The American Gradual

Chants of the Proper of the Mass
Adapted to English Words

Second Edition, Revised

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Introduction

The Proper Chants of the Mass

The proper chants of the Mass of the Roman rite have roots in Christian antiquity. References to psalmody in the Liturgy of the Word appear in the earliest accounts of Christian worship. The fifth and sixth centuries saw the introduction of psalmody to accompany the entrance of the ministers, the collection of the people's offerings and preparation of the gifts, and the distribution of Holy Communion. Evidence suggests that the core of the proper chant corpus that we know today was initially composed at Rome during the second half of the seventh century[1] and later substantially revised in France.

Manuscripts dating from the early ninth century contain the *texts* of the proper chants. Manuscripts dating from the end of that same century include the same texts set to the music popularly styled "Gregorian chant" but identified by music historians as "Romano-Frankish chant." The systems of notation used in the earliest notated manuscripts do not show exact pitches. Not until the eleventh century was a system of notation that shows exact pitches devised. This system, however, does not convey the rhythmic nuances that the earlier systems do.

At the Reformation the Church of England laid aside the traditional psalmody of the Roman Mass; and on the continent the chant melodies suffered mutilation at the hands of Renaissance humanists, who sought to improve them.

In the late nineteenth century a movement to restore the chant to its "unimproved" integrity emerged. This movement within the Roman Church, led by the monks of Solesmes, attracted the interest of certain Anglican scholars, who under the influence of the Oxford Movement were seeking to restore to Anglican worship much that had been lost at the Reformation. These scholars, as they participated in the wider effort to restore the melodies, also began to adapt them to English words for use in Anglican liturgy. The concentrated primarily on the chants of the ordinary of the Mass and on the antiphons of the Daily Office; however, G.H. Palmer adapted a number of introits, graduals, alleluias, and tracts[2] to English words. Several decades later Francis Burgess and R.L. Shields continued his work.[3]

The revision of the calendar and lectionary and the modernization of liturgical language that have occurred since 1960 make much of the work done by adapters of earlier generations obsolete. This publication, the fruit of over three decades' effort, represents an attempt to carry on their efforts.

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[1] See James McKinnon, *The Advent Project: the Late-Seventh Century Creation of the Roman Mass Proper.* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2000).

[2] G.H. Palmer, *A selection of Grails, Alleluyas, and Tracts* (Wantage: St. Mary's Convent, 1908).

[3] *The Plainchant Gradual* (2nd ed. rev. Wantage: St. Mary's Convent, 1962-1965). Parts I and II are by G.H. Palmer and Francis Burgess. Parts 3 and 4 are by G.H. Palmer, Francis Burgess, and R.L. Shields. Palmer brought to his work a grasp of the principles of chant composition. Burgess and Shields did not. By and large they simply strung English words under music composed for Latin texts.

Their Place in the Liturgy of the Episcopal Church and in the Modern Roman Rite

Because the rubrics of the American Book of Common Prayer permit anthems to be sung at all the points in the eucharistic liturgy to which the proper chants are assigned, these anthems in the words of Holy Scripture—most of which were used in the Church of England before the Reformation—may appropriately be sung in the Episcopal Church.

In the modern Roman rite the introits, offertory antiphons, and communion antiphons found in the *Graduale Romanum* are preferred as the songs to be sung at the entrance of the ministers, during the reception of the people's offering and the preparation of the gifts, and during the distribution of communion.[4] The graduals and alleluias are permissible alternatives to the responsorial psalms and alleluia verses assigned in the *Ordo Lectionum Missae.*[5]

The Value and Feasibility of Adapting Chant to English Words

Nowadays choral music is frequently sung in Latin at services otherwise conducted entirely in English. During the past forty years rigid insistence that everything sung at Anglican services be "understanded of the people" and the discomfort with Latin that arose in some Roman Catholic quarters after the introduction of English to the liturgy have yielded to recognition that the texture of some choral works makes their words unintelligible, regardless of the language in which they are sung, and that much fine choral music cannot be satisfactorily adapted to English words

When chant is sung in English, however, those who understand English can, indeed, understand the words. A primary function of chant is to help the listeners as well as the singers to meditate upon the scriptural text that is being sung. Worshippers can do so more readily when the text is declaimed in their own language; and most are edified more by hearing and immediately understanding the words than by reading them in translation.

Furthermore, chant can often be adapted to English texts quite satisfactorily. No one conversant with the Latin chant repertory will argue that chant melodies cannot be satisfactorily adapted to more than one set of *Latin* words. Not only have type melodies such as those used for the antiphon *Lumen ad revlationem,*[6] the gradual, *Justus ut palma,*[7] and the alleluia verse *Dies sanctificatus,*[8] been adapted to numerous Latin texts, undergoing significant permutations but remaining clearly

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[4] *Institutio generalis missalis Romani,* no. 48, no. 74, no. 87.

[5] *op. cit,* no. 61, no. 62.

[6] A tabular analysis of the adaptation of this melody to 22 different Latin texts appears in Paolo Ferretti, *Estetica gregoriana* (New York : Da Capo Press, 1977), following page 112.

[7] A tabular analysis of the adaptation of this melody to numerous Latin texts, with commentary, appears in P.l Ferretti, *op. cit.,* 170-189.

[8] A tabular analysis of the adaptation of this melody to numerous Latin texts, with commentary, appears in P. Ferretti, *op. cit.,* 200-206.

recognizable in the process.   Original melodies composed for particular texts have also been adapted to other Latin texts, both in the era when the authentic Gregorian repertory was developing and in the twentieth century. The adaptation of the music of the offertory antiphon *Stetit angelus* to the text of *Iustorum animae*[9] stands as an example from the Middle Ages. Joseph Pothier's adaptation of the melody of the introit *Vocem iucundidatis* to the text of *Gaudens gaudebo* stands as an example from the twentieth century.

Some deny, however, that chant melodies can ever be satisfactorily adapted to texts in any language *except* Latin, basing their stand on the relationship between the chant and the rhythms of Latin prose. That relationship is undeniable.   The question is whether the differences between the rhythms of Latin prose and those of English prose differ so significantly as to impede adaptation.

André Mocquereau of Solesmes asserted that during the golden age of chant composition Latin had a *pitch* accent rather than a stress accent, and that Latin prose rhythm was not based upon intensity. His position finds no support among linguists, who generally agree that by the fourth century that Latin language had already developed a stress accent.[10]

Virtually every rhythmic pattern that occurs in English prose occurs in liturgical Latin prose as well. Two occur more frequently in English than in Latin: proximate accented syllables (e.g., "because of your gréat stréngth), and accented final syllables (e.g., déath and the gráve).   Examples of these stress patterns are, nonetheless, not difficult to find: (e.g., "réx glóriae" and "propitiátio ést").

Methods of Adaptation

Unsatisfactory adaptations usually result from **failure to *adapt* the chant at all**. Stringing new words (whether English or Latin) under an existing chant melody without modifying it is a process doomed to failure.[11] By examining the good adaptations in the Latin chant repertory we learn that success in adaptation depends upon a willingness to modify the music intelligently—to change the notes so as to preserve in the adaptation the *relationship between words and music* that obtains in the source.

Charles Winfred Douglas studied the methods of adaptation employed by composers of the Latin chant repertory and employed them in his own work. In that work we can find many examples of chant melodies felicitously adapted to English words.[12] I have taken his work as a model.

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[9] See J. Gajard, "L"Offertoire de la Toussaint," *Revue grégorienne,* 26, no. 5 (septembre-octobre 1947), 179-185.

[10] See, for example, L.R. Palmer, *The Latin Language* (London : Faber & Faber, 1954), 214. "For the period after A.D. 300 there is general agreement among scholars that a stress accent characterized Latin." Whether Latin *ever* had a pitch accent remains open to question. See W. Sidney Allen, *Vox Latina* (Cambridge [England] : Cambridge University Press, 1978), 83-88.

[11] This approach is evident in the adaptations by Burgess and Shields found in *The Plainchant Gradual.*

[12] See Bruce E. Ford, "Charles Winfred Douglas and Adaptation of Plainsong to English Words in the United States," *The Hymnal 1982 Companion* (New York : Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990) 1: [194]-214.   See also John Boe, *The Ordinary in English* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1969), *passim.*

Sources

The editors of 1974 *Graduale Romanum* adopted the melodic readings given in the 1908 gradual without alteration, planning to undertake a substantial revision later. This revision, unfortunately, has not yet been published.

For seventy-five years most scholars have agreed that many *Fa*s and *Do*s found in the Vatican edition of the chant were originally *Mi*s and *Ti*s, changed after the advent of polyphony to forestall the incidence of the augmented fourth, a chord much disdained. Because polyphony was late in reaching southern Italy and southern France, alterations of this sort that crept into manuscripts from other regions did not generally find their way into Beneventan and Aquitainian manuscripts. Therefore, in editing the first edition of this work I compared the readings given in the Vatican edition with those found in *Benevento* VI. 34 (*Paléographie musicale,* volume 15) and generally adopted the Beneventan readings

In this revision I have also consulted the "restored" versions of numerous proper chants edited by a group of German-speaking chant scholars, who have made their work accessible at: http://www.gregor-und-taube.de/html/materialien.htm#I.1. I have found their work immeasureably helpful, although I have always adopted their readings.

For translations of psalm texts I have relied principally upon the psalter of the American Book of Common Prayer (1979). I have drawn translations of other biblical texts primarily from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Occasionally I have altered the texts to make them fit the music, but I have tried to ensure that the altered texts can withstand scrutiny apart from the music.

Sometimes verses in the Prayer Book psalter or the RSV that correspond to a particular Latin chant text have a meaning entirely unrelated to the meaning of the Latin text (because the Prayer Book psalter and the RSV are translated largely from the original languages and not from the Latin). When I have judged that the translation given in the usual source lacks the *liturgical* relevance of the Latin text, I have replaced it with an original translation of the Latin.

Notation

With lingering diffidence I have again used modified modern notation in this edition. Choir directors have told me often that few of their singers, even the professionally-trained, can read conventional four-line chant notation with facility. They have also said that training singers to read it would not be feasible because of high turnover and the frequent need to engage substitutes.

Rhythm

Semiology, the approach to chant interpretation that has grown out of the paleographic research of Eugène Cardine and his associates, affords us an invaluable aid to interpretation. It enables us to understand the rhythmic nuances conveyed in the oldest chant manuscripts. These nuances frequently involve small and indeterminate variations in note values. Few choirs have enough rehearsal time to incorporate *all* these variations into their singing, and when they try, they invariably exaggerate the differences, to the detriment of essential fluency. Jean

Claire, a close associate of Cardine, who served for years as choirmaster at Solesmes wrote:

> It will be worthwhile ... to take the time to remind oneself coldly of the difference between an average syllabic beat and a melismatic beat, which is exactly the difference between the time it takes to pronounce an average syllable (consonant + vowel) and the time it takes to pronounce a syllable that consists of a vowel alone. If one has an electronic technician in his group, one ought to ask him to measure that difference, that is, to give it in fractions of a second. Then one ought to try to listen for a while without smiling to any of the recordings with semiological pretensions "according to the work of Dom Cardine."[13]

And Cardine himself wrote:

> The danger that lies in wait for us is all too well known: that is, to lose ourselves in all the details identified and learned with hard work and to forget the whole. Most especially, *the notes that we have reason to underline* become too long; they impede and weaken the movement; excessive attention given to a thousand details quells what is spontaneous and natural. The voice seems to be "bridled" by the fear of not doing well enough. In an effort to carry forward the analysis, do we lack the synthesis

In this edition, therefore, I have chosen not to transcribe all indicators of augmentation but only those that I consider most important.[14]

Cardine never refers to rhythmic groups in terms that singers and conductors trained in modern music can easily grasp. He uses the term "rhythmic units" to refer to *musical phrases.* To modern musicians a rhythmic unit phrase but a measure, which begins with a downbeat, and a phrase is an altogether different entity. A system of rhythmic analysis based upon groups of notes that begin with downbeats will, consequently, will be advantageous to most singers.[15] *Downbeats and upbeats are unquestionably present in chant, regardless of whether they are consciously acknowledged.* To sing more than three notes or to utter more than three syllables without placing *some* audible stress on *more than one* of them is impossible, even though stresses may vary in degree.

The rhythm of syllabic chants—those in which most syllables are set to only one note—is immediately derived from the rhythm of the texts. In the longer neumes of more ornate chants semiology enables us to identify the notes requiring emphasis. In this work a short vertical stroke identifies notes bearing primary

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[13] "Dom Eugène Cardine," *Études grégoriennes,* XXIII: 23 (1989), 10.

[14] In editing the new *Antiphonale monasticum* Solesmes has chosen, likewise, not to transcribe all the rhythmic indicators found in the manuscripts.

[15] The system of rhythmic analysis devised by André Mocquereau delineated groups of two and three beats, but these groups often began on upbeats. The rhythmic ictus, as he conceived it, was "immaterial." It could be perceived but not heard. Mocquereau's system is a theoretical construction imposed upon the music. Sequences of downbeats and upbeats, inherent in the music, also delineate rhythmic groups of two or three beats in a manner that seems natural to singers trained in modern music.

accents. When more than two other notes separate two stressed notes, singers *cannot avoid* placing a secondary accent on one of them. In a group of four notes the secondary accent will fall upon the third note. No definite rule can be given about the placement of secondary accents in groups of more than five notes. Therefore, in this publication these are also marked with a short vertical stroke.

A Guide to Notation Used in the Publication

1. A filled notehead represents a one-beat note.
2. An open notehead represents a two-beat note.
3. A jagged note is a *quilisma,* which is a light passing note. The note that follows it and the note that precedes it are emphasized and lengthened.

4. A Horizontal line placed below a note or a group of notes (the *horizonal episema*) indicates that these note are to be lengthened indeterminately. (Groups of notes that are lengthened too much rob the chant of fluency.)
5. The quarter bar and half bar indicate a short pause for breath.
6. The full bar indicatea longer pause for breath.
7. Repeated notes attached to the same syllable call for a light repercussion *without any hiatus.* Singers who cannot execute a light repercussion *without any hiatus* will do better simply to sustain the pitch for the requisite number of beats than to interrupt the sound.
8. A short vertical stroke (the *ictus mark* or *vertical episema)* is used to mark the first note in a rhythmic group.