Abbey church of St. Gertrude of Nivelles, located in modern-day Belgium, in the diocese of Liège in the Middle Ages, and also then in the archdiocese of Cologne. The liturgy thus contains strains of French, Belgium, and German practices, and can be shown to have ancient hagiographical strata, given that the abbey was founded in the mid seventh century. There is much work forthcoming on the Abbey of Nivelles, given that an ordinal and collection of documents from this place, recently acquired by the Houghton Library at Harvard University (MS Latin 422) is now the subject of a volume of essays<sup>57</sup>.

#### III.1. A Description of the Ceremony at Nivelles

The liturgical practice found at Nivelles has much in common with that of nearby Mons, also a double monastery, also with canons and canonesses conducting many of the rites in tandem<sup>58</sup>.

In this ritual, the canonesses process with the canons of this double monastery, moving outside of their own church into a nearby church dedicated to St. Mary (a frequent destination for their various processions). As the description shows, the candles are blessed and lit during to the singing of the antiphon *Lumen ad revelationem gentium*, along with the canticle of Symeon, as would have been the practice in many churches. However, the singing of the chant is alternatim, with the male and female congregations participating, each with its own part to sing<sup>59</sup>.

On the same day, the sacristan releases to each canon and canoness, whether present or absent, one prebendal candle and also [a candle] to the three *matricularii* of this church. It is known that when the women begin Terce one of the major bells ought to be rung three times in succession for congregating the clergy.

57) This ordinal from the Abbey of Nivelles is dated 1346, but contains a liturgy representing practices from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. For the manuscript and the liturgy it contains, see *The Liber ordinarius* of Nivelles (Houghton Library Ms lat 422). Liturgy as Interdisciplinary Intersection, ed. Jeffrey HAMBURGER/Eva SCHLOTHEUBER (Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 111), Tübingen 2020.

58) See Alicia SCARCEZ, *Musique et liturgie des chanoinesses de Sainte-Waudru de Mons*, in: *Mémoires et publications de la Société des Sciences, des Arts et des Lettres du Hainaut* 109 (2016), pp. 1–16.

59) Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Latin 422, f. 60v. When possible, all incipits of well-known chants can be consulted with the full texts as found in Tongeren, Lady's Church, MS 63, indexed by Ike de Loos on >Cantus<.



With the men gathered, the men and women come into the choir near the altar of St. Peter and place their candles on this altar. And there they are blessed and in blessing two collects are said with the ending *Per dominum*. Afterwards they are incensed and are asperged with blessed water. Then [the candles] are illumined. Meanwhile while they are lit the cantor begins *Lumen ad revelationem*. The women: *Nunc dimittis*. The clerics: *Lumen*. The women: *Qui viderunt*. The clerics: *Lumen*. The women: *Lumen ad revelationem*. The clerics: *Lumen*. The women: *Gloria patri*. The Clerics: *Lumen*. The women: *Sicut erat*. The clergy: *Lumen*.

The procession follows encircling the pillars and into the cloister and enters the church of blessed Mary. The procession leaves this church through the door opposite St. Stephen, and the cantor first intones the antiphon *Adorna thalamum*. The women, the antiphon *Responsum accepit*. The clerics, the antiphon *Hodie beata virgo*. The women, *Nunc dimittis*. In the church of blessed Mary, the women sing this antiphon: *Ave gratia plena*. Afterwards, the priest sings the verse *Senex puerum portabat* and the collect *Omnipotens sempiternus deus*. Then when this procession leaves the aforementioned church of St. Mary, it crosses through the atrium of this church of St. Mary, and when it comes into the furriers, the canons make a station by the choir. The women, the priest carrying the image of the Blessed Virgin, and others carrying liturgical fans cross over before the canons and enter the church first. This crossing of the women is made in reverence of the glorious Blessed Virgin Mary.

The women entering the church sing this antiphon: *Cum inducerent puerum Jesum parentes ejus accepit eum Simeon in ulnas suas et benedixit deum dicens nunc dimittis domine servum tuum in pace*<sup>60</sup>. Next the chaplain of the women, carrying the image of blessed Mary, stands before the altar of the Holy Cross, and turning himself toward the people begins the responsory *Videte miraculum*, which is then sung by the clerics<sup>61</sup>. The women sing the verse *Caste parentis*<sup>62</sup>. The priest says the verse *Senex puerum portabat* with the collect *Perfice in nobis*. The women ascending the stairs sing the antiphon *Accipiens Simeon*<sup>63</sup>; and again the women when entering their choir sing the antiphon *Glorificamus te dei genitrix*<sup>64</sup>.

When the procession goes forth all bells, both large and small are rung at once. The Mass that follows is *Suscepimus*.

60) Can 002011.

61) Can 007869: *Videte miraculum matris domini concepit virgo virile ignorans consortium stans onerata nobili onere Maria et matrem se laetam cognoscit quae se nescit uxorem*.

62) Can 007869: *Caste parentis viscera caelestis intrat gratia venter puellae bajulat secreta quae non noverrat*, supplied from Paris, BNF, lat. 15181, as the MS from Tongeren does not have it.

63) Can 001233: *Accipiens Simeon puerum in manibus gratias agens benedixit dominum*.

64) Can 002952: *Glorificamus te dei genitrix quia ex te natus est Christus salva omnes qui te glorificant*, supplied from Utrecht UBib. 406.

### III.2. Differences between the Ceremony of the Canonesses and those of Benedictines

Many of the same ingredients of this ritual practice as found in two Benedictine communities are in play here as well, but the ordering and the ways in which they are combined with other elements make the entirety very different. In the first place, from the beginning this is a ritual shared by the male and female contingents of Nivelles abbey. The way in which the antiphon *Lumen ad revelationem genitium* is sung with the canticle of Symeon during the blessing and lighting of the candles makes the point. Also lay people are continually present: they would have seen the procession as it left the abbey church and moved, with both men and women singing *alternatim* to the neighboring church of St. Mary's and then to other locations nearby as well. There is no indication that the men or women played particular roles in this ceremony, as they did in the Benedictine practices described above. For the most part, the men and women shared the chanting and took the roles of Mary and of the receiving Symeon interchangeably when singing of the miraculous pregnancy and birth, and of Mary's bringing of her child to the Temple.

However, the women of Nivelles were uniquely representative of the Virgin Mary in one aspect of the ritual. The canonesses took precedence after the procession left St. Mary's and the Hall of the Furriers; at that point the women were instructed by the ordinal to cross before the canons in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Then the procession made a station before the image of the Blessed Virgin within the church, and instead of celebrating the coming into the abbey church, as had occurred at St. Mary's, the character of the procession changed, and honor was paid at length to the Virgin Mary and the miracle of her maternity. At this stage, the people are mentioned as observing the ceremony and chanting by the work of art depicting the Virgin. This was very clearly a Marian feast at Nivelles. When the women subsequently processed into their choir after this station they sang of Symeon, and then again of Mary, returning to the narrative of the feast itself.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The Purification in the ordinal of Nivelles helps to contextualize the many ideas of »outside« and »inside« represented within ceremonial for the feast. At the Paraclete, much of the work of the procession takes place in other texts, the hymns, in many years. Yet through these texts and their singing at many locations throughout the hours of prayer, there was a powerful sense of narrative, of allegorical meanings, and of character. There was also a clear sense of the laity observing the nuns in the work of their practice, even if they may or may not have had a role to play themselves. At Barking, the ceremony of the procession became a statement about the importance of administrative hierarchy in the community, with the abbess playing a major role, as she led the community both in

the procession, in which the church became a replica of the Temple, and later in the Mass liturgy, when she and all members of the community sacrificed their »lambs«, that is, their candles, on the altar. The canonesses of Nivelles, on the other hand, worked with the canons in procession to recall both the Virgin Mary and her son, and the prophet Symeon, through procession to a neighboring church, which became a replica of the Temple though their elaborate entrance. Later, however, their own church became a place to commemorate the Virgin and to remember the miraculous birth of her son, celebrated too on this feast 40 days after Christmas, and tied to it chronologically. The people were there to join in this ceremony, which involved the visual arts, and which was a kind of farewell to the joys of the season of Christmas and Epiphany and the major role of Mary in both feasts and in the entire season standing between them.

In all ceremonies of the Purification there are many themes of »outside« and »inside« created in a great variety of ways, although many of the components were held in common. Christian citizens, clerical, monastic, and lay, had many parts to play in the recreation of this historical event, but all had some understanding of transformation of the inside by motion across the threshold, and the coming of change. To hear the chants every year across the transformed spaces gave the music and their sung texts a special role to play, whether the singing was by the monastic community, by men and women of a secular church, or by laity, who may have joined in with the simplest of the chants, the *Lumen ad revelationem genitium* serving as the most likely example. The chants defined the actions, whether tied to the blessing of candles, to motion through space and historical time, or in ceremonies of sacrifice during the offertory of Mass<sup>65</sup>. Both »outside« and »inside« meant many things, from history, to allegory, to actual motion in particular spaces at special times, but one thing is clear: this replication of transformation was essential to medieval Christian understanding and identity.

SUMMARY: SOUNDINGS WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE »TEMPLE«: LITURGICAL VOICES  
IN THE PURIFICATION PROCESSION

Liturgical motion was of many types in the Latin Middle Ages, and its nature and the various kinds of people who participated in it were frequently interpreted allegorically. Deeper meanings were on display for contemplation within the actions themselves, especially when it came to the major processions of the church year, one of which was that taking place on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, February 2. The ways in which communities of religious women ordered their processions often required

65) The music for the offertory at Barking on the Purification was the multi-purpose sequence *Inviolata integra et casta*, for which see *English Music of the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*, ed. Ernest SANDERS (Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century 14), critical commentary to Nr. 68, p. 244.

the crossing of various lines of demarcation, both from within the various areas of the church and monastic grounds, to outside. This was especially true of the Purification procession, in which the motion of the Christ Child and his parents from outside the Temple, to within the building and up to the altar (as described the Gospel of Luke), was dramatically re-presented each year in every Christian church. The viewing of the procession by various members of the community also had a role to play in interpreting the outside and inside of communal life, and the various relationships between groups of people. This essay examines the Purification procession in three different female communities, two Benedictine and one of secular canonesses: the Paraclete, Barking Abbey, and the Abbey of St. Gertrude of Nivelles, respectively. In each case the foundational understanding of ritual events and characters shifted, allowing the women to make comments about their lives and their identities through their well-ordered motion.