GREGORIAN MUSICAL VALUES

By the same author

GREGORIAN

MUSICAL VALUES

BY

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Hard work and good will are not enough: taste and intelligence and a certain sensitiveness to musical *values* are what we lack most of all.

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FOREWORD

In the liturgy of the Church, music may be looked upon by some as a troublesome formality or a concert performance; it should, however, be a way of praying, an aid to prayer; and it is only if we look at it from this point of view that we shall be able to understand, to love and to sing Plainsong as it should be sung.

Some perhaps would prefer to pray in their own way, and certainly private prayer is excellent and essential; but when we come to church for public worship, we must participate actively in an act of collective worship, in which public, official prayers are read or sung.

For us Catholics, this public worship is the authentic, official, social prayer of the Church, which has received authority and a mission for organizing divine worship.

If we really understand what the Church is for us, not only shall we give her obedience, but we shall do so with the fullness of our faith and love. If we firmly believe that in her official liturgy we give to Almighty God that authentic worship which He is expecting, we shall find in it for ourselves a treasure of spiritual life.

In the last fifty years, the Church has more and more insisted on the active participation of the faithful in the liturgy, and it is here that we find the importance of the rôle played by music as a means of participation, because of its intimate union with the sacred texts.

This explains the special attention given by the Church to sacred music, among the arts which contribute to the liturgy. So great is this attention, that she has her own music, the Gregorian Chant, "the chant proper to the Roman Church", as St. Pius X says in his Motu Proprio, "the only chant she has inherited from the Fathers of antiquity, which she has jealously kept for so many centuries in her liturgical books, and which she insists on using exclusively in certain parts of her liturgy . . ."

Why this preference of the Church for Plainsong? Why does she give it first place, declaring that it is "the highest model of Church music"? (Motu Proprio). Because those venerable melodies are, more than any others, filled with the spirit of the texts. Their rhythm, modality, melodic design, everything in them is inspired by the words and seems to come from them, giving the chant life, colour and intensity, in order to penetrate our souls, inform them, and make us feel with the Church, sing with the Church, *sentire cum Ecclesia, cantare cum Ecclesia.*

Plainsong no doubt is music, and excellent music; but it is above all the language of the liturgy, the language of the Church, inviting us to participate in the great mystery of Christ made present, every day in the Mass, and throughout the year in the liturgical cycle. For this reason, the Motu Proprio of St. Pius X was much more than a reform of church music: it was in fact the beginning of the great revival of the liturgy. It was for this restoration of the authentic and traditional chant of the Church that Solesmes prepared the way before the Motu Proprio appeared, and the monks have never ceased to labour assiduously in this cause ever since [1].

Unfortunately, Plainsong is not always well sung; and even where its technique is more or less correct, all too often its spirit is missing. In the present little book, we wish to help all those who love the Chant of the Church to interpret it in the spirit in which it was composed, to penetrate its technique with this spirit, in order to achieve the praise of God and our own sanctification.

I am indebted to the Benedictine nuns of St. Cecilia's Abbey, Ryde, for their assistance in preparing the text and examples; and to my brethren and friends for their suggestions and aid. To all these I render my most grateful acknowledgements.

Quarr Abbey.   J. H. D.

[1] See Maurice Blanc: "L'enseignement musical de Solesmes et la prière chrétienne" (Editions musicales de la Schola Cantorum et de la Procure Générale de Musique, Paris).

INTRODUCTION

The Vatican Edition of the Plain Chant of the Church, a direct outcome of the Motu Proprio of St. Pius X, is now the official text [1]. It would be equally inexact either to declare it perfect, or to criticise unduly the weak points and inaccuracies occasioned by the circumstances which brought about its somewhat hurried publication; but it seems only right to recognise that the melodic text, as it stands, certainly conforms largely with the authentic tradition of the manuscripts, and permits an interpretation at once artistic and prayerful.

As is well known, many methods of Plain Chant — often more or less mensuralist — have been put forward, each claiming exclusive authenticity. We do not intend to discuss here their respective claims to historical accuracy. Our intention is an entirely practical one, and in this short work we propose rather to focus attention on the three qualities which seem to us so important in the eyes of the Church, and such necessary elements in our interpretation if we are to carry out her wishes, namely:

1) Our Chant must be simple and practical enough to make the participation of the faithful possible and relatively easy.

2) It must satisfy the rules of musical art, as beauty is a step to prayer.

3) It must be objective; as faithful as possible to the authentic tradition of the manuscripts and to the musical structure of the melodies.

This need for an objective method was felt at Solesmes from the very first days of the restoration of the monastery in 1837. Plainsong had fallen into a state of decay difficult for us even to imagine nowadays: corrupt versions and absurd interpretations. So low was the level, indeed, that almost anyone could have improved

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[1] We mean, of course, the edition without rhythmic signs.

upon it, and it was no difficult matter for the monks of Solesmes to succeed rapidly in establishing a practical, purely empirical method, created by circumstances and necessity, by instinct, as it were, out of their own good-will. At this stage, of course, the only rules or principles possible were those of "verbal or oratorical rhythm": to pronounce, accentuate, phrase well; and for the rest, to keep the regularity of the notes and their grouping as found in the musical notation.

Dom Guéranger, the then Abbot of Solesmes, and the first pioneers of the Chant, Dom Jausion, Canon Gontier a friend of the monks, and Dom Pothier, were quick to realize that much work needed to be done if an objective basis were to be established. They set to work on the MSS, therefore; but as their attention was occupied mainly with the melody itself, the method of Solesmes at this first period under the direction of Dom Pothier, continued to remain that of verbal rhythm.

It was then that Dom Mocquereau joined the community, making his profession in the Abbey in 1877. Dom Pothier began by initiating him into his own method; but as he had been a musician in the world, Dom Mocquereau quickly realized that Plainsong presented certain difficulties and even serious problems to those accustomed only to the laws of modern music. One of these difficulties was the seeming clash between word-accent and musical beat. With his clear and logical mind, he saw that the first vague principles of verbal rhythm, which so far had seemed satisfactory and sufficient to Dom Pothier, needed to be analysed more carefully, and seriously revised and modified. He also saw that for the numerous purely melodic passages in which the principles of verbal rhythm could no longer find their application (long neums on the same syllable), other principles of rhythm had to be found and clearly determined, with a view to maintaining order and life in the Chant. Gradually he worked out his theory of "musical rhythm" — not a pure fantasy as some of Dom Mocquereau's critics appear to imply, but the result of careful observation and analysis of the facts. He found that either by its musical structure (groups, long notes, melodic design, modality etc.) or because of indications of length found in certain categories of MSS, which he called rhythmic [2], the Gregorian melody had its own rhythm.

[2] He found six such schools.

To ignore this rhythm would be to distort it, to ruin that beauty and tranquillity which is so essential to prayer. He noticed to his surprise, while listening to the Choir actually singing, that the word-accent very often did not coincide with the musical beat which the structure of the melody naturally imposed. Dom Mocquereau had to find the solution to this problem, and finally to revise the current conception both of the musical beat and of the Latin word-accent; the former, he saw, was of the rhythmic order, and most often should not be accented; the latter ought to be arsic, not thetic, expressive rather than intensive. In this way, the musical rhythm inherent in the Plainsong melodies led him to the exact interpretation of verbal rhythm [3].

It was this combination of the musical and verbal rhythm that was eventually to constitute the interpretation and method of Dom Mocquereau and of Solesmes.

The musical rhythm (measure, ictus, the counting of 1-2, 1-2-3, etc.) is Dom Mocquereau's theory, but it is founded, as has been said, on facts observed in the MS. tradition and on the natural laws of music.

This method does not impose an arbitrary rhythm for the melodies: it only ascertains the rhythm which is in them, and makes it as clear as possible to the singer.

But the Solesmes 'ictus' or method of counting has also its dangers. Measure and time are never mechanical and rigid in music that is artistically executed, still less in Plainsong. Because of its ancient origin, its long oral tradition and its neumatic notation, Plainsong is very much like folk-song, whose natural suppleness of interpretation modern notation has some difficulty in suggesting. Many who claim to follow the rhythm of Solesmes, in reality follow only its material mechanism: 1-2, 1-2-3, not its rhythm. Measure and mechanism must be informed by rhythm, since that alone makes music come to life and become prayer.

We are quite convinced that Solesmes with its rhythmic editions and principles (properly understood and applied) possesses the best method of interpreting melody and text with the qualities mentioned above: that is, in a manner which is at once practical, artistic and objective.

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[3] We shall come back to this point in Part II, ch. III p. 41 fol.

But it is also our conviction that if many do not appreciate Plainsong or the interpretation of Solesmes, it is because too much stress has been laid on the purely musical and even mechanical technique of the Chant. This study is necessary for the choirmaster, but most people find discussions on clefs, notes, groups, ictus, arsis and thesis, etc., rather uninteresting. What appeals to all, musicians or not, is the fact that the Chant is a living prayer; they realize that in this lies its true meaning.

In this little book therefore, we shall try to show how in singing the melody or the words, everything must be at the same time prayerful and artistic, flexible, natural and true. We venture to hope that what we have written in these pages, since it is founded on sound general musical principles, good diction of Latin and paleographical research, will be of some help towards a true interpretation of the Chant. Even technical points become interesting when we understand how they serve the spiritual side, translating for us and infusing into us the truth and feeling expressed or suggested by the words.

PART I

MELODY

The Gregorian monody issuing from the liturgical texts — most of them written in prose — is free from the square and strict forms and style of the part-music of later periods. Its structure, free alike in the proportion of its phrases and its smaller rhythmic elements, everywhere maintains its great flexibility and simplicity, as is found in folk-song. There should be nothing stiff or mechanical: all should flow smoothly with continual variations of tempo, according to the movement of the melody and its natural phrasing.

CHAPTER I

Free rhythm

Gregorian melodies do not proceed in regular time — all either 2/8 or 3/8 — but in free rhythm, i.e., a succession of compound beats or simple measures, 2/8 and 3/8, freely and irregularly mixed:

Sanctus
VII.

San - ctus,   San - ctus,   San - ctus

The very regularity of each individual note or 'unit' will assure the irregularity or proportion of the various rhythmic groups [1] of 2 and 3, and as a result will break the mechanical regularity of a regular time. Used as we are, however, to regular time, we need to accustom ourselves to free rhythm. We must be careful to observe this approximate equality of the units, and not to reduce the rhythmic groups of 3 to the same time as the rhythmic groups of 2 by turning them into triplets, or enlarging the time of the groups of 2 to make them of the same duration as those of 3.

We shall have to bring control to bear on this point, in order

[1] See footnote p. 23.

to make our Chant exact and at the same time perfectly supple and natural. Special attention must be given to the duration of the last note of the rhythmic groups of 2 or 3, which, too often, is slightly shortened. On the contrary we must give it its full duration: nothing gives more style and dignity to the melody than this rounding-off of the up-beat of the simple measure (2/8 or 3/8).

CHAPTER II

The long notes

By long notes, we mean here the notes properly double or triple, counted 2 or 3 in the measure: dotted notes, pressus, distropha, tristropha, bivirga, oriscus. These long notes have a particular interest in Plainsong. They are, so to say, the pillars of the melody. On them the melodic movements alight either to spring off with a new élan or to rest provisionally. Coming as they do at irregular and free intervals, dividing and phrasing in irregular sections, they introduce a fresh element of freedom and suppleness.

The duration of these long notes must be in keeping with the general movement of the notes which precede and follow. They must be interpreted either in full upward impulse with crescendo and a tendency to accelerate the movement, or on the contrary as a fall, with a tendency to slow down the tempo and to decrease the intensity of the voice; this is determined according to their place and rôle in the whole musical sentence, and their relationship with the words.

In general, the structure of the melody clearly suggests the treatment (arsic or thetic) to be given.

Gradual
3rd Sun. in Lent,
Exsurge.

Ex-   súr- ge

...: Exsúr - ge Dó - mi - ne, et jú - di-ca cau - sam tu - am.
Introit, 13th Sun. after Pent., *Respice.*

A gentle repercussion (i.e. a fresh layer of sound, without inter-ruption of the note) is needed at every ictus-note which is on the same degree as the previous note: this repercussion will be sung according to the arsic or thetic quality of the corresponding ictus.

Sometimes certain phrases of the melody offer alternative inter-pretations, and in such cases, the choir-master chooses for himself.

Off. *Filiae*
Mass *Dilexisti*
Comm. of a Virgin
not a Martyr.

Fí - li-ae re - gum

Or:
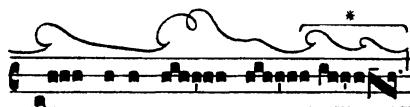
Fí - li-ae re - gum

CHAPTER III

Preparation of the long notes

To give more suppleness and style to the fundamental regularity of the Chant, each long note must be prepared for by a slight broadening of the simple note immediately preceding it. For the same reason every single note isolated between two long notes, or even two single notes between long notes should be slightly rounded-off :

... et confi-té -   bor

Alleluia Adorabo, of the Dedication of a church.

Alleluia Veni Sancte, of
Whit Sunday.

... : et tu- i a-mó -   ... ris

Kyrie III ad lib.

... Kýri - e   e - lé -i- son

B

Kyrie IX ad lib.

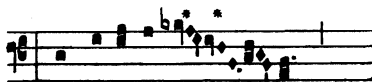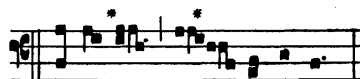... Ký-ri- e   e ‑ lé ‑ i -son

Salve Regina.

... O   dul-cis

It is a mistake to make an abrupt contrast between the notes in movement (simple notes) and the notes in comparative rest (long notes). Experience, here, is the best master. As we approach the long notes, we must prepare for them and they must be *expected.* Instead of being mechanical, everything should be supple, smooth, natural, artistic, peaceful and prayerful.

CHAPTER IV

The lengthened notes

The lengthened notes of the Gregorian notation contribute, perhaps more than the long notes themselves, to the freedom and flexibility of the melody. We are speaking here of the notes which, being lengthened — and as we shall explain notably lengthened — nevertheless are still counted only "one" in the simple time 2/8 or 3/8. They are: the quilisma (a), the salicus (b) and the horizontal episema (c):

Introit *Judica,* Monday of Holy Week:

...Vir- tus sa-lú ‑ tis me   ‑   ae.

We shall say a word about each of them.

The Quilisma.

It is well known that the note which immediately precedes the jagged note must be prolonged. But by how much? Experience shows that those who at all costs wish to avoid doubling this note curtail it to the point of losing its expressive effect and have great difficulty in obtaining unity of movement in choir.

We should definitely say, then, do not be afraid of practically

doubling the note (in the light movement of the Chant, any marked lengthening is bound to double the duration of the note). But what will differentiate it from a proper double note (dotted note, pressus, oriscus, etc.) is that this lengthened note of the quilisma will be counted only as *one* and not *two* in the time 1-2, 1-2-3; and that is why we say *practically* doubled, meaning that mathematically one could count 2 during this lengthening; but in fact we shall consider this lengthening as a single note, a single beat of the simple measure 1-2 or 1-2-3. In that way this ex- tended beat will get its full expressive value: something like the "rubato" of modern music:

Asperges me:

As-pér - ges me, Dó- mi- ne

one could practise ... but, with the same lengthening, one must count:

1. 2. 3. 4.

1. 2. 3.

In conformity with the rule given above (p. 3) — a rule con- firmed in the case of the quilisma by the MS. tradition in the majority of cases — the lengthened note in question has to be announced and prepared by a progressive 'allargando' (slowing down of the movement) on the two or three preceding notes. This rule of style for the execution of the quilisma, apart from being traditional, as we have just said, makes of this particular sign or group a striking element of art and expression:

... Sa - ti - á - bor ... dum manifestabitur gloria tua.

Introit, *Ego autem*, Friday in the 2nd week of Lent.

If we sing this as if we had a horizontal episema on the three notes preceding the quilisma, we get the whole meaning of the word *satiabor*, and of this Introit. This is just one instance which shows how a technical point of notation and interpretation helps us to penetrate the prayer of the Church. If we sing this word without the rallentando preparing for the quilisma, and without giving sufficient length to the quilisma itself, we lose much of the spirit of the piece.

If the note which precedes the lengthened note of the quilisma

group has been given a dot in the rhythmic edition of Solesmes, this dotted note should be understood as a broad preparation (and kind of élan) for the next note (not dotted) which immediately precedes the jagged note; but this undotted note must be felt as the aim of the first and as the more important of the two long notes. Examples:

Te Deum. — Sanctus,

Reserve the impulse or arsis for the 2nd note: — San - ctus,

Sanctus XV. — Ho - sán-na = Ho - sán - na

If the lengthened note of the quilisma group is preceded by a clivis, only the first note of this clivis is marked by a horizontal episema; for instance:

Tract, *Domine non secundum* of Ash Wednesday: quae fé-cimus nos:

The note between the two lengthened ones (here the *do*), being rounded-off according to our rule (p. 3), the impression should be that of balancing or swinging on the *re*, the second *re* being the aim of the movement, and the place where the impulse (arsis) is given towards the next word *nos*: the effect will be that of having the whole clivis lengthened and leading to the second *re*.

A very frequent mistake is to believe that the lengthened note of the quilisma is always arsic because it begins an ascending group. The question as to whether it is arsic or thethic, however, is decided by its position in the word or in the melodic movement. The execution, of course, will be quite different in the case of a thesis:

arsic   arsic

Kyrie VII: .. e - lé - i - son   *Asperges:* Dó-mi - ne

Sanctus VI :

.. Ho – sán- na

In this last example the final syllable of the word does not really allow us to put there an impulse of the voice (arsis). But even in a purely melodic passage, we prefer as a rule to follow the movement of the melody and to treat as a thesis the lengthened note of the quilisma, each time this note happens to be lower than the preceding one:

Introit,
Requiem :

do- na   e – is

Communion,
Panem de caelo
13th Sun. after
Pentecost :

.. su – a – vi –   tá – tis

The Salicus.

We suppose that our readers know this particular group, as found in the rhythmic editions. But perhaps it is not out of place to remind them of the easy and practical way by which they can recognize it.

We treat as a salicus [1] every ascending group of 3 or more notes of which the penultimate ascending note is marked *underneath* by the vertical episema.

If the vertical episema, in an ascending group, is printed *above* the note, we do not treat the group as a salicus [2], except in the case of an interval of a fifth.

It is well known that this treatment of the salicus consists in lengthening the note marked with the vertical episema as if it were also accompanied by a horizontal episema.

[1] We say "treat as a salicus": we know that sometimes in the MSS it is not, in fact, a salicus; but having to deal with an imperfect edition, we are obliged to adopt a *practical* rule which corresponds to the majority of the cases.

[2] As a matter of fact it sometimes *is* a salicus in the MSS. We have adopted here the treatment which more often corresponds to the MSS.

As to the duration of this lengthening, we refer our reader to what has been said concerning the lengthened note of the quilisma group: in practice we double it, but count it as only *one* unit, in the simple measure — *one*, emphasized as a kind of 'rubato'.

Here again we insist on the need of preparing for this lengthened note. In the Introit *Requiem aeternam*:
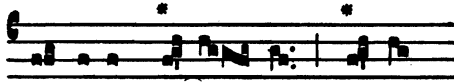
Ré – qui-em * ae-tér – nam do- na ...

we shall not sing:

Ré – qui-em ae – tér – nam   do – na ...

or even:

Ré – qui-em ae – tér – nam   do – na ...

but, broadening the first note of the syllable, we announce and prepare the way for the second, which is definitely lengthened:

... ae – tér – nam   do – na

and in this instance, the lengthening of the salicus on the syllable *ae* is practically equal to the duration of the pressus on the syllable *ter*, which must also be well prepared for and with which it balances harmoniously on all the *sols*.

In the same way, at the end of the Gradual of the same Mass:

.. non   non
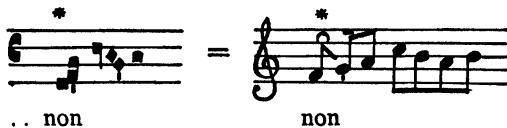
A light but rather ample spring on the first note with the intro-

duction of the syllable, the next note receiving the length —
nearly always arsic.

In a few cases, the salicus is *thetic* and forms a feminine ending,
as for instance in the Gradual *Requiem*, just before the ¼-bar
which precedes the Versicle:

in the Communion *Magna est* (Vigil of St. John the Baptist):

... e - um, Dó - mi - ne.

When the *arsic* impulse must be given on the ictic lengthened
note of the salicus (the general case), the slight broadening of the
previous note is similar to the preparatory movement made by
someone about to strike a ball. It helps to emphasize still more
the stress on the next note, and at the same time prevents the
disagreable effect of syncopation. When the salicus group co-
incides with a word-accent (*dona* in the Introit *Requiem* — see
above), it is best to mark the arsic impulse on the first note of the
syllable, leaving the ictus-note to be marked only by length.

When the salicus, on the contrary, is *thetic*, the slight broaden-
ing of the first note of the neum acts as a gentle preparation for
the feminine ending:

Grad,
Requiem:
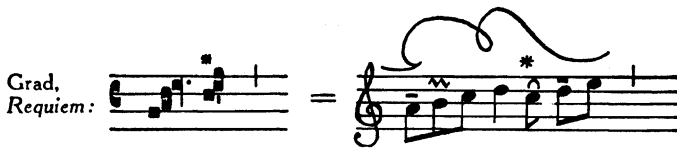
In either case, avoid the brutal sound caused by putting the whole
emphasis on the ictus-note.

THE HORIZONTAL EPISEMA

The horizontal episema is the third lengthened note, after the
quilisma and salicus.

In order to be clear and exact, we have to make a few distinc-
tions.

I. THE HORIZONTAL EPISEMA ON ONE NOTE ONLY

(A) *At the rhythmic ictus.* This is the most frequent case. Unhesitatingly we give to the lengthened note the same duration as is recommended in the case of the quilisma and of the salicus. It comes quite naturally, is much easier to do, and is certainly not exaggerated when it comes on an isolated note which coincides with the rhythmic beat or ictus. The duration, however, should be reduced when such notes are multiplied, and in proportion as they affect a greater number of notes.

(i) If the horizontal episema marks a *thetic* ictus-note, the note must be sung comparatively softly, according to the place it occupies both in the melodic phrase and in the words. Such a thetic episema generally marks the ending of a phrase and invites us to link intimately this thesis to the next phrase or member. If an episema has been chosen rather than a dot (or two dots, in the case of a clivis), it is precisely in order that this thetic ending be understood only as an articulation in the melodic flow, or a slight punctuation or mere phrasing in the verbal text. The rhythmic movement must not stop here, but immediately rebound and proceed on its way.

Offert.,
12th Sun.
after Pent:

Pre- câ - tus   est   Móy - ses

At Mag-
nificat,
14th Sun.
after Pent:

Quae-ri- te pri-mum   reg-num De - i,

Offert.,
*Scapulis
suis,*
1st Sun.
Lent:

.. et sub pen- nis e - jus   spe - rá - bis:

(ii) If the horizontal episema marks an ictus-note that is *arsic* (either because of an ascending movement or because of a verbal accent), far from holding up the movement, it should be a means of marking the élan towards the climax, or of giving a more ener-

getic impulse to this climax; or again of giving the proper light, expressive accent to the word:

Offert., 13th Sun. aft. Pent:

climax

In te spe - rá - vi,

At Magnif., One Martyr:

accent   elan

Iste San - ctus pro lege De- i su - i ...

Comm. *Ego clamavi*, 22nd Sun. aft. Pent:

accent-climax   thesis

... et ex-áu - di

Introit, 5th Sun. aft. Pent:

accent

Ex-áu-di Dó - mi - ne

2nd Vesp. Many Martyrs:

elan   elan   elan

Abstér-get De-us ... et jam ... Sed ...

(B) *Horizontal episema on one note only but on a non-ictic note.* This case is not so frequent. It is a more delicate one, and needs special care because the lengthening, if too long and heavy, could easily be misinterpreted as being the place of the rhythmic ictus, and the rhythm would be upset. Examples:

Gradual, *Universi*, Advent: 1st Sun.

... non confundéntur ...

12

... re-ple   tu - ó - rum   cor-da   fi - dé - li - um

Alleluia, Veni Sancte, Pentecost.

1st Ant.,
1st Vesp.,
Christmas:

Rex   pa - cí - fi-cus

4th Ant.,
Dedication
of church:

Be-ne   fun-dá-ta   est

In such cases the episema must be interpreted as a certain amplitude given to the syllable in order to emphasize expressively the meaning of the word, and to permit a perfect pronunciation. The lightness of the accent must be kept and it must convey the feeling that it is an up-beat, rounded-off.

2. THE HORIZONTAL EPISEMA ON THE FIRST OR ICTUS-NOTE OF SEVERAL CONSECUTIVE GROUPS

5th Ant.,
Dedication,
Lapides pretiosi:

... et   tur- res   Je-rú - sa - lem

3rd Ant.,
(Monast. Antiph.)
Dedication,
*Haec est domus Domini:*

... fír- mi - ter   ae-di - fi-cá - ta ...

Commun.
Tollite
18th Sun.
after Pent:

.. a - do-rá - te   Dó-mi-num ...

The note or notes which are in between have to be slightly broadened also, as has been explained (p. 3), in order to avoid an abrupt contrast between the note which is lengthened and the one which is not. The result is that the whole passage is amplified,

emphasized, with a slight insistence only on the ictus-notes. It is in reality the whole rhythmic group, commanded by its ictus, which each time is broadened. In addition to this, each of these horizontal episemas has to be treated either as arsic or thetic, according to its position in the melody and its relation to the words, as explained above (pp. 10-11). These two devices bring about a natural and perfect diction and expression of the text in its musical clothing:

.. a - do- rá - te Dó-mi- num . . .
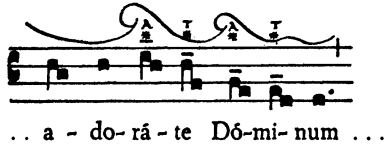
3. THE HORIZONTAL EPISEMA ON A WHOLE RHYTHMIC GROUP

Here, while marking the length sufficiently, care must be taken to keep the 2 or 3 units in the unity of only one compound beat. Example:

Asperges:

. . . et   mun-dá-bor
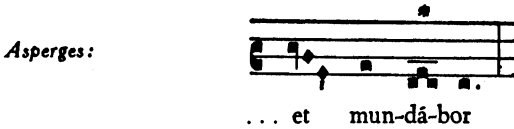
In such cases the lengthening must not be very marked, otherwise the ternary group, being too long and too slow, will not be felt as one single compound beat, one single step, another step will be taken instinctively on another note of the group:

. . mun-dá - bor

or perhaps even on each note of the original group:

. . mun-dá - bor
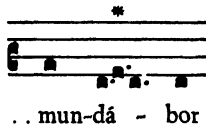
this would change the rhythm completely, and would make it very heavy and unnatural.

As this case of a lengthened torculus followed by a dotted note

is so frequent a formula, it is perhaps advisable to say here that slightly different interpretations are possible.

Since this torculus is a kind of ornamentation of the simple punctum that we find in more simple cadences, some choir-masters like to give a little more importance to the first lengthened note (ictus-note) of the torculus and of the syllable:

.. et   mun-dá - bor   et   mun - dá - bor

But, without ignoring the relation of the more ornate formula to the simple one, it seems evident that the proposed treatment runs the risk of causing an extra ictus to be felt and marked on the top note of the torculus: a fault all too easily heard in certain choirs adopting this solution. For our part, we believe that the horizontal episema may be more naturally understood as a progressive rallentando towards the cadence. In this way, the first note of the group, instead of being more prolonged, would be hardly lengthened at all but would begin the rallentando terminating on the last dotted note; it would be, of course, more marked on each note of the torculus, something like this:

in one step

.. et   mun - dá - bor.

Here the horizontal episema corresponds to a thesis. In other cases such lengthenings are arsic, and prepare or even begin a crescendo marked by the rising of the melody:

... ex- al - tá-vit   il-lum,

Gradual *Christus factus est*, Maundy Thursday.

.. et   propter   nomen   tu - um   dux mi - hi   e - ris

Introit, *Esto mihi* Quinquag.

nó - mi - ni e - jus

Offert, *Jubilate* 2nd Sun. after Epiph.

If the horizontal episema is found on several consecutive notes in a syllabic passage, the rule is the same, care being taken to keep the unity of the rhythmic group formed by these notes. Example:

... in gló - ri - a De - i Pa-tris. Amen.

Ambrosian *Gloria*.

In both cases, syllabic and neumatic, the rhythmic grouping in compound beats of 2 or 3 and their arsic or thetic quality in the phrase must remain clear.

4. THE HORIZONTAL EPISEMA ON SEVERAL CONSECUTIVE GROUPS

The *Amen* of the last example has already introduced this case. Another example:

... pec-cá - ta nostra por - tá - vit,
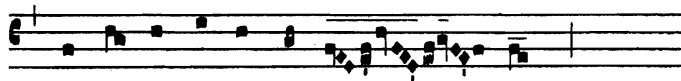
Ecce, vidimus 3rd Resp., 1st Noct., Maundy Thurs.

Sing rather slowly, and almost heavily, deliberately: *la sol fa*; then slightly faster (arsic) *sol la do*; then again *la sol fa* (thetic) as the first time, then *sol la si* lighter again (arsic): the *si* ♮ is doubly expressive because it is marked again by the episema; and contrasts with the *fa*:

por - tá - vit

Treated in this way — clearly suggested by the melody — the whole passage conveys a great impression of the weight of our sins and of the acute suffering of Him who carries them.

Before leaving the subject, we should like to give as an example the 1st Antiphon of the 2nd Vespers of Christmas, *Tecum Principium*, which is made intolerable by a bad interpretation of the horizontal episema. With the indications given here it is very easy to get a beautiful rendering, even from a very inexperienced choir:
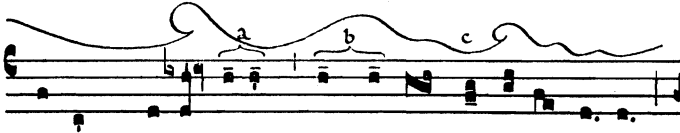

Te- cum prin-cí - pium * in di - e vir-tú-tis tu-ae,

in splen-dó- ri- bus sanc- tó- rum, ex ú-te-ro an-te

Lu-cí - fe-rum gé-nu - i te.

a = thetic: ending of word, soft.

b = arsic: beginning of new rhythm, and accent of *die*.

c = not too strong, élan emphasized in length to prepare the next syllable where the verbal accent is, and where the impulse must be given.

d = to emphasize the accent (and meaning) of *splendóribus*.

e = accent of *sanctórum* prepared and emphasized.

f = accent of *útero* lifted up and emphasized by the slow and dignified fall of the dactyl; this is to insist on the mystery of the eternal generation.

g = accent of *lucíferum*: arsic, lifted up.

h = accent of *génui te*.

* *

*

All the long or lengthened notes must be kept in movement all the time. Even at a cadence (except the final one) the movement must continue uninterrupted. While it is essential to maintain their exact value, we must be given the impression that life is passing through these long notes for the whole of their duration. This is achieved either by an impulse of the voice required for a verbal or melodic accent, or on the contrary by a decrescendo leading to the ending of the word or of the melodic phrase. It is indeed a very common fault to treat these long notes in a flat and dull way, forgetting that they are one of the most important elements for giving solidity, life and virile enthusiasm to the Chant. We must, of course, avoid the opposite fault of emphasizing equally all the long notes without paying attention to their place and rôle in the rhythm, as determined by the words and melody.

CHAPTER V

Variations of tempo

The fundamental mechanism of Plainsong is made supple and flexible:

1. By free rhythm.
2. By long notes.
3. By the preparation of the long notes.
4. By lengthened notes.

All these elements are of the melodic order. Before passing to the words, we have yet to mention two further points concerning the melody, i.e., variations of tempo and phrasing.

It is necessary first of all to give some indication as to the average tempo to be adopted.

Everyone knows the old 'Grandfather' clocks with their peaceful tick-tock. Within ourselves, in our sense of rhythm, we must be able to feel in a similar way a kind of pendulum, something like the beats of the heart. Let us suppose that we have a piece in regular binary time (as, for example, in Kyrie X): we shall then give to our interior 'pendulum' the interval of a little less than a second, singing of course two notes for each beat.

When we come to three-beat groups, we must broaden slightly the interval of the beats, coming back to the normal beats of two when the three-beat groups are over. Or we may think of a swing

with the same movement as our pendulum, and rising slightly higher when we have to sing groups of three notes.

For a piece in which the movement must be more rapid, 80 on the metronome is a good speed to adopt [1]—or 160, counting one beat to each note. This should be the average speed for many of the more ornate pieces, such as Graduals and Alleluias, and for many others which need plenty of movement: Introits, Tracts, Communions, Glorias, etc.

Some pieces suggest a slightly slower movement: Offertories, for instance, and, as a rule, the syllabic chant. We should slow down our beats a little, but not to more than 60 on the metronome for 2-note beats (120 for each note).

It is a good thing to determine the tempo from the ternary groups, especially if they are many, e.g.:

Alleluia *Beatus vir*, Mass *Os justi*, of a Confessor not a Bishop.

If the piece begins too slow, the ternary beats will tend to turn into 3 beats, instead of one compound beat. The binary beats must therefore be given, proportionately of course, the speed required by the ternary. This is the average tempo.

It would, however, be a fatal mistake to believe that fundamental regularity consists in keeping mechanically and imperturbably the same movement in a piece, from beginning to end. Regularity is not mechanism. Regularity can and must adapt itself to perpetual modifications in the tempo, on condition that these modifications be smoothly introduced and determined naturally by the structure and movement of the melody, or by the text.

The question is not an arbitrary one. A good choir should be

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[1] The tempo being merely broadened to accommodate three notes.

able to attain perfect flexibility, since it follows laws that are both definite and natural:

1. The 'rubato', or rounding-off to prepare for both long and lengthened notes necessitates continual modification of tempo.

2. Arsic passages, being naturally in movement (ascending) towards their principal accent or climax and being attracted by this accent, should be sung slightly accelerando in tempo as well as crescendo in volume.

3. After the verbal or musical accent, however, the progressive decrescendo naturally involves a more restful movement; not an actual slackening in pace — the phrase goes on — but in a movement to which no further impulse is given. The whole proceeding — arsis and thesis — might be compared to the action of a motorist in putting his foot on the accelerator when going uphill, and letting the car run down on its own — if not, indeed, applying the brakes — on the down-slope.

4. Full bars must be prepared for by a slight slowing-down of the movement. It will make this more important pause natural, and will also facilitate a full and calm breath. Only the ending of the piece must be noticeably slackened, though not earlier than about the last three rhythmic groups (not necessarily the last three neums).

At the full bars, the last note must be sung relatively soft of course, but firm, and given its full value in the rallentando movement of the cadence (until the next ictus). The equivalent, in silence, of a full dotted note is given afterwards for taking breath, and it is this rallentando, terminating at the fully-sustained dotted note, which distinguishes clearly the complete from the provisional pause (half-bar or quarter-bar) where there is no rallentando or a rallentando hardly noticeable, and where no special silent time is allowed for taking breath. In this latter case, when breathing is necessary, it must be taken off the duration of the previous note without breaking the time.

Two mistakes are to be avoided: 1) breaking the rhythm by prolonging unduly the note before the bar while taking breath, and 2) cutting short the cadence while trying to keep time strictly. There is a way of keeping time gently, singing the cadence-note or the cadence-group sufficiently, and yet taking breath properly — an essential for the maintenance of a good quality voice. Where

c

the rhythmic edition has not put a dot on the note or two notes preceding the bar, and where a breath must nevertheless be taken, it is always possible to do this, while still keeping time, by making the note or two notes flexible: "cédez" delicately, marking the slight articulation of the melody signified by this bar. Example:

Grad.
Requiem :

lú – – ce-at e – is.

To hurry and keep strict time at such points ruins the rhythm and the tranquillity of the piece. In other cases, good taste and experience show that it is better to neglect the bar-line completely and take breath at a long note before or after the bar. Example:

... ju- bi-lá –

te   De – o

Offert., *Jubilate* 2nd. after Epiph.

In this long passage in which breathing is of particular import-ance, *b* seems an easier and better place to breathe than *a*, espe-cially as the ending at *c* is the same rhythmically as at *b*. Again, *d* seems a better place than *e*, as after *d* there is the same kind of beginning (with a podatus) as after the breath taken at *c*, or even at *b*. If we find it difficult to sing properly until the end (this last bit requiring much breath because of the high notes), perhaps a furtive extra breath could be taken before the last word *Deo*.

In such cases there are Choir-masters who advise part of the choir to take breath at one place, while the rest, called 'linkers', continue to sing without pause, thus covering the breathing of the first group and being themselves replaced, in their turn, at the next breathing point. This is sometimes good, as in the example cited above, but only as an exception, since it is painful to hear a choir giving the impression of never taking breath.

The last pause.

A common fault is that of not sustaining the last note sufficiently. To sustain it sufficiently, the sound of the vowel must be prolonged until the next ictus, with which the consonant terminating this syllable — if it ends with a consonant — must coincide. This must be done in a movement which is progressively slowing down, so that the last binary group is the slowest of all. Only thus is achieved that peaceful and dignified ending which we expect.

CHAPTER VI

Phrasing the melody

In every musical period or sentence there are various sections, members and phrases, linked but distinct. The point of their union may be called an 'articulation', something like the articulation of the bones of the arm.

Most of these articulations are marked in our modern books by division-bars. These bars do not exist, as such, in the MSS: they have been added to show the modern singer the articulation which *is* in the melody and results from its structure and also from the text which it interprets. Later on we shall see the phrasing of the text; here we wish to draw attention to that of the melody — the phrasing, that is, which results from its structure and meaning.

The great majority of bars indicate phrasing and articulations which are obvious. A few are open to discussion (cf. pp. 20 and, further on, pp. 26 & 28).
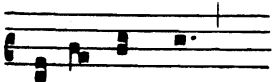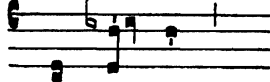
In addition to the bars, melodic developments sometimes require in execution further articulations which are not in the printed text. Themes are repeated, answering or completing each other.

Distinctions must be made, therefore, to bring out the sense and architecture of the music. This is done by grouping together the elements, building up a phrase and distinguishing it from the following phrase, while linking them and keeping them in the main stream of the melody.
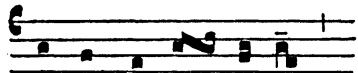
As we have explained elsewhere [1], a musical phrase can terminate either

with a *masculine* cadence or ending, i.e., on one single note at

1 "Plainsong for Musicians" (Rushworth & Dreaper), p. 34.

the musical beat or ictus. Ex.:

Asperges
1 Ad lib:

Intr.
15th Sun.
after Pent:

Aspér-ges me, *   In - clí - na, *

or with a *feminine* or compound cadence or ending, i.e., on a neum. This cadence falls also on the rhythmic beat or ictus, but as a kind of appoggiatura which finds its resolution at the end of the neum; this neum may or may not have a dot which makes its last note a second ictus-note; or it may have its two notes dotted; in either case the last note is the weaker of the two:

Comm.
2nd Mass
Virg. et Mart:

Fe - ci   ju- dí - ci - um *

Sanctus
Mass VIII:

Offert.
16th Sun.
after Pent:

... Ho-sán - na   Dó-mi - ne, *

Kyrie IX:

Ký - ri - e *

Offert.
23rd Sun.
after Pent:

De pro - fún ,- dis *

When the last note of the cadence, masculine or feminine, has a dot or a vertical episema, it is obviously the ending of the previous musical phrase. But when the cadence note of the masculine ending or the last note of the feminine ending has no lengthening sign, and when this happens in a melodic passage where the words no longer help us to recognize the cadence and its nature, it is possible to mistake a masculine for a feminine ending and vice versa, and to miss the articulation of the different phrases, especially when there are many single notes without a long note. In such cases:

1. First recognize these phrases and the place of their articulation in the melody,

2. Make sure whether the ending of the first phrase is masculine or feminine,

3. Interpret thus: at the articulation, the ending of the first phrase — thesis — must fall rhythmically, slightly slower and softer; with a slight contrast the beginning of the next phrase — arsic — must be a little more lively in movement and intensity.

Examples will make this perfectly clear [1]:

Kyrie IX:

Ký - ri - e *   e-lé - i - son.

At *a*, the ending (feminine) of the first melodic phrase is obvious; at *c*, the same ending terminates the sentence. But it is not easy to recognize in *b* another articulation, and in fact it is seldom suggested in the rendering. The first *do-re* is thetic (the feminine ending of the melodic word *fa-re-do-re*):

The second *do-re* is arsic and begins the last phrase:

e - lé - i - son.

therefore the first *do-re* will be slightly softer, followed by a new impetus at 'eleison' and leading up to the accent of the word.

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[1] In order to avoid any confusion, we distinguish carefully between these terms:

1. the *neum* or simply *group* of the notation.
2. the *rhythmic* group (the 2 or 3 notes between 2 ictus) — the rhythmic group does not always coincide with the group of the notation. Ex.:
3. the *melodic* group, which we call *phrase*.
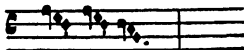
In cases of imitation or melodic repetition, e.g. in the *Alleluia Loquebantur* of Whit Monday

it is easy and important to realize that it would spoil the balance of the imitation if the last note of the first phrase were too intimately linked with the next melodic phrase; this note, *sol*, is the end of the first phrase, and this quality of 'end' must be felt (without stopping or breaking the flow of the movement), before passing to the next melodic phrase which begins on the next ictus (*mi*).

So, too, in the Gradual *Adjutor* of Septuagesima:

.. ae - tér -   num.

While there is room for discussion and difference of interpretation in these cases, objectivity should be aimed at, analysing the structure of the melody, and consulting the MSS, for whatever indications they may give.

The Alleluia *Justus ut palma* of the Mass of an Abbot is another instance of a repetition or imitation which involves the same distinction and articulation:

Here the horizontal episema suggests it, and helps to carry it out; but it must be well understood that the *two* notes of this rhythmic group (*fa-sol*) are thetic, the feminine ending of the first melodic phrase. Therefore the second note (*sol*) of the group must not be shortened, on the plea that the episema affects only the first note (*fa*).

The Alleluia *Quinque prudentes virgines* of St. Agnes is another example; with the difference, this time, that no rhythmic sign

has been placed there to help us to recognize the articulation:

Alle ~ lú-ia. * ij.

At *a*, it is impossible to miss the articulation: the bar and the dotted note mark it. But at *b*, where obviously it is the same, in spite of the slight modifications introduced in the theme to make a closer link between its two parts, only the repetition shows the podatus *do-re* as a feminine ending; before passing to the second part, the movement must be slightly slowed down.

A few examples will show how this point requires attention in ornate melodies.

Ex. 1. The Offertory *Filiae regum* of the Mass *Dilexisti* for a Virgin not a Martyr, at the end, on the word *varietate*. For years we heard this passage interpreted with the following melodic grouping:

...va ~ ri ~ e ~ tá ~ te.

Usually long notes end a phrase, but do they do so here? One may feel some uncertainty in this case, especially during phrase **3**: it is too long and unbalanced, and it misses the imitation *si-do-la-sol-do* of the second phrase.

Consulting the MSS we found that the *podatus subbipunctis* was lengthened on its last two notes and that the last two diamond notes of the climacus before the syllable *te* were also lengthened, thus stressing the imitation of the theme of the two previous *podatus subbipunctis*.

This suggests a quite different and far more satisfactory melodic grouping:

...va ~ ri ~ e ~ tá ~ te.
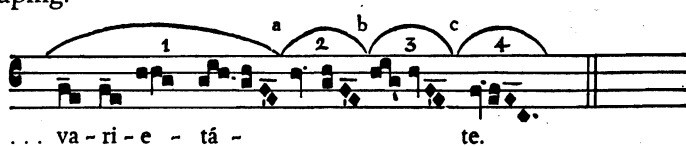
At *a*, *b*, and *c*, the same feminine ending marks the cadence of each musical phrase. A feminine ending can be well interpreted

only if given more weight and length on the first note (ictus-note) of the cadence, the *la* in the present case — a *la* which has already been approached in the same way four times in the same piece.

At *a*, the cadence comes for the first time; the next phrase 2 is a repetition of the five previous notes, with the same cadence at *b*. Then phrase 3 is another repetition with a melodic development or augmentation, terminating again with the same cadence *c* and linked skilfully with the 4th phrase, again an imitation of the theme, only rhythmic this time. The very fact that the three other melodic phrases terminated in a feminine ending makes it probable that the 4th phrase should terminate in the same way, but with a dot on each note. since it is final:
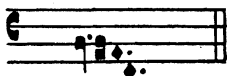
After having stressed the second last note (the *la*) at *a, b* and *c*. the final double cadence seems called for.

Once understood in this way, there is no need to introduce these MSS signs into the actual notation: just a delicate change in tempo and intensity will give the correct interpretation.

Ex. 2. The Gradual *Benedicam* of the 12th Sunday after Pentecost:

... laus e - jus

The revisers of the Vatican edition put the bar after the *sol* of *ejus*, but perhaps the following will be found a more satisfactory interpretation:
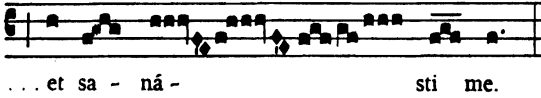

... laus e - jus

As may be seen, the actual ¼-bar should be ignored, and the *la-si-la-mi* should be treated as the feminine ending of the first melodic phrase, the distinction or articulation being made between

this neum and the one which opens the phrase that follows.
Ex. 3. The Offertory *Exaltabo te* of Ash Wednesday:

... et sa – ná –   sti   me.

Again, this section is generally sung without any clear phrasing.
In the MSS the diamond notes of each climacus are lengthened;
this suggests that they may be understood as feminine endings, as
in the example given above from the Offertory *Filiae regum*. The
la (arsic) which follows these diamond notes, begins the next
melodic phrase, and at *a* (next example), we have an articulation
of the two phrases; at *b*, we have the same feminine ending and
another articulation, and the next arsis receives a melodic develop-
ment:

.. et sa – ná –   sti   me.

This interpretation, from the indications of the MSS, is artistic
and natural, with its three-fold fall from the *do* to the *la*; it seems
also the natural conclusion in a piece in which the arsic movement
la-do, and back again from *do* to *la*, is often repeated. There is no
need to introduce MSS signs in the notation, but only to keep the
interpretation they suggest.

Ex. 4. The Offertory *Beata es* (Mass IV of the B.V.M. on Satur-
days):

.. qui te fe –   cit

In this long passage, the melodic movement, with the neum *la-si
la-sol* twice repeated and the influence of the modal tonic *sol*,
suggests the same kind of discreet articulation between the *sol* and
the *fa*; this is accompanied by the usual slight rallentando on the
two notes *la-sol* (feminine ending of the first melodic phrase),

followed by an arsic élan to mark the beginning of the next phrase.

In such a case, breath should only be taken when the first melodic phrase has been sung. This can be done easily if one treats the articulation with the slight natural rallentando that it requires.

Ex. 5.   As a final example, let us take a difficult piece, the Gradual *Haec dies* of the Thursday after Easter. The versicle remains difficult as long as the various melodic phrases with their articulations have not been understood, so we indicate them at once in the text, as we understand them:

... ae – di– fi–cán – tes,

hic fác-tus est

To begin with the 2nd part of the example (after the full-bar): the right place for the ¼-bar is after the porrectus *re-do-re*, which seems to be the real ending (masculine) of this first melodic phrase. Then comes a second phrase with the same ending, *re-do-re*. A third follows, a kind of rhythmic imitation of the second, this time falling in a feminine group which should be slightly stressed on the ictus-note, *mi*; this feminine group, which ends on an up-beat, prepares and announces the conclusion of the period in phrase 4, on the same notes *mi-re*, but this time with an ictus for each note (feminine ending 'virilised').

So far we have had only feminine endings, as in all the previous examples, or masculine cadences marked by a lengthened note. But in the first part of the present example, on the word *aedificantes*, we have something new which makes it perhaps more delicate to interpret. The endings of the first and second melodic phrases — both the same — are masculine, and consist of a single note not lengthened at the ictus, so that at the first articulation,

a, between phrases 1 and 2, the *do*, end of phrase 1, is thetic, while the next note *re*, second note of the same *rhythmic* group, is at the same time the first of another melodic phrase (phrase 2). At the second articulation *b*, between phrases 2 and 3, the *do*, end of phrase 2, is thetic, and this time the two next notes (the whole clivis *mi-do*) — both in the same *rhythmic* group as the *do* — are the first two of phrase 3, and arsic [1]. At these articulations a slight contrast must always be felt between the thesis of the melodic phrase which finishes and the arsis of the melodic phrase which begins.

Still more curious is the case when the distinction of thesis and arsis comes not merely in the same rhythmic group, but actually in the same neum, a porrectus, of which the first note is thetic and the other two arsic [2]:

Tract. *De necessitatibus*, Ember Wed. in Lent:

... Et-e – nim.

The second phrase is obviously a melodic and rhythmic imitation of the first. This means that at *a* we have the articulation as explained above.

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[1] In this example, as in many others (see *Christus factus est*, quoted in "Plainsong for Musicians", p. 21), we may note how the traditional notation — surprising at first to our modern eyes — follows the *rhythmic* grouping of the melodic phrasing, and after the ictus-note, end of the first phrase, begins the second phrase with a new group (neum); the modern musical notation would always follow materially the grouping of the *measure*.

[2] Here, for once, the traditional notation follows the grouping of the measure.

PART II

TEXT

CHAPTER I

Importance of the words in Plainsong

The structure and technique of Plainsong help us to understand why the Church uses music to enable her children to share in her prayer, the Liturgy. The music is in view of the text, and there is perfect union between them.

It is not enough to say that the verbal text has always inspired the Gregorian melodies. The Gregorian Chant may be described as the expansion or "efflorescence" of the Latin words of the Liturgy. The melodic design, accentuation and rhythm, spring from the Latin words. As is well known, in the spoken language the accentuated syllable is enunciated at a higher pitch: it rises, and then the voice comes down again on the unaccented syllables.
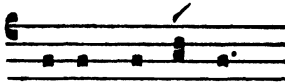
Example: *Ave Maria.* This will give in Plainsong:

Short Resp.
(Monast. Antiph.)

A - ve Ma - rí - a
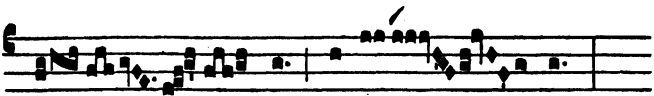
Sequence
("Variae Preces")

A-ve Ma - rí - a

2nd Ant. of the
Annunciation.

A- ve Ma - rí - a

Offert. Comm.
of the B.V.M.
after Pent:

A -   ve Ma - rí -   a,

In the great majority of cases the accented syllable in the word has been so treated in the melodies as to rise higher than the other syllables, or at least higher than the ending of the same word. See, for instance, the Introit *Exsurge* of Sexagesima Sunday, or the Offertory *Mirabilis* of the Common of Many Martyrs out of Paschal Time.

What is true of a word, is also true of a small phrase or of a more important section. The verbal accent which is, or has been, understood by the composer as the main accent of the phrase or of the section — the phraseological accent — attracts to itself the whole movement of the melody as to a climax. This explains why the accents of some words seem to have been neglected, not having received a higher or ascending note in the actual setting:

Grâ-ti-as ági-mus ti-bi propter magnam gló- ri - am tu - am

In this period, the principal accent is obviously on the word *magnam*. Not that the accent of *Grátias* is sacrificed, but it leads up to those of *ágimus* and *tibi*. And these two words, if they are given the melodic and dynamic progression proper to their tonic accent, must also be sung in such a way that the general crescendo leads towards the accent of *magnam*, climax of the period, on the other side of the bar.

This question of accentuation of words, phrases and sentences, has certainly been the source and inspiration of our Gregorian melodies and is the secret of their interpretation.

Gregorian free rhythm has also its source and explanation in the natural rhythm of the Latin words. We have already seen (Introduction p. XIII) that the way in which the authors of the Gregorian melodies have set their text to music shows the independence of the Latin word-accent from the musical beat [1] From this treatment of the Latin word-accent comes its light, expressive, lifted up, arsic quality: it is the rise of the word which alights and comes to rest on the final syllable. As a result, taking

---

[1] We shall treat this question more fully further on, when we speak of accentuation (Chapt. III, p. 41).

the words independently, the end syllable is the normal place for the ictus (down-beat in 2/8 or 3/8 rhythmic groups).

The alternation of rise and fall created by the accents and endings of words in a full sentence determines binary (2/8) or ternary (3/8) beats: this is the free rhythm of prose:

Déus Déus méus ad | te de lúce vígilo.
2   2   2   3   3

Sitívit in | te ánima méa
2   2   3   2

Spíritus Dómini replévit orbem terrárum
2   3   3   2   3

It was quite natural for this free rhythm of Latin prose to be kept when put to music, and to be the source and origin of the free rhythm of Gregorian music even in its purely musical developments and ornamentation. This was specially true at a time when composers did not have to think of the combination of several parts.

In music brought out from Latin words in this way, the importance of the words is primary; that is why we insisted so much in our Introduction on the importance of verbal rhythm, well understood. The better we understand the proper technique of the words in relation to the melody, the more profoundly shall we enter into the meaning of both, and realise how wonderfully the music of the Church makes us grasp the full significance of the texts she gives us to meditate, in order to carry us along in the stream of her Prayer.

We must now examine carefully the technical aspects of the Latin text: Pronunciation, Accentuation, and Phrasing.

CHAPTER II

Pronunciation

Each language has its own beauty, but we want to understand more particularly how Latin gives an incomparable dignity to the prayers, lessons, Psalms, and other parts of the Roman liturgy.

It is particularly important to realize that in Latin all the syllables, the unaccented ones as well as the accented, have their own duration, quality and importance, and must be enunciated clearly with the pure, round, full, ample sound and beauty of their vowels. The beauty of its vowel-sounds is perhaps a special characteristic of Latin.

In pronouncing Latin there is a full beat for each syllable pronounced with its proper round sound, fully distinct from the other syllables. The accent is lifted up, rounded-off, soaring, and then the voice comes down quietly on the ending of the word.

Li-te-ra-tú-ra   Ca-thó-li-cam

Every syllable must be enunciated: 1) with regularity, 2) clearly, 3) with the exact, pure and round sound proper to each vowel; 4) with clear consonants. This must be achieved without rigidity, remembering that nothing is more natural, supple, flowing, easy, than Latin.

REGULARITY OF SYLLABLES

In Latin, all syllables have approximately the same duration. This does not mean, of course, that syllables are shot out as from a machine-gun; it means that not only the accented syllable, but every syllable must be fully informed with the shape of its vowel. Correct accentuation and phrasing (explained further on) give life and soul to the sentence.

Attention must be given to the regularity of dactyls, i.e. words having their tonic accent on the ante-penultimate syllable: *déxtera, justítia,* etc. A very common fault consists in lengthening the accented syllable and shortening the next:

déx-tera   instead of :   déxtera

Special attention is necessary when there is no consonant between the second and the last syllables:
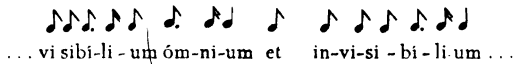

gló-ri-a   and not: gló-ri-a   or even   gló-ria

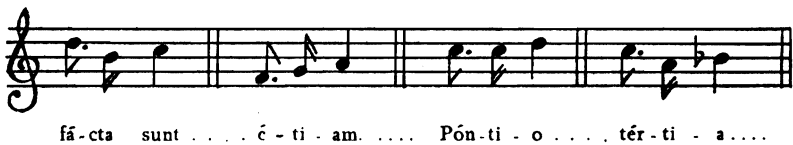reducing to only one the last two syllables, normally the rule in Italian.

A fault like this can ruin the melody. Someone accustomed to say the words badly:

... vi si bí - li - um óm-ni-um et in-vi-si - bí - li um ...

will sing in the same way, giving the melody the incorrect rhythm he is giving the words:

vi-si-bí-li-um ó - mni-um et in-vi-si-bí- li-um

And the same fault will appear at every dactyl of the Credo:

... Fí-li-um De-i u-ni-gé-ni-tum ... an-te ó-mni-a saé - cu-la

lu-men de lú-mi-ne Gé-ni-tum .... per quem ó-mni-a

fá-cta sunt .... é-ti-am. .... Pón-ti-o ...., tér-ti-a....

déx-te-ram .... í-te-rum .... Fí-li-o .. Ec-clé-si-am .. etc.

A few simple exercises will help to eliminate this fault:

(a) Count 1, 2, 3, on the last three syllables, and then we shall not sing:

one   two   three
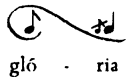
(b) Or, imagine singing each successive syllable alternately to the two sides of the room:

jus- ⟶ tí-   gló- ⟶ ri-

ti- ⟵⟶ a.   a. ⟵

(c) Or again: instead of considering the penultimate syllable as if it were part of the last, pronounced in the same emission:


glό - ria princi - pio

consider this penultimate syllable as forming part of the accented syllable rounded-off — *half* of it, as it were:


glόri - a.

The word does not fall on *ria*, but only on the last syllable, *a*. This gives time to end the word quietly. It is what the late Dom Alphege Shebbeare used expressively to call 'lazy' or 'dignified' dactyls:

ju - sti - ti - a
fi - li - o
prin - ci -pi - o

When conducting with chironomy, the penultimate syllable should coincide with the top of the arsic curve:
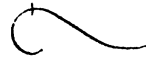
and this rhythm should be kept for any melody, even if the penultimate syllable is lower:

ju – sti– ti – a
fi- li - o
prin- ci-pi - o
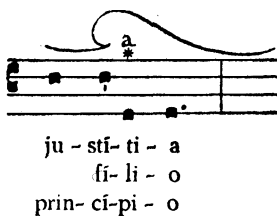
a remains rhythmically an
* up-beat, from which we
come down slowly.

The difficulty presented by two syllables that are not separated by a consonant is increased when one of the two happens to be the accented syllable. The following examples will illustrate how faults of pronunciation at such a point upset the rhythm:

ab - so - lu - ti - ό - nem   = 6 syllables and not 5:   ab - so-lu-tiό - nem
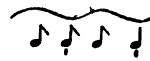
D

re-mis-si-ónem = 5 syllables and not 4: re-mis-sió -nem

pro-pi-ti- á -ti-o = 6 syllables and not 4: pro-pi-tiá-tio

Ký- ri- e e-lé- i-son ̤= 7 syllables and not 4: Ký - rie e-léi- son

Psalm CXVIII is an excellent Psalm for practising this point, which occurs in it so frequently: *judícia, justítia, voluntária, testimónia, exultátio, faciéndas, retributiónem, ódio*, etc. etc.

CLEARNESS OF PRONUNCIATION

Office in church is a *public* service. If the Church asks the celebrant, the deacon, the subdeacon, those who read the lessons etc., to speak with raised voice or to sing texts, it is because the people are supposed to be able to hear them and understand them. The prayers or readings in church should never be read as a "matter of course", a formula which *has* to be got through but to which nobody listens, and to which the routine answer is given without paying the slightest attention.

Everything, on the contrary, should be done *"in spiritu et veritate"*. Everything should be made *true*. When I speak or sing, I must know what I am talking about, and I must say or sing it in such a way that people can hear and understand, or at least realize from the way in which I speak or sing that it is something dignified which *means* something to Almighty God and to His Church.

A person in the congregation knowing Latin, but without a book, should be able to understand what is being said or sung. Every word, therefore, should be perfectly clear. Each word will be clear only if each syllable is clear. And every syllable will be clear-cut only if its vowel is pure and exact, i.e., perfectly different from the others, and full; and if the consonant or consonants which accompany this vowel are, in the same way, clearly enunciated and easy to recognize as distinct from the others.

PROPER SOUND OF THE VOWELS

Latin has, in principle, only five vowel sounds: A, E, I, O, U; AE and OE being pronounced like E.

Assuming that the teaching of the text-books on this question is generally known, we shall note here only a certain number of points which experience has shown us to be useful.

A.

Nearly every text-book says A is to be pronounced like the A in Father, rather than like the A in man. Care must be taken, however, not to make it resemble the French A (pâtre), thick and heavy. It should remain light.

The A should not be placed at the back of the mouth (at the root of the tongue) but in the front, more or less where the T is. This requires careful practice.

> Sta-bat   Mater dolorósa
> . . . . lacrymósa

E.

Firstly, the sound of this vowel must remain the same for its entire duration: there should be no "after sound" of I; it should be Domine not Domine-i, Mariae not Mariae-i.

Secondly, in Latin this vowel has two different sounds — as has "O". A clear and practical rule can be given for both letters:

E and O are

1) *more open* (a) when they are in an accented syllable:
> Déus, Glória.

(b) in a syllable terminated by a consonant:
> Amen, Sion.

2) *more closed* anywhere else:
> Dícite, cápite; sancto, díligo.

The two different sounds may occur in the same word:

open	open
*	*
Dómino	Miserére
*	* *
closed	closed closed

The E of *Kyrie* is not the 2nd of *Eléison*, but the 1st:

open
*
Kýrie eléison [1]
* *
closed closed

The difference is very slight and must not be exaggerated, but it is very noticeable.

Furthermore, if several notes are sung on a syllable having an open sound, this open sound should be heard only on the very last note of the vocalisation. Examples: *Allelúia, justi epuléntur* (Mass *Sapiéntiam*, Common of Two or More Martyrs), on the words *epuléntur* and *delecténtur;* or in the *Allelúia, Adducéntur* (Mass *Loquebar*, Common of a Virgin Martyr), on the words *adducéntur* and *afferéntur*. O: *Benedicámus Dómino* (Liber Usualis, p. 124 et seq.).

When E is followed by R it is not infrequently modified into a neutral sound like *er* (the sound someone makes in hesitating for a word, or like the mute E in French): *sápere, dilígere, tabernácula, Jerúsalem*. Great care must be taken to keep the exact and pure sound of the vowel, and never to alter its colour because of the influence of the next consonant.
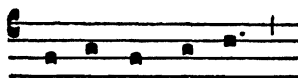
I.

Accented or not, short or long, the Latin I is like the English *ee* in *meet*: Dómine, and not an ill-defined sound which might be mistaken for E: Dómene.

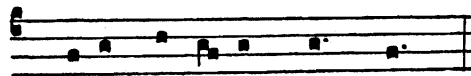This vowel, too, must be kept pure for its entire duration; there should be no echo "er":

Tu autem Dómine, miserére nobi(er)s.

Ant. B.M.V.

Re-gí – na   cae-li(er)

Short Responsory,
Sana animam meam:

qui – a   pec-cá – vi(er) ti(er)-bi(er).

[1] In the Kyrie of the Mass, we pronounce them as if they were Latin words.

If on such syllables there is a group of notes this ugly sound may be heard at the end of the last note:

Kyrie IX:

Ký(er) – ri – e

Gloria II:

Et in   terra pax ho-mí(er)-ni(er)bus

These ill-defined sounds unconsciously produced are hard to convey in writing, but they are plain to the attentive ear. They certainly mar the beauty of the Chant, and this seriously, if prevalent in a choir, or marked in a celebrant, deacon or other sacred minister.

For these two vowels, E and I, a nasal resonance must be carefully avoided. Recording machines can bear relentless and unanswerable testimony to such faults.

O.

A pure and correct O is difficult to achieve. It is produced between the lips, in front of the teeth, not at the back of the mouth.

U.

English speaking people seem to have no difficulty with the Latin U. It is enunciated by the lips only, without any contraction or movement of the tongue or jaw. (It is *not* like the French U or EU).

We might lay out the vowels in the following way, with *A* occupying the central place:

```
                    I
                E
            A
                O
                  U
```

The normal position for A is obtained by opening the mouth (and teeth) with lips and tongue at perfect rest.

For E and I the only change is that of arching the tongue itself — a little, in the case of E, and still more for the I. This movement, which permits the pronunciation of the vowels while keeping the

teeth and mouth open, must be carefully practised until it has become a matter of habit; otherwise these two vowels will always be thin and poor, without resonance and beauty.

Coming back now to the central position of A, we have to keep the tongue at rest for the O and U, the lips alone closing and coming forward, a little for the O, and more for the U. Unless the teeth are kept open and the tongue flat for these two vowels, their sound will lack roundness and beauty.

CLEARNESS OF CONSONANTS

Every letter in Latin must be clearly pronounced.
Attention may be drawn particularly to:

(a) *Double Consonants:*

A vowel must not be introduced between them on the plea of pronouncing both, as the Italians often do: *Red(e)dam* for *reddam*, *tol(e)le* for *tolle;* but since a double consonant, e.g. "dd" requires something more than the single one, the tongue should be allowed to linger a little longer in the required position.

Practice will form a habit.

> Ex.: Ille, reddam, Hosánna, peccáta, tolle, extólle illos, insurrexérunt, immolávi. Qui tollis peccáta mundi. Allelúia, Allelúia.
> Annuntiáte nobis in terris quis appáruit.
> Mittit crystállum suum sicut buccéllas.
> Multa flagélla peccatórum.
> Allevat Dóminus omnes qui córruunt.
> Illumináre, illumináre, Jerúsalem.
> Illic interrogavérunt nos.
> Paulo minus consummavérunt me in terra.
> Pullis corvórum . . . multitúdinem stellárum.
> Psallam nómini Dómini altíssimi.
> Commóta est terra.
> Misit sagíttas suas et dissipávit eos.
> Ero immaculátus.
> Caeli enárrant . . . annúntiat firmaméntum.

(b) *The immediate succession of two or more different consonants in the same word or between different words:*

The first consonant must be pronounced with all possible clarity before passing to the second, the voice remaining all the time flexible, smooth and natural without any exaggeration or affect-

ation. This is very important for the strong living beauty of the Chant.

> Ex.: Virgam **virtútis** tuae emíttet **Dóminus** ex **S**ion.
> Jurávit **Dóminus** — **R**ex caeléstis — Tu solus **s**anctus.
> Patrem **omnipoténtem factórem** caeli . . .
> **L**umen **d**e lúmine.
> Consubstantiálem **P**atri — Et incarnátus est **d**e Spíritu **S**ancto.

CHAPTER III

Accentuation

Every syllable must be pronounced with regularity and clarity, but not hammered out like shots from a machine-gun. Just as the material measure in music has to be informed by rhythm, so too rhythm must give life and spirit to the material of the words and syllables.

WORD-ACCENT

Role of the accent in the word.

When we meet a friend, we do not look at his feet: we look at his face, into his eyes, since it is there that we as it were meet him, see into him, penetrate his life. It is much the same with words. One syllable is of supreme interest, only one seems to contain and to give the message of the word: the accented syllable. The idea in each word is concentrated in the accented syllable: *Glória Pátri et Fílio . . . Benedíctus Déus. Propter mágnam glóriam túam.* Of course the other syllables must not be neglected. All are important. The tonic accent falls on one syllable only, but it embraces the whole word; its attraction is felt, and the last syllable or two are felt as a relaxing of its life.

Nature and character of the Latin accent.

It is extremely important to understand the real nature and character of the Latin accent and to give it its proper treatment.

In the Introduction we have seen how the quality of the Latin accent is revealed by the actual setting of the words in the melodies. Its treatment there is quite foreign to modern methods. Hence it causes much discussion, and is a stumbling-block for musicians and scholars. In view of its importance, a short résumé of the question seems necessary here.

In English, German and French, the word-accent is made and felt as a down-stress, coinciding with, and determining, the rhythmic beat in music, in poetry, and in prose. The same, naturally, is expected in Latin, and we accentuate: *Díxit Dóminus Dómino méo* in the same way as we say in English: "May becóme Everlásting To-mórrow". Stress and accent go together. This explains why all modern compositions with Latin words show this coincidence of the verbal accent with the rhythmic beat.

But experience proves the difficulty of trying to treat Latin in this way. French people, accustomed as they are to putting both the rhythmic beat and the verbal accent on the last syllable of the word have great difficulty in not doing the same in Latin, and we hear: *Patér nostér. Dominús vobiscúm.*

In English, the word-accent has a much more important rôle than in French, and at first it seems that this should make the correct accentuation of Latin easier. In point of fact, the English accent is the only important syllable of the word, whether the last in the word — ad*vise*, con*cise*, at*tack* — or the last clearly heard in the word — *fa*(ther) *won*(der) *won*(derful). Since in Latin, however, the last syllable must be perfectly clear and have its full duration, English speakers, knowing this and wishing to do it well, are apt to treat it heavily like an English accent, and we hear: *Gloriá Patrí et Filió et Spirituí Sanctó; sicut erát in principió et nunc et sempér, et in saeculá saeculorúm, Amén.* Or, if the accent is put in the right place, it is made as in English, so that the unaccented syllables are absorbed by the accented one. We hear for instance: *Cór*(pus) *Dó*(mini) *nós*(tri) 3 syllables instead of 7; or *Quó*(niam) (confir)*má*(ta est) (super)*nós* (miseri)*cór*(dia) *é*(jus).

Is this really the correct way of understanding and treating the Latin accent? In other words, is the Latin accent a strong downward stress, and thetic. as in German and English?

Italian and Spanish, both closely derived from Latin, have a *thetic* accent, when it is on the last syllable of the word: *corazón, contribución;* otherwise their verbal accent is definitely light, not heavy: arsic, not thetic: *Providéncia, precióso, precisaménte.* Is not this a strong argument in favour of an arsic accent in Latin?

If we examine the structure of Gregorian compositions, we find that this argument in favour of an arsic treatment of the Latin accent becomes an evident fact. If the Gregorian composers had

the same conception of the Latin accent as modern musicians, they would have put it on the beat: which is determined musically by groups or long notes; and which is the only place where a thetic accent can fall. Sometimes this is, indeed, done; but more often, and with a marked preference, the accent is on a single note, before and outside the group or long note; it anticipates the beat and is independent of it. It cannot, therefore, be the thetic, rather incisive word-accent which we find in English and German; it must be arsic, light, more spiritual and expressive, akin to that in Italian and Spanish.

For example:

> *Ave Máris Stélla* — (Hymn of the Feasts of Blessed Virgin Mary), the three words.
>
> *Dómine Jésu Chríste*, (Offertory of the Requiem Mass), the three words.
>
> *Sánctus* of the same Mass.
>
> *Crux fidélis*, (Hymn for the Adoration of the Cross, Good Friday) ten words in the last four lines.
>
> *Inclína*, (Introit, 15th Sun. after Pentecost), *Miserére mihi Dómine.*
>
> *Meménto*, (Communion, 20th Sun. after Pentecost), first phrase.
>
> *Quinque*, (Communion of a Virgin not a Martyr), *in vásis súis cum lampádibus.*
>
> *Dómine Déus méus*, (Communion, Ember Saturday in Lent), the three words.
>
> Etc., etc.

In such cases, so frequent in Gregorian music, forcing the rhythmic beat to coincide with the word-accent spoils the natural rhythm of the melody. The very structure of the melody shows that it was never written for such treatment. If, on the contrary, we follow the rhythm imposed by the melody, the accent of the word is brought all the more into evidence, but with a quite different quality — light, arsic, expressive. The ictus which comes after the accent corresponds to the ending of the word (a thesis) and is obviously not an accent. Mozart, Beethoven, Bach frequently use these end-of-rhythm time-beats, which are weaker than the rest of the same compound beat (Ex.: the *Pastorale* of

Bach, quoted in "Plainsong for Musicians", p. 21). To hold that rhythm can be marked *only* by stress is, therefore, an over-simplification leading to serious musical errors.

Such being the treatment of the accent in ornate melodies, it is only natural and logical that it should retain its same arsic quality in syllabic chant, and even in a Latin text only read or chanted in a monotone. That is, we leave it preferably outside the rhythmic beat, rather than make it always coincide with it. The danger of stressing down the accent must be avoided, even if it has sometimes to coincide with the beat; in which case, the beat itself becomes arsic.

The Latin accent, too often conceived as strong, is hardly stronger than the unaccented syllables — it may even be softer. It is rather a slight amplification which allows the accented syllable, the soul of the word, to give its expressive significance, its beauty, its colour. It is not the blow of a bludgeon, but rather a movement of expression, of understanding or faith, informing the whole word. And since the accent animates the whole word, it must not be sudden and unexpected: its coming must be prepared, its attraction must be felt on the syllables preceding it; and when it has passed, the life of the word declines.

Though printed in one horizontal line, the words may be pictured as forming a perpetual undulation, a series of waves whose impulse and rise is due to the accents:

Quóni - am   confirmáta est   súper nos   misericórdi - a é - jus
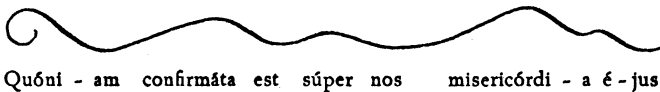
Whether the melody is rising or falling, the accented syllable must always be felt rhythmically on the top or climax of the word. Its intensity is greater or less according to its place in the phrase, its amplitude or emphasis varies accordingly:

Kyrie XVIII:

Ký - ri - e

Kyrie XVI:

Ký - ri - e   Ky-ri-e

Gloria XI:

Jé - su   Chrí - ste   =   Jésu   Chríste

It is true that this execution of the accent (rather by amplitude than by force) breaks the absolute regularity of the words. But true music is not purely mechanical. The function of the accent is precisely that of giving life and movement to measure, and verbal rhythm informs and enlivens that fundamental regularity or mechanism controlled by measure:
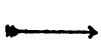
Gloria   is not a significant word, but   *Glória*   is.

Ju-sti-fi-ca-ti-o-ni-bus hammers out the syllables in machine-gun style; correct accentuation makes a word fully significant:

crescendo & accelerando   * decresc. & rall.

Ju - sti - fi - ca - ti - o - ni - bus

*
turning point
rounded-off and slightly amplified.

In practice, if we look after the accent, treating it with a light, arsic, and expressive quality, the ictus will look after itself. The places of the rhythmic beats will be determined by the groups, long notes, and, in syllabic chant, by the ending of the words or the melodic design:

Núlla   silva   tá-lem   pró-fert   Frónde, fló-re   gérmi - ne.
Pange Lingua. Good Friday.

Sequence
Lauda Sion:

Ec-ce   Pá-nis An-ge-ló-rum

Hymn
to
B.V.M.:

Vír-go Dé -i gé-ni - trix

That, then, is how the accent should sound: an impulse given in a gentle, expressive way. But what about the ictus? — There is no need to mark it with the voice, since it is already heard in the very structure of the melody. To stress it by a heavy down-beat ruins both words and melody. It is marked *in the book* to point out the natural musical rhythm of the melody, or to show which rhythm has been adopted in a place where several alternatives are possible — for it is particularly necessary to be aware of the place of the ictus when the verbal accent does not coincide with it; but, once understood and felt, the rhythm passes into the singing quite spontaneously and as a whole, just as in the case of a beginner who plays to the tick of the metronome: the effect but not the tick passes into his playing, and later he feels the rhythm without hearing the ticks.

We give here an example in which it is easy to realize the whole effect of verbal accents treated in the right way:

2nd Versicle,
Responsory
Libera me:

Di - es illa, di- es i-rae, ca- la-mi-tá- tis   et

mi - sé- ri - ae, Dí- es mágna   et   a- má- ra vál - de.

Dies illa 'That' day: the accent of *illa* is the important syllable, the whole soul of this first little phrase. It is to be emphasized expressively by a certain amplitude rather than by intensity.

Dies irae: same treatment for *irae,* but softer, and flowing from the first phrase; this will link the two phrases — a link indicated by the melodic fall.

Calamitátis et misériae: two words, two accents; the first one, emphasized by the melody, giving their sense to the two.

Dies mágna et amára válde: again, think of the meaning of these words, and give the full expression of this meaning through the accented syllable. In this way, the real significance and truth of the whole versicle will be made manifest.

Experience shows that this conception of the verbal accent is the secret of a living interpretation. Too often, unfortunately, this essential point occasions disputes and misunderstanding, to the prejudice of the Chant.

PHRASE-ACCENT

What is true of the accent in its relation to the other syllables in a single word is proportionately true of the principal accent of a phrase in its relation to the other words it contains. In English, in "Good morning, Father", the accent of "Father" almost disappears, while that of "morning" dominates and so effects the unity of the phrase. So too in Latin: each phrase has its most important word, the climax towards which it rises and from which it falls away, the accented summit drawing all up towards itself:

Gloria
III:

Grâ – ti- as â-gimus tí- bi propter mâ-gnam glóri- am tu- am.

The correct interpretation simply follows and brings out in the voice the movement that the melody has received from the text. A well-controlled crescendo and slight accelerando accompany naturally the movement ascending towards the accents (of phrases, sections, sentences); a quiet decrescendo the descending part.

CHAPTER IV

Phrasing the text

Although the unification of a sentence by its principal accent must be realized, the distinction between its component parts must also be made clear. These elements are at once distinct from one another and intimately linked; the point at which this distinction appears is called an articulation. It plays the same rôle as punctuation in a sentence: distinguishing, even separating, but never compromising the unity of the text.

Phrasing is the art of making these articulations felt in the text and melody. In Part I (Chapt. VI, p. 21) we studied the phrasing of the melody; now we come to the phrasing of the text itself, or of the melody in so far as determined by good diction of the text.

This is, indeed, a most interesting point in the study and practice of the Chant. More than anything else, perfect phrasing obliges us to put into action not only our artistic sense but our understanding and our faith; nothing is more conducive to prayer.

In the verbal text, good phrasing consists in grouping the syllables of the same word or several words intimately joined by their meaning, and in distinguishing or separating them from the others; and this even when punctuation or musical notation gives no material indication. In other words, it consists in not mechanically running together elements which the meaning of the sentence dissociates.

Take, for example, *Hosánna in excélsis:* obviously, good diction requires a slight distinction or articulation after *Hosánna: Hosánna'* *in excélsis.* This, of course, does not mean breaking the unity of the phrase, but avoiding confusion and making perfectly clear to any listener both the distinction of the words as seen in the printed text, and the grouping of those words according to their meaning.

Both in reading and in singing, these articulations must always be made clear by a slight lengthening of the last syllable before the articulation, pronouncing it clearly but relatively softly before enunciating distinctly the next group:

Sede' a dextris meis,	and not: *Sedea dextris meis.*
Glória Patri' et Filio,	and not: *. . . Patriet . . .*
Chérubim quoque' ac séraphim,	and not: *. . . quoqueac . . .*

Dom Suñol [1] has two excellent pages on this point, studying two Psalms of Sunday Vespers and the Canticle of the *Magníficat.* He marks these groupings and distinctions, showing their meaning and prayer value.

When words are put to a melody, often enough the melody itself marks these articulations by long notes or groups of notes. Examples:

Sanctus IX:

Ho-sán - na   in   ex-cél - sis.

---

[1] Cf. *Text Book of Gregorian Chant,* translated by G. M. Durnford. Desclée, Tournai, Belgium, pp. 28-29.

Sanctus XI:

Ho- sán-na   in ex - cél-sis

When, however, there is no such indication in the melody, then the last note, although not so prolonged as to modify the actual notation, must without breaking the movement be given its full duration and a relative softness, with perfectly clear enunciation:

Sanctus X:
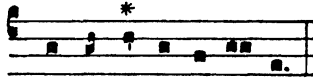
Ho - sánna   in excél - sis.

Hosanna in excelsis, and not: *Hosannain.*

A careful study of the antiphon *Hodie Christus natus est* admirably illustrates this essential point. The natural grouping of the words according to their meaning is:

> *Hódie Christus natus est: Hódie salvátor appáruit: Hódie in terra canunt ángeli, laetántur archángeli; Hódie exsúltant justi, dicéntes: Glória in excélsis Deo, Allelúia.*

There is no punctuation in the text after the word *Hódie,* but the meaning requires a slight break after this word every time it occurs. So, too, after *in terra.* At each of these articulations, a very slight prolongation of the voice on the last syllable must phrase and mark the grouping.

The melody itself marks these distinctions — every articulation has either a dotted note or horizontal episema or a group:
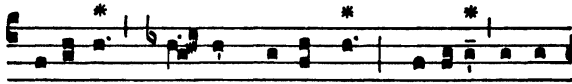
Hó-di- e   Chri- stus   na-tus   est   hó-di-e Sal-vá-

tor ap-pá-ru-it: hó-di-e   in   ter-ra canunt An-ge-li,
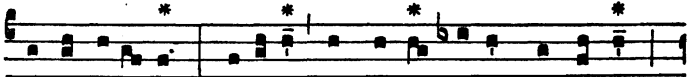
laetán-tur Archán-ge-li: hó-di- e   ex-súl-tant   ju-sti,

di-cén-tes gló- ri - a   in ex-cél-sis De - o,   al-le - lú - ia
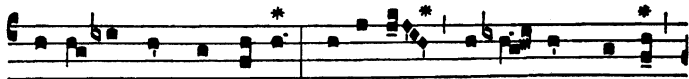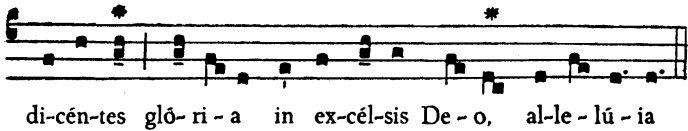
On *justi* and *dicéntes* the horizontal episema and the bar sug-
gest phrasing without breaking the rhythm — and perhaps slightly
more after *dicéntes* than after *justi*. In two places, viz. *terra* and
Deo, there is a group without any indication of length. The group
itself gives a certain length to the syllable, and is quite sufficient
for the natural phrasing which here requires the minimum of
separation. But to get this distinction, the two notes of the group
must be well interpreted as a thesis, a feminine cadence, on which
the melody finishes softly before taking new life on the third beat
of the same rhythmic group, for the next small phrase:

in terra   canunt An-ge- li

in excél-sis De - o   al-le - lú - ia
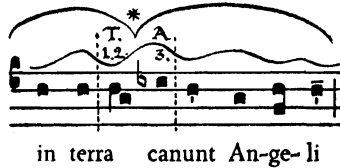
On the last syllable of the fourth *Hódie* there is a group with
a horizontal episema under the first note:

Hó-di- e   ex-súl - tant ju-sti

A good sense of interpretation will realize that the whole group
is thetic and must be treated slightly in rallentando and dimi-
nuendo until its very last note on the down-beat, on the ictus
before the ¼-bar; with the next up-beat a new impetus marks the
beginning of the next word and melodic group.

In these last three cases, and in all similar ones, to hurry the movement and link too closely the two or three notes of the rhythmic beat on the plea that there is no indication of length in the book would spoil the diction and even make the text unintelligible. This treatment of the articulations is essential in Gregorian music.

This respect for natural phrasing, by paying attention to every articulation of the text, is so important that more examples may perhaps profitably be given:

... et a ver-bis im-pi- ó - rum non tí-mu - it

Ant. *Iste Sanctus*, 1st Vesp. of One Martyr:

Care must be taken to avoid singing as one word — *"rumnon"*: a certain length is necessary to keep, *in singing*, the distinction which is made naturally in speaking:

Introit,
Domine ne longe
facias,
Palm Sunday:

not:

"meusres"

℣. De- us, De-us me-us, ré- spi-ce in me, *

Even between words of the same phrase the same clear distinction must always be kept:

lau-dá-te pú-e-ri Dómi-num *   Ad-ju-vá-bit e-am

. . ju - va pu - sil - lá-ni- mes,

The above three examples are from an excellent chapter (Chapt. X) in Dom Pothier's "Mélodies Grégoriennes". He writes: "The final syllables of *Laudáte*, *púeri*, *adjuvábit*, *juva*, must not be shortened so as to seem as if thrown against the next word in such a way that we hear these unintelligible groupings: *tepu*,

E

rido. bite, vapu". The danger exists specially when a word begins
with a long note, as *Mariam* does here:

Ant. *Adorna,*
2nd February:

... am-pléc-te-re   Ma - rí - am,

In the purely melodic order, the long note naturally tends to
be interpreted as the aim and end (thesis) of the preceding
phrase, and unless close attention is paid, we are apt to hear:
amplecterema-riam — a combination all too often heard at the
Procession on 2nd February.
When the long note comes on the ending of a word, as is the
case in the next line of the same piece, the text is perfectly suited
and there is no such danger:

.. quae est cae-lé - stis por- ta:

It is still more difficult to avoid bad grouping when the last
syllable of the first word has only one note, and the second word
begins by a long note or a group. Ex.:

Introit *Respice,*
3rd Sun.
after Pentecost:

. . quo - ni - am ú - ni-cus

1.

Introit. *Dominus fortitudo,*
6th Sun. after Pentecost:

... for - ti-tú-do ple- bis

2.
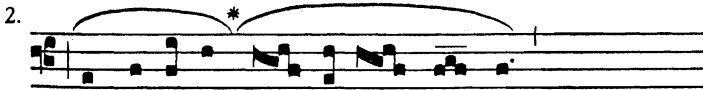
... et pro-téc-tor sa - lu - tá - ri - um

3.

... pó-pu- lum tu - um

---

first is at *cum Filio*, but the monosyllable *cum* is so intimately linked by its sense with the word *Filio* that it does not create any difficulty, especially if *cum* is not sung too fast, in preparation for the long note of the quilisma on *Filio*. The second is at *nostro refusus*:
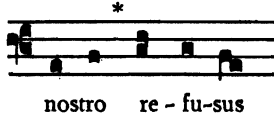
nostro   re – fu-sus

and here, indeed, care must be taken not to run the three syllables together: *nostrore*, as if they formed one word. The ending of the word *nostro* must be felt and heard as coming on an up-beat, *refusus* being heard distinctly as another word.

If Verse B is sung in exactly the same way as Verse A, the words will not be sung correctly. The time and measure are the same, the ictus are in the same places, the duration of notes is essentially the same, but the *text* is not the same: and the different text gives a rhythm quite different from that of Verse A. The text informs the tune in a different way, it interprets the tune and each time gives to it its own life and soul.

How is this to be realized in practice?

While keeping the same regular time (determined by the structure of the melody) the words must be grouped and sung as their individuality, unity and sense require.

Final syllables can be sung quite as well at the up-beat of the rhythmic group; there is only a logical dissociation:

Praesta Pater piissime and not: *Praes taPa terpi issime*, etc.

If the text is clearly kept in mind, the correct grouping will find its expression, not by changing the notation or the measure, but by slowing down the movement almost imperceptibly on the last syllable of the word, taking new life with each new word. This is the "tempus vacans" that Quintilian demanded between each word.

On the next page a comparison of verse A with verse B illustrates the different rhythms of the two word groupings. It is in the last line only that the two different texts inform the melody in the same way.

Compare these two groupings and rhythms:

E*

The practical rule we have to remember is very simple: *When the final syllable of a word comes on a single note and the next word begins by a long note or a group, finish the word softly, so as not to give the impression that this syllable begins the next word.*

This may be considered over-subtle, but negligence on this point invariably indicates a general inattentiveness to the words — an inattentiveness which can make reading or singing quite unintelligible, even ridiculous, and turn the varying freshness of the verses of a hymn into a mechanical repetition which might go on for ever, devoid of thought or prayer.

In Gregorian Chant, music does not exist for its own sake, nor is it either entertainment or routine, it is the simple and glorious handmaid of the words: we pray in music. The music develops, it is true, much more than the words — but it never contradicts them; it emphasizes and illustrates them:

Veni Creator.
Whit Sunday:

... Tu rí - te pro - mís - sum Pa - tris

But if the same rhythm is given to every verse of a hymn on the plea that the tune is the same and the music prevails, the words often risk being spoiled:

... Im-ple su - pér - na grá - ti - a

Surely the dynamic and rhythm proper to the word ought always to modify and inform my singing:

... Im-ple su - pér - na grá - ti - a

PART III

HOW TO INTERPRET A PARTICULAR PIECE

"The singer has to ask himself not what can be put into the song, but what can be got out of it." (H. P. Greene).

CHAPTER I

### *The words are the primary source of interpretation*

So far, attention has been concentrated on making the rendering of the Chant flexible, artistic, and with the required nuances. With this end in view, various principles of technique and interpretation have been examined, but we still have to see how these principles are to be applied to a particular piece. How is an objective and authentic interpretation achieved?

Since Gregorian Chant is essentially music with words — music to express the meaning of these words — the first step is to understand the meaning of the text. Most of the texts are from Holy Scripture, hence they must be studied first in their Scriptural context, then in their full spiritual meaning, and lastly we must discover the exact sense in which the Church uses them for a particular feast or season.

One of the major questions to ask is: *"Who is speaking? Is it I, as an individual? or the Church? or Our Lord Himself?"*

The answer furnishes the first element to inspire the rendering of any piece, e.g., the dignity to be given to our singing when it is Our Lord Himself addressing His Father:

Magnificat
Sat. before
Palm Sun.
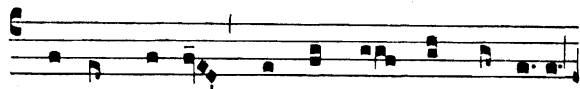
Pa-ter   Juste,   mundus   te   non cognóvit:

e - go au-tem cognó - vi te,   qui-a tu me mi - sís - ti.

And then: *to whom* are we speaking? Instinctively we adapt our expression, the tone of our voice, to the dignity of the person addressed.

Lastly, we should consider *for whom* (or in whose name) we are praying, what is the intention of the Church and of Our Lord Himself.

It is by communicating in this divine energy and even enthusiasm that individual feelings are raised up into this fuller life, and are able to give to the Chant something of its real meaning. Also, we will realize its immense variety, from the different forms which this prayer takes: meditation, supplication, adoration, praise, atonement, etc. This variety must be expressed by the different ways in which the pieces are sung. This is an important and integral element of technique itself.

CHAPTER II

The meaning and the expression of the words are largely dependent on perfect diction

It is the rôle of the Choir-master (or teacher, or cantor) to apply what has been said in general about the nature of the text.

An excellent method is to read the text aloud first until it is fully appreciated and well mastered. After this — which is half the work of practical interpretation — the text is sung with the melody, moulding it perfectly in true art and prayer.

CHAPTER III

The quality of voice is suggested by the words

The question is often raised: with what voice must the Chant be sung?

The answer is: with your own natural voice, used in such a way that it renders the particular prayer of the piece sung.

A few points may be mentioned to clear up some misconceptions and difficulties.

The colourless voice all too frequently adopted for Plainsong is undoubtedly not only dull and tiring for the singer, but unsuited to the Chant. The voice must be free, round, mellow, with its full timbre, controlled sufficiently to rid it of any roughness (a trained voice is desirable).

This fulness of voice must be maintained not only when a strong voice is required (forte) but even when singing softly (mezzo forte and piano).

Theatrical effects are to be avoided, of course, as not being in keeping with liturgical prayer.

The intensity of the voice depends on:

1. The size of the place in which we sing: the larger the room, the stronger the voice. Westminster Cathedral requires more than a small chapel.

2. The character of the piece:
   (a) Acclamations or praises require the fullest voice, e.g., *Christus vincit*.
   (b) Very dramatic responsories such as some of those in Holy Week may require the same voice with a difference in nuance according to the circumstances.
   (c) Calm, meditative pieces require a calmer, more meditative voice.

3. The melodic design: ascending and descending suggest crescendo and decrescendo.

The question of the quality of the voice is of great importance if we do not wish to lose the dignified and virile character of the Chant and the spiritual training which the Church intends to give us in her music.


CHAPTER IV

*Rôle of the melody in relation to the words*

The words are the key to interpretation in that they give the meaning of what is intended and express intelligibly the feeling naturally corresponding to this meaning. Of itself, music does not give ideas, but it gives colour or intensity to the feelings expressed in the text, or at least by a title as is the case with many compositions of figured music.

1. In the first place, melody in Plainsong is used simply as a means of obtaining unity in public prayer: all have to answer *Amen*, or *Et cum spiritu tuo*, and so it is done on one note.

2. Next, in the case of Prayers and Lessons: to facilitate clarity and dignity, the readings are *recto tono* with one or a few notes lowered, to mark pauses or punctuation:
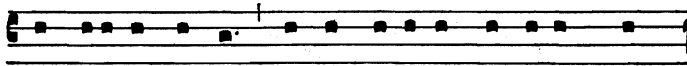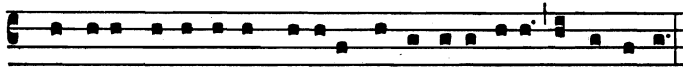
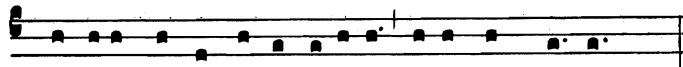In dié-bus   il-lis,   scrip-sit Mó-yses   cán-ti-cum,   et
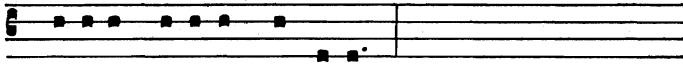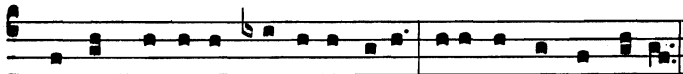
dócu-it   fí-li-os   Is-ra-el.

Cadences become slightly ornate for the Epistle, Gospel, Psalms; but the recitation is still *recto tono*. This holds good also for the *Te Deum, Gloria XV, Credo:* which are still psalmody, though rather more ornate:
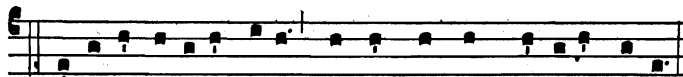
Lec-ti-o E-pí-sto-lae be-áti Pau-li Apósto-li ad Romános.

Léc-ti-o Sancti   E-van-gé-li-i   secún-dum Lu-cam.

Di-xit Dó-mi-nus Dómi-no me-o * Sede a dextris me-is.

.. Grá-ti-as á-gimus ti-bi propter mag-nam gló-ri-am tu-am.

3. A step further is made when some particular word creates a melody for itself. Interest is concentrated entirely on the word:

Kyrie XVI:

Ký-ri-e   e-lé-i-son. Chrí-ste e-lé-i-son

Requiem Mass:
Sanctus,

San-ctus   San-ctus   San-ctus Dó-minus

De - us   Sá - ba - oth.   etc.

4. Finally, the music becomes so important that it has its own well-defined shape and interest. Ex.:

Kyrie XI
Orbis factor:

Ký - ri - e   e -   lé-i-son.

Even here, however, we must avoid the temptation of concentrating on the tune to the extent of forgetting that it exists for the words and takes its value from them. The musical element may appear to be of predominant interest, but in reality it is the word that is the source of the melody, not only in its inspiration and main lines but even in its smallest detail. Ex.:

Gradual,
Epiphany:

Sur-ge   et il-

lu-mi- ná -   re   Je - rú - sa - lem:

Once we have fully understood the way in which the melody springs from the words, it is easier to see how in turn the melody sheds light and colour on to the words. This harmonious blending of words and music must be constantly sought, since it is so great a help towards penetrating the spirit of the Church's liturgical prayer.

CHAPTER V

The whole technique of the melody is intended to give more perfect and complete expression to the words

Every detail of technique: crescendos, decrescendos, flexibility of tempo, treatment of the pauses and articulations, manner of treating both the long and lengthened notes (quilisma, salicus, horizontal episema), all must be understood and carried out, not as a musical performance, but as a means of expressing the words.

We should like to draw special attention to the horizontal episema: not the episema which ends a phrase — since there it is purely rhythmic — but the episema which occurs in the course of a phrase. It is nearly always intended to bring out and stress the meaning of the words. Examples:
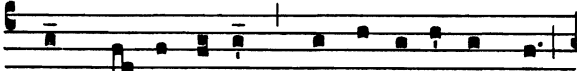
Gloria IV:

.. mi- se - ré- re   no - bis.
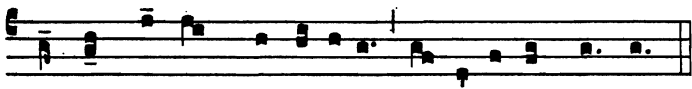
Comm. *Tollite hostias,*
18th Sun.
after Pentecost:

... a - do-rá - te   Dó- mi - num

1st Ant.
1st Vesp.
Christmas:

Rex   pa - cí - fi- cus   mag- ni - fi-cá- tus   est

cu - jus   vul-tum   de- sí-de-rat   u - ni-vér- sa   ter - ra.

These episemas are not inserted as mere prolongations, nor for a "lovely" rhythmic effect, but are purely expressive, and this in no artificial way but as arising from attention to the words and meditation on them.

There is nothing more instructive than to consult the MSS of the Chant. Many signs are to be found there which have not been reproduced in the actual rhythmic editions, but which give a great

insight into the interpretation of the Chant. It is quite possible to take the style and spirit suggested by the MS. tradition, although practical difficulties and the risk of disorder may make it unadvisable to write additional signs into our books.

Modality and interpretation

Modality is a subject which would need a whole booklet to itself. Although it can only be treated briefly here, we nevertheless feel bound to touch on the subject, for it is one of the principal means of objectivity in interpretation. At this point, perhaps a few words on the more technical aspects of the question may be useful.

Let us take the first three notes ascending above the modal tonic. In the case of the two Modes on the tonic *re* (1 and 2) and the two on the tonic *mi* (3 and 4) we have here a minor third, and so they are Minor Modes. The other two Modes on the *fa* (5 and 6), and on the *sol* (7 and 8) have a major third, and so are Major Modes.

On each of these notes *re, mi, fa, sol*, there are two Modes: the "Authentic" of which the range is all above the tonic, and the "Plagal", of which the normal extension is not higher than a fifth above the tonic and a fourth below. The dominant of the Plagal is lower than the dominant of the Authentic [1].

With these simple facts in mind it is easy to understand that:

1. A *major* tonality is stronger, clearer, firmer, brighter; a *minor* more restrained, discreet, reserved.

2. An Authentic Mode with its higher dominant and facility for rising higher above its tonic, permits an outburst of expression more easily than a Plagal Mode.

Bearing these two points in mind, it is already possible to discover the main expression suggested by the modality of any piece;

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[1] This will be found more fully explained in the text-books. See, for instance, Suñol pp. 34-35.

We say nothing here of the Modes on *La, si, do*, which may be analysed according to the same principles. Also, we merely mention here the modulations from one Mode to another which may occur in the same piece.

further experience with the different melodies will develop a knowledge of each Mode and of its distinctive character.

The 1st and 2nd Modes, on *re*, being Minor, provide an atmosphere of tranquillity, dignity, gravity, most suited to texts which are meditative, contemplative.

For instance: the Introit *Da pacem*, of the 18th Sunday after Pentecost, the Introit *Exsurge* of Sexagesima, the Communion *In salutari tuo* of 21st Sunday after Pentecost, the Antiphon *Beata Agatha* of Feb. 5th, the Antiphon *O Crux* of Sept. 14th — all 1st Mode.

When the words suggest more emotion, enthusiasm or intensity of feeling, more grandeur and solemnity, the rising of the melody above the dominant, *la*, in the authentic Mode (1st Mode), admirably suits and expresses such feelings.

Examples: *Kyrie XI*, the Sequence: *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Pentecost), the Offertory: *Jubilate Deo* (2nd Sunday after Epiphany), the Introit: *Suscepimus* (8th Sun. after Pent.), *Gloria, Laus* (Palm Sunday), the Gradual: *Beata gens* (17th Sun. after Pent.), the Offertory: *Ascendit* (Ascension), the Hymn: *Decora lux* (SS. Peter & Paul, June 29).

The 2nd Mode (Plagal) on the other hand, with its restricted ambitus above the tonic and its lower dominant, creates an atmosphere which normally excludes force and brilliance: instead, it is humble and simple, more interior and meditative.

Examples: the Alleluia: *Eripe me* (9th Sun. after Pent.), the Offertory: *Meditabor* (2nd Sun. of Lent), the Introit: *Dominus dixit ad me* (Christmas, Midnight Mass), the Responsory: *Sancta et immaculata* (Christmas, 2nd Nocturn of Matins), the Offertory: *Ad te levavi* (1st Sun. of Advent).

The 3rd and 4th Modes, on *mi*, are also Minor Modes (the third above the tonic is a minor one), but they differ from the Modes on *re* by the place in which their semitone occurs: (fa-mi) descending to the tonic. This is characteristic of these Modes, and very expressive.

In the 3rd Mode (Authentic), the extended ambitus above the tonic, with its high dominant (*si*, and more often, in fact, *do*), its frequent cadences in the 8th Mode on the *sol* — the strongest and most virile of the tonics — gives to any kind of emotion (suffering, jubilation, etc.) a force and firmness incompatible with sentimentality.

Examples: The Introit and Gradual: *Benedicite Dominum* (St. Michael, Sept. 29), the Gradual: *Speciosus forma* (Sun. within the Octave of Christmas), the Gradual: *Eripe me* (1st Passion Sunday).

In the 4th Mode (Plagal), on the *mi*, the ambitus is usually very limited. The dominant often lingers on the *sol* and even on the *fa*, before rising to the *la*. There is, therefore, as in the 2nd Mode, an atmosphere of tranquillity, simplicity, deep reserve. But the note *mi*, which is called the modal tonic, is not really a tonic in this Mode: it is only the cadence note; the tonic, according to different cases, is on the *re*, the *fa*, the *la*, or the *do*. This gives, at each cadence on the *mi* and during the entire piece, an impression of incompleteness or suspense, of attraction towards something beyond. Accordingly, this Mode is often referred to as the Contemplative Mode, the Mode of contemplative prayer, deep admiration and ecstasy. What an error it would be to treat it with that force and brilliance expressive of human jubilation!

The dislike many people have for this Mode is probably due to their want of understanding of its particular rôle. An excellent instance is furnished by the Introit *Resurrexi* of Easter Sunday. Easter is undoubtedly the Solemnity of solemnities, the greatest feast of the year, a feast full of joy, celebrating as it does the very origin of our spiritual life. And yet it is the 4th Mode which is chosen for its Introit, using only four or five notes *re-fa*, *re-fa*, nearly all the time! Is this music found too dull for such an occasion? Should it be taken as high as possible, to try and give it some life and brightness?

We should like to suggest to those who put forward such views that they are taking the wrong line of argument. This Introit is given to us by the Church, and its whole structure is therefore the starting-point of our interpretation. On analysis, we find that the text gives the words of Our Lord. He is speaking to His Father, experiencing His divine joy and expressing it very differently from the way in which we, mere humans, would have expressed it. Hence the use of the contemplative 4th Mode, here eminently in its right place.

An opportunity of giving vent to this human joy with exultation and enthusiasm is given later in the Gradual *Haec dies* of the same Mass: *"Exsultemus et laetemur in ea"*. Inspired by the words,

the melody enters a kind of spiritual exaltation of human joy: the joyful neums extend it in time and in intensity.

The Offertory *Tui sunt caeli* of the Third Mass of Christmas presents another example of the same divergence of thought. The world in the Divine Child of Christmas sees mainly the *Child*, and this influences all its manifestations of piety and joy. The Church, however, stresses, in the liturgy of the feast, rather the *Divinity* of this Child: *Verbum caro factum est*, and throughout the Office texts referring to the eternal generation are constantly repeated. This again explains the use of the 4th Mode, and of so calm and serene a melody.

Modes 5 and 6, on *fa*, are in a Major tonality. A notable thing about them is that though the semitone is used, it is always avoided (at least in the authentic and well-revised pieces) just before a cadence on the *fa*, when the *mi* would sound like the leading-note of our modern music. In this way the firm and healthy tonality of the Modes on *fa* is preserved.

The 5th Mode (Authentic) has a higher dominant: *do*, and a higher range. Its free and bold character makes it well suited to express joy, admiration, wonder, praise, gratitude. These qualities appear often in the magnificent Graduals of this Mode: *Benedictus es Domine* (Trinity Sunday), *Omnes de Saba venient* (Epiphany), *Timebunt gentes* (3rd Sun. after Epiphany), *Anima nostra* (Mass *Sapientiam*, Common of Many Martyrs), *Locus iste* (Dedication of a Church), *Constitues* (SS. Peter & Paul), *Suscepimus* (Feb. 2, Purification B.V.M.). The Offertory *Jubilate Deo* of the 1st Sunday after the Epiphany offers another striking example.

Though the 6th Mode (Plagal) is in the same Major tonality, because of its more restricted ambitus above the tonic and its less elevated dominant (*la*), it has not the same characteristics of enthusiasm, of spiritual transport. It is simpler, more positive. It is true, clear, direct, plain, stable and constant.

Examples:

> the Communion: *Tu es Petrus* (29th June): firmness and steadfastness;
>
> the Introit: *Esto mihi* (Quinquagesima Sunday): firmness, confidence, complete reliance on God;
>
> the Communion: *Mitte manum* (Low Sunday): firmness, steadfastness and faith;

the Communion: *Qui manducat* (9th Sun.
    after Pent.)
the Introit: *Dicit Dominus* (23rd Sun.   firmness of
    after Pent.)   God's promise
the Introit: *Hodie scietis* (Christmas Eve)

the Offertory: *Domine Deus* (Dedication of a church): firmness of man's promise to God;

the Introit: *Quasi modo geniti infantes* (Low Sunday): unaffected joy.

The 7th and 8th Modes, too, are Major, and distinguished from the Modes on *fa* by the full tone below their tonic, *sol*. Hence this tonality of *sol* is the strongest of all.

The 7th Mode (Authentic) with its high dominant (*re*) and great range, often rising to *fa, sol*, and even *la*, is the most brilliant of all the Modes. For this reason, and particularly because of the "spiritual transport" from its tonic *sol* to the *fa* (a 7th), it lends itself admirably to the expression of intense feelings of joy. It is pre-eminently the "jubilant" Mode.

Examples:

the Offertory: *Confitebuntur* (Mass *Protexisti*, I Martyr, P.T.);

the Alleluia: *Te decet hymnus* (10th Sun. after Pent.);

the Alleluia: *Exsultate Deo* (11th Sun. after Pent.);

the Alleluia: *Venite exsultemus* (14th Sun. after Pent.).

With the same fundamental transport, interpreted differently by the text (always the key to interpretation), this 7th Mode depicts also anguished supplication or deep, plaintive sadness.

Examples:

the Introit: *Respice* (13th Sun. after Pent.);

the Alleluia: *De profundis* (23rd Sun. after Pent.);

the Responsory: *Tenebrae factae sunt* (Good Friday, Matins, 2nd Nocturn);

the Responsory: *Una Hora* (Maundy Thursday, Matins, 3rd Nocturn).

The 8th Mode (Plagal) has the same force of tonality as the 7th. But its more restricted ambitus and lower dominant (*do*), does

not give it, as a rule, as much of that spiritual transport which characterises the 7th, and its lower part, towards *re* or *do*, gives more weight and gravity. The atmosphere created is one of strength and virility, dignity, seriousness and solemnity.

Examples:

> the Offertory: *Mirabilis Deus* (Common of Two or More MM, Mass I.);
> the Alleluia: *Deus Judex Justus* (3rd Sun. after Pent.);
> the Offertory: *Deus enim firmavit* (Christmas, 2nd Mass.);
> the Introit: *Spiritus Domini* (Pentecost);
> the Introit: *In excelso throno* (1st Sun. after Epiphany);
> the Offertory: *Improperium* (Palm Sunday).

It is indeed very striking to see how the words help towards an understanding of the Modes used with them, and how the Modes, in their turn, help towards a truer interpretation of the words. Hence the careful choice of the Mode in each case.

CHAPTER VII

Answer to some objections against melody and modality as a source of interpretation

Two objections may be made immediately to what has been said of the melody and its modality as a source of interpretation. If there is such a relation between the verbal text and the modality, how does it happen that

(1) the same words are to be found in quite different Modes; and

(2) on the contrary, different words are used with the same melody?

(1) There is undoubtedly a case of the same text treated by two different Modes. On the 1st Sunday of Advent the words *Ad te levavi* are put to a very characteristic melody of the 8th Mode for the Introit, and to the 2nd Mode for the Offertory. A close analysis, however, reveals that this, instead of disproving our theory on the union between words and music, serves only to confirm what has already been said on the subject (Chapt. IV, p. 59). The text furnishes the idea, while the music gives it

colour and shades of meaning; and so, at the Introit, Mode 8 helps to assert the strong and unassailable protection found in God, while at the Offertory Mode 2 shows the same words in a different light — a tender, personal confidence: we meditate on the words within us, rather than proclaiming them publicly.

That is what was meant by someone who said: "It is good of course to meditate on the texts that the Church presents to us in her liturgy, but to meditate on them with their melody will often reveal in them treasures which we would not have found otherwise".

(2) What, then, of those texts which are different, but have the same melody? — The melody of the well-known Gradual of the Requiem Mass, for instance, is found with 27 or 30 different texts. Whether it is found with many modifications or with only a few, it remains the same melody fundamentally, and yet it is used for texts differing as widely as the Requiem Mass and the Nuptial Mass. How is this to be explained?

The explanation lies in the fact that there are two main categories of Plainsong melodies. The first may be compared to the painting of a particular subject. An excellent instance is furnished by the Introit *Circumdederunt me* of Septuagesima Sunday. The melody was composed for these words, and for these words only, so that the relationship between the melody and the words, its modality, design, special groups, expressive signs, etc., is intimate and obvious. The second category suggests rather a piece of architecture, such as the religious framework of a cathedral — perfectly adapted to prayer, but remaining always the same, whether it be Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, a Burial or a Wedding. Such pieces fit the words very well in the sense that they give them a melodic framework which is perfectly religious and dignified. It would, however, be a mistake to try to discover in them that special relationship which can only exist when the melody is composed for one text alone. Since they are a common formula, they cannot be expected to illustrate or express a particular idea. They furnish a kind of ornate psalmody, and create a dignified religious atmosphere.

Here and there, however, the common formula may have been modified or adapted definitely to a special occasion and text, and, in proportion, it becomes expressive of that text. This is the case undoubtedly for the Gradual *Tecum principium* of Midnight Mass,

as also for the Gradual *Haec dies* of Easter and during Easter Week, especially the versicles.

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CHAPTER VIII

*How each particular melody composed for only one text
is a perfect expression of that text*

</div>

We may perhaps summarize now what has already been written above. The Mode gives the general atmosphere and so offers its particular means of expression. Then comes the construction of the melody and its movement in relation to the words. Then the detection of the different articulations of sections, members, phrases, with the higher notes given to the word which the composer wished to stress principally. The interplay between the melody and the words becomes clear, the words giving meaning to the melody, and the melody giving colour and life to the words.

The Communion *Videns Dominus* (Friday of the 4th week in Lent), for instance, depicts in a few words the whole drama of the raising of Lazarus:
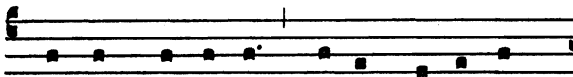
Vi - dens Dó - mi-nus   flen-tes   so- ró - res

Lá-za- ri   ad mo-nu-mén - tum, la-cri-má-tus est co- ram
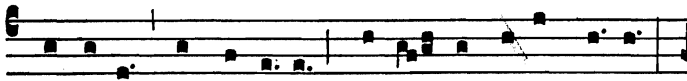
Ju- daé-is,   et cla-má-bat: Lá-za - re, ve-ni   fo- ras:
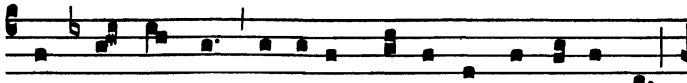
et pró - di - it   li-gá- tis   má- ni- bus et pé-di - bus,

qui fú- e - rat quatri- du - á - nus mór - tu - us.

The first two lines, in recitative, explain the situation, the place and the persons. The second phrase, rising one tone higher, underlines and expresses the emotion of Our Lord: "lacrimatus est ...": "Lazare, veni foras", with its still higher melody, is the climax. It is followed by the full bar: we wait expectantly. And slowly, (with the lengthening of the quilisma) the melody dies away, to finish on its tonic, re — Lazarus obeys his Lord's command.

CONCLUSION

People have often suggested that a book should be written to explain in detail all the pieces of the Chant. Such a book, while containing much that would be objective in its analysis, would probably contain much that would be merely subjective and perhaps unacceptable to some readers; moreover, the constant repetition of certain points might, in the end, prove wearisome.

And so we have felt that, having proposed certain principles of interpretation in this little book and having tried to show how they are to be applied, the rest had better be left to individual judgment. It is all a question of understanding, of attentiveness to the words, of faith, and of musical taste — this last element, though essential, is definitely the least important. Let us pray in singing, and we shall discover more and more every day the wealth of spiritual treasure hidden in the Chant, the authentic language of the liturgy; thus, under the sure guidance of the Church, we shall be formed to behold the Eternal Beauty of God, and "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord".

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