



C. MICHAEL HAWN

Music making is universal to humanity. The intonation of prayers, singing of sacred songs, and reverberation of pitched sound in a sacred space are attributes of the holy. Music affects people deeply, ranging from the individual spiritual epiphany while singing, or listening to an organ or choir, to the shaping of a cohesive community through a sung response. From a sound sense of awe and wonder that resonates the individual with the wholeness of the universe, to the identity that is forged when a Christian body gathers and feels a oneness with the saints of every time and place while singing a classic hymn. Music has the power to evoke place and time. We never sing alone. Singing a 14th century plainsong melody in the 21st century is actually a duet between a monastic community of an earlier era and a Christian community today. Singing a South African Freedom Song in Des Moines, Iowa unites these two communities in their prayer for deliverance from oppression. The question is not whether music and spirituality are integrally related, but how the individual worshipper and a particular worshipping body become increasingly attuned to the “*beauty of holiness*” that transpires when musical sounds combine with Christian ritual. For me, the key to unlocking the spirituality of music is the dialogue between the music that shapes the sung prayer of an individual, with the music made when a particular body of Christ gathers to offer its sung praise, thanksgiving, adoration, invocation, petitions, and blessings; when singing and praying become one.



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“GATHER INTO ONE: PRAYING AND SINGING GLOBALLY”