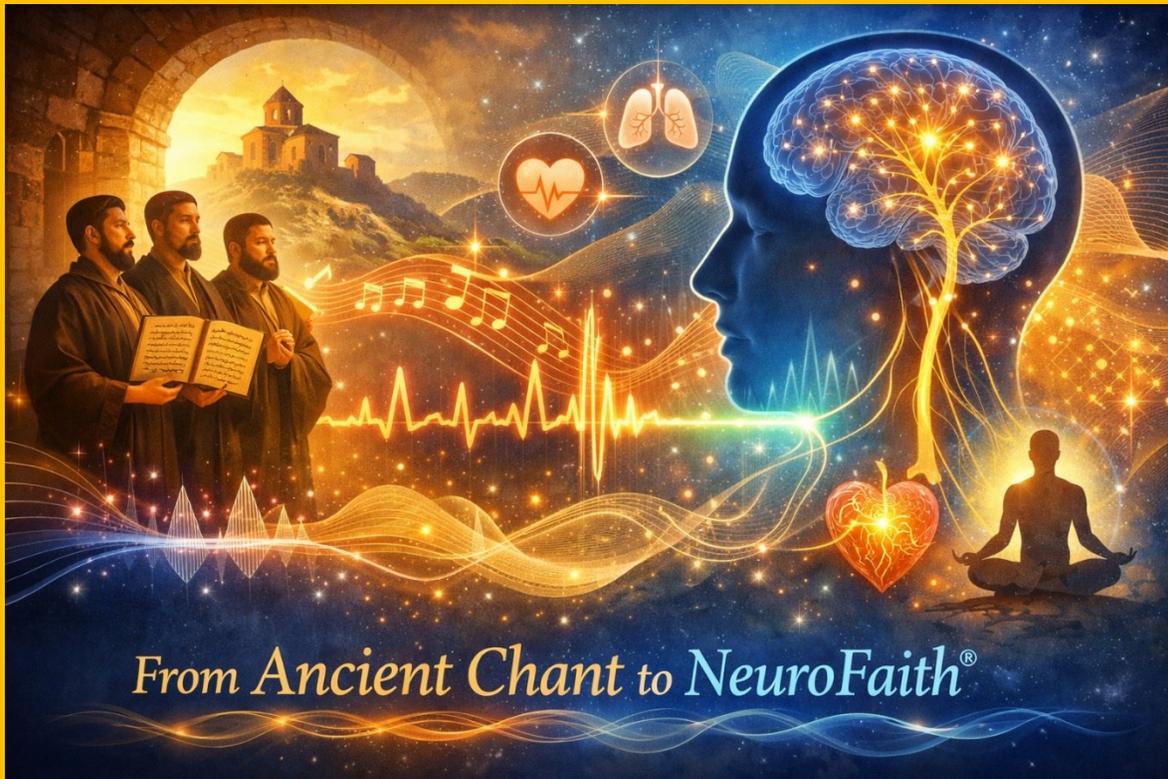


## Who Would Have Thought an Ancient Chant Would Sing the Melody of NeuroFaith®



*Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.*

### **A Personal Awakening**

I did not understand the words. I did not know the history. I did not even know what I was listening to.

All I knew was that when the chant played, something in my body softened. My sleep improved. Anxiety rolled off me in ways I could not explain. It was not intellectual. It was not theological analysis. It was a body sense. My nervous system exhaled before my mind ever caught up.

### **Discovering an Ancient Tradition**

Only later did I learn that what I had been listening to was ancient Georgian chant, sacred music flowing out of the early Christian tradition of the country of Georgia, a nation that embraced Christianity around AD 337. Imagine that world for a moment. Mountain monasteries. Stone cathedrals echoing with breath instead of instruments. Worship that was not about performance but participation, voices woven together in prayer.

Georgia's spiritual life was deeply Trinitarian, soaked in the language of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From my read, and from many within the Orthodox tradition, the three voices of Georgian chant feel like an echo of that divine mystery. Whether every composer sat down with a diagram or not, you can hear it. Three distinct lines moving together without losing their unity.

There is a grounding bass that feels like foundation itself, steady and rooted, almost like the presence of the Father holding everything together. There is a middle voice that moves relationally, bridging the harmony, the incarnational presence of the Son. And then there is the upper line, breath like and lifting, sometimes almost whispering, the Spirit moving through sound. When I first heard it, I did not analyze it that way. I just felt held.

### **Embodiment and NeuroFaith®**

Through the lens of NeuroFaith®, this experience fascinates me. These ancient chanters did not have modern language for neuroscience or polyvagal theory. They were not speaking about vagal tone or heart rate variability. Yet they lived close to the body. They knew breath. They knew resonance. They knew that when human voices align slowly and deeply, something happens inside the nervous system.

Low sustained tones ground the body. Predictable harmony reduces vigilance. Breath shaped phrasing slows the rhythm of the heart. Today we might talk about neurocardiology or autonomic regulation. Back then they simply lived it. Faith was not an abstract concept. It vibrated in the chest cavity. It moved through lungs and stone walls. It was embodied theology long before we had modern vocabulary for it.

### **A Tradition That Survived**

Then history took a brutal turn.

When the Soviet regime spread across the region, state-sponsored atheism attempted to silence religious expression. Churches closed. Traditions were suppressed. Sacred sound itself was treated as something dangerous, a threat to a system that wanted loyalty directed toward ideology rather than transcendence. Under a totalitarian government cloaked in the language of benevolent socialism and Marxism, faith was pushed underground.

And yet something remarkable happened.

You can shut buildings. You can regulate institutions. But you cannot erase vibration from memory. You cannot legislate breath out of existence. The chants survived, whispered in families, remembered by elders, carried quietly through generations. Because things of the body cannot be destroyed so easily. The divine, once embodied, does not vanish because a regime declares it inconvenient.

When the Soviet Union collapsed and Georgia regained independence in 1991, those ancient voices rose again. The tradition many assumed would disappear came back not as nostalgia but

as living prayer. For me, that realization changed how I understood my own experience. Maybe the reason my nervous system responded so quickly was because this music was never merely aesthetic. It was survival encoded in sound, faith carried through centuries of pressure and still breathing.

### **Why I Keep Returning**

Through NeuroFaith® I see something beautiful here. Ancient worship that regulates the body. Harmony that calms the mind without needing translation. Spirituality that does not bypass the nervous system but embraces it, heart, breath, and community moving together. Long before we had the vocabulary of neuroscience, these communities cultivated practices that whispered safety to the human organism.

And maybe that is why I keep coming back to it.

I do not speak Georgian. I do not always understand the lyrics. But my body understands the structure. My heart recognizes the rhythm. My temple, this living nervous system, settles into something deeper than explanation.

Because sometimes the divine meets us not first through words but through vibration. Not first through doctrine but through breath. And when voices rise together, grounded, relational, and lifted, something ancient reminds us that faith is not only believed.

It is felt.

### **An Invitation**

If you have never listened to Georgian chant, give it a try. You might just feel surprised how blessed you are, as it will speak to your mind, body, and soul.

### **A Word of Gratitude**

Perhaps a word of gratitude is due to my dear Georgian brothers and sisters who, around AD 337, lifted their voices in devotion and could never have imagined that their prayerful harmonies would travel across centuries and calm the hearts and bodies of people they would never meet. Their gift reminds us that what is offered in faith is never wasted. As Scripture tells us, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God.”* Colossians 3:16.