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:: 1914 ::

***The Teaching and  
Accompaniment of Plainsong***

:: Francis Burgess ::

*To the Council of the Royal College of Organists*

FRANCIS BURGESS

THE  
TEACHING & ACCOMPANIMENT  
OF PLAINSONG

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE.

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THE matter contained in this little book is based upon two lectures delivered at the Royal College of Organists, in March of 1912. Some recasting of the material has been necessary, and opportunity has been taken to amplify certain points which seemed obscure owing to the brevity of their original treatment. Even now this contribution to the scanty literature of a highly technical subject can claim to be nothing more than a preliminary study, and as such it is offered to those students who desire what information the author is able to give concerning a system of ecclesiastical music which, in spite of much ill-merited contempt has never entirely lost its hold upon Christendom.

*January 1st, 1914.*

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG.

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To compress within readable limits all that needs to be said concerning the subject of this treatise is a task of overwhelming difficulty. During the last twenty years the scientific investigation of the Gregorian melodies has lifted them from the plane of antiquarian survivals into the atmosphere of living emotional expression. They now appeal to us as being ancient but not obsolete, as old rather than archaic. They represent in Western civilisation the growth and development of the monophonic idea in music, and from this point of view they may not be ignored by the serious student of musical history. But their appeal to the executant is so far temperamental that the very mention of their existence has tended to provoke controversy—hence the passionate enthusiasm with which their use is championed in some quarters, and the equally passionate antagonism they encounter in others.

The purpose of these pages is purely constructive; we shall not engage upon any preliminary argument as to whether Plainsong is a branch of musical art worth discussing, nor

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shall we seek to draw comparisons between it and other methods of illustrating liturgical texts, save very occasionally, and then only for the sake of clearness. For destructive criticism is a thankless thing; it is of little value, except perhaps as an occasional discipline, and when it is directed against matters of taste or of temperament it is actively mischievous, for it invariably produces resentment rather than conviction. So that while the writer follows the example of the historic ordination-candidate who in preaching a trial sermon before an audience of two—the Bishop and the Bishop's examining chaplain—somewhat incautiously divided his hearers into two categories, the converted and the unconverted, it ought to be made quite clear that the primary purpose of this volume is not to make converts, but rather to recite certain statements which the writer believes to be facts, and to state certain conclusions which may fairly be drawn from those facts. If this collection of statements and inferences should succeed in establishing more surely the faith of the temperamentally converted it will be well. But if the result should be to persuade the temperamentally unconverted to continue in their unconvertedness it will be better, for there is nothing more fatal to the welfare of art than the adherence of an intellectually unconvinced man to some particular side or manifestation of it because of a passing fashion or vogue. Indeed, there is much to be said for one who investigates and realizes the main features and purposes of Plainchant, and then, in the exercise of his God-given free-will, rejects the whole thing as undesirable or as inappropriate to present conditions. Such a man is on quite a

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 3

different plane from the disciple of accomplished obviousness who brushes aside the very existence of Plainson on the ground that the Plainchantists wrote melody because they couldn't write harmony.

The Teaching of Plainson divides itself quite naturally into two main sections: (a) the teaching about Plainson in relation to music as a whole, and (b) the teaching of the Plainchant melodies, as they now survive, to a set of singers in a given choir. The second aspect may be more immediately useful, but the first is not without its value and urgency. Before proceeding to details there are a few preliminary difficulties which must be cleared out of the way. To begin with, we must define our terms. *Cantus planus*—Plainson or Plainchant—is a name devised about the time of the invention of harmony to describe the whole mass of unisonous, one-dimensional music which was already in existence. Until the rise of the new art, Plainson had needed no distinctive label; it was simply "ecclesiastical chant." The other term, "Gregorian music," now used loosely by us as an alternative name, really denotes a particular tradition and describes only a section of the whole Chant. But the two terms are in no sense opposed. Gregorian music, strictly speaking, is the title of that particular family of Plainson melodies which came either from St. Gregory's own revision or from his *Schola cantorum*. The Gallican, Ambrosian, and Mozarabic families or traditions in Plainchant differ from Gregorian Plainson only in detail; there is no difference in their structure, and it is possible to point to particular melodies in the Gregorian family which may be found in almost identical form in the other families too. The

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Plainsong tradition in England has always been markedly Gregorian, for we trace the Chant in this country to the coming of St. Augustine in 597. Augustine, as we know, was Gregory's own disciple, and with him came James, a skilled Plainchantist and a learned musician, who became Precentor of Canterbury, and afterwards was raised to the episcopate as Bishop of York in 633. He it was who laid the foundations of England's later fame in ecclesiastical music.

Now let us consider the teaching about Plainsong which prevails in England. It will be supposed that the reader has already read and assimilated the usual statements which appear in those text-books, historical and otherwise, that consider the subject worth mentioning. The accepted theory may be divided into two parts, the first part having reference to Structure, and the second to Tonality. The usual explanation of the origin and consequent structure of Plainsong is enshrined in the following statement:—

Plainsong was the spontaneous creation and growth of the first six centuries of Christian worship. It was composed round about the rhythm of Latin words, and it began by being quite simple, though afterwards it became ornate.

The current explanation of the Tonality of Plainsong is that—

Plainsong was not derived from the Hebrew melodies in use in the Jewish Temple, but was based upon the modes or scales of ancient Greece, as popularized in Rome by Greek flute-players. This Plainsong, founded upon

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 5

Greek tonality, was further systematized by the invention of the four Authentic Modes by St. Ambrose in the fourth century, and completed by the addition of the four Plagal Modes by St. Gregory in the sixth century.

In spite of the widespread acceptance of these theories, the student who investigates the matter at first-hand will have little hesitation in saying that the foregoing statements are not merely inadequate as a whole, but that, taken in detail, they are almost entirely untrue. We shall never really understand Plainsong properly until we clear the air of that mystery which so long has surrounded its early forms, and for this reason it is necessary to state quite clearly what may safely be said as a starting point for the formulation of an alternative theory to that which now exists among us.

First, let us take the threefold statement as to its Christian origin, its Latin structure, and its gradual growth from simplicity to ornateness, and see how far these things are really true. Some twelve months ago a learned journalist, writing in the columns of a widely-read Church newspaper, accused us of attempting the impossible by setting Plainsong melodies to English words for the annual Gregorian Festivals at St. Paul's. The labours of such men as Mr. Helmore, and the enthusiasm of our old friend Dr. Warwick Jordan, which lasted over forty years and laid the foundation upon which we newer men are able to build, had all to be swept away because this journalistic critic was obsessed by an academic idea. Plainsong, he said, was *constructed*—mark that word—round about the rhythm of Latin words, which it fitted like a glove, while the structure of the English text was



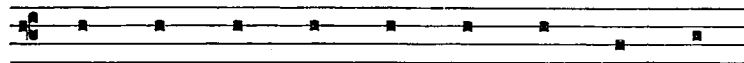
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quite different, being in fact more like the structure of Greek than of Latin. Now if his argument had been based upon æsthetic grounds, and it had been asserted that Plainsong *sounds* better with Latin words than with English, it would have met with a measure of general agreement, for many of us feel that all the older ecclesiastical music of the passive or non-dramatic kind can be better vocalized upon the broad, open sounds of ecclesiastically pronounced Latin than is ever possible with a language like English, which must bear some relation to ordinary conversation. But this is a matter which concerns all music, not merely Plainsong, and, of course, all choirmasters. All this is in parenthesis, however. The point actually raised was that Plainsong was so *constructed*—mark that word again—round about the rhythm of the Latin that it could not possibly be applied to English because English is constructed more like Greek than Latin. This might have been a difficult point to discuss if the writer in question had not supplied his own answer by inadvertence. “Let us take,” he said, “the ornate melody to *Ite missa est* at the end of the Latin Mass. You cannot possibly set it to English without spoiling the music.” Unfortunately for him nearly all the various melodies set to *Ite missa est* happen to be identical with the melodies of *Kyrie eleison*, which is not Latin at all, but one of the few reminiscences left in the Latin liturgy of those primitive days when Greek was the liturgical language in Rome itself. So the very example adduced as an argument against adaptation supplies in itself a clear and undoubted illustration of that very process. Here we find a specific instance of a set of Plainsong melodies

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 7

doing duty for quite ten centuries for two languages, the older of which is declared to be so much like English that logically you ought not to be able to sing Latin to its melodic setting at all. It is not necessary to enlarge upon a point like this, but whenever the statement is deliberately made that Plainsong was exclusively constructed round about Latin in its early forms it may safely be denied. There is ample scientific ground for this denial to be found in Gastoué’s “Origin of the Roman Chant,” a work which unfortunately exists only in French at present. But mere denials are of no use unless something positive may be put in place of them. The constructive theory about the primitive music of the Church can be summed up as follows.

Plainsong is divided into two kinds, simple (or syllabic) and ornate (or melismatic). The simple type has, roughly, one note to a syllable, and it is nothing more than inflected recitative or a musical counterpart of oratorical declamation. The germ of this type is to be found in the ordinary inflexion to the versicles and responses which still survives in England:—



Ÿ. O Lord, shew thy mer - cy up - on . us.  
 Eꝝ. And grant us thy sal - va - tion.

The ornate or melismatic kind, on the other hand, is not merely practical, but has enshrined within it the principle of melodic ornamentation. The syllables receive their due weight and emphasis, but there is melodic decoration as well, so that very often the progress of the text

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is interrupted for the sake of musical embellishment. This species is as undoubtedly Oriental in origin as it is in character; it was invented in the East, not in the West, and its roots certainly lie in the pre-Christian age. So far from being written round about the rhythm of the Latin language, this kind of Plainsong was adapted to Latin, and was gradually simplified in the process of Latinization. It certainly was not a development of the syllabic type of Plainchant, for the two kinds existed side by side from the earliest times. Their contemporaneous use is known to us, and we understand that the entire system of primitive worship music was based upon considerations of common-sense and utility. The parts of the service reserved to the skilled soloists were very ornate; the sections intended for the trained chorus singers were rather less so, while the music for the priest and his assistants at the altar belonged to the syllabic species. The Christian development of the two Plainsong root-forms is clear. After their acclimatization to Christian surroundings they proceeded along the path of natural musical progress. The syllabic kind caught the melodic idea without ceasing to be simple, while the melismatic kind shed some of its redundant notes without ceasing to be ornate. In some melodies you get a fusion of the two forms in the shape of a long syllabic passage suddenly interrupted by a melodic ornament of greater or less length, usually upon a weak syllable. This seems to have been a deliberate device of the musicians to avoid the feeling of secularity which, to them, was inherent in periodic rhythm. When a metrical hymn, for instance, has one note to a syllable all through,

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it produces something like periodic rhythm, and is more akin to folk-song than to real Plainchant. But a sudden interruption by means of a melodic ornament in one of these old tunes restores at once the primitive ideal of ecclesiastical atmosphere by making it impossible to dance or to beat strict time to the melody. The main points to remember are, however, that both the simple and ornate species of Plainsong are equally old in the West, that the ornate kind is Oriental, and that the fusion of the earliest Plainsong with the Latin liturgy is in itself the result of adaptation.

Now we will consider the accepted theory as to the Tonality of Plainsong which invites us to believe that it—

was based upon the Modes or Scales of ancient Greece as popularized in Rome by Greek flute-players, and afterwards further systematized by the introduction of the four Authentic Modes by St. Ambrose and completed by the addition of the four Plagal Modes by St. Gregory.

It might at once be asked why it should have been necessary for St. Ambrose to introduce four authentic modes, or for St. Gregory to introduce four plagal ones, if the music was already based upon the modes or scales of ancient Greece? The melodies might have had their rhythm modified by continuous use, but it is difficult to see how their melodic construction could have become so obscured as to make a fresh invention of their basic law necessary, had the constructive principle been clearly defined to begin with. The answer to this question is to be found in the fact

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that the Plainsong melodies were not constructed upon any modal principle at all, whether Greek or Ambrosian or Gregorian. That can be proved by the melodies themselves. To take the Greek theory first. If the reader will refer to section F of the article *Greek Music*, by Professor Macran, in the new "Grove," he will find that the result of research has been the oversetting of much that has hitherto been accepted about Greek modality. It seems now to be certain that the Greek modal system was primarily instrumental; it was related to the tuning of instruments; it was based not upon the relative positions of tones and semitones, but upon the assumption of exact pitch. This enables us to understand Aristotle's argument (*Politics* v. (vii) 7, 1342 b 20) that certain low-pitched modes suited the failing voices of old men because they could use their lower notes more than their higher. After analysing all the Greek modes in their various forms—diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic—Professor Macran arrives at the conclusion that the only real modality to be found is that of our unaltered minor scale, without the sharpened leading note. So that the Greek modes called Lydian, Dorian, Phrygian, &c., which have usually been regarded as so many scales differing from each other in the way that our own major and minor modes differ to-day, were in reality only descriptions of varying pitch based upon instrumental tuning.

Now when we turn to the Plainsong system we find that, through the whole of its period of acclimatization in the West, it was deliberately divorced from any association with instrumental accompaniment and, in its constructive epoch, was

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devoid of every idea of exact or absolute pitch. Not only was it readily transposable, but such modal classifications as it did assume were the result of influences the reverse of academic. The creation of the idea of "modes" in Plainsong can be described in a few words. From the time of St. Ambrose onwards the method of antiphonal singing became very popular. This did not denote the singing of a psalm, verse by verse, by two sides of a choir, but it meant that a psalm-verse was sung by one body of voices, and was answered by another body of voices with an unvarying chorus or refrain, called an antiphon. (There we have the connection between the terms "antiphon" and "antiphonal singing," and it must be noted that anciently the antiphon came after every verse.) The antiphons of the one choir had clearly defined melodies; the psalm-verses of the other choir were sung to certain conventional recitatives. For quite practical and obvious reasons the singers—not the theorists—had to formulate a rough system of grouping in order to combine the two sets of things with ease and artistic effect. They divided the antiphon-melodies into four categories, according to the concluding note, whether D, E, F, or G. They grouped the Psalm recitatives into four classes which, in the matter of their dominating notes, suited the four classes of chorus-refrains. This was a purely practical thing, and it never amounted to anything approaching a theoretical modal system. It is a gross exaggeration, therefore, to regard St. Ambrose as a great musical theorist, or to ascribe to him the establishment of four theoretical modes. The same thing is true of St. Gregory. The compilation later on of formal tables of Psalm Tones (*Tonalia*

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they were called) led to a subdivision of existing groups so that they became eight in number, but the theorist who can see a serious connection between the method of compiling a tone-table in the seventh or eighth centuries and the tuning of a musical instrument in ancient Greece, possesses powers of intuition which are positively uncanny.

The main point to be remembered is that Plainsong, as a coherent art-form, is older than its present modal system. So far from being based upon eight modes, the Plainchant melodies were written and sung before they were grouped; they were the forerunners of musical theory and not its result. And those who have followed the developments of modern harmony will agree that this is neither abnormal nor unnatural. We do not formulate laws until we have concrete examples to quote, for theory is the result of practice and not its primary cause. And the only modal system which bears any relation to Plainsong is merely a matter of grouping the music according to certain broad melodic characteristics, which have no real constructive significance whatever. Even then, those who have analysed Plainchant on a large scale find that there are many melodies which cannot be definitely ascribed to any particular group, or which may be ascribed with equal ease to more than one group. Most of our modern students have allowed themselves to be misled in this matter by mediæval writers. The Latin theorists of the ninth century are altogether untrustworthy. They did not examine the then existing melodies with a view to finding out their innate structure. Nor did they even adopt the traditions and rules of the singers

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as a basis for their theories. They ignored the music in order to speculate about it. Being ignorant of Greek, they drew their inspiration from such older Latin writers as Boethius (d. 524), Cassiodorus, and Martianus Capella, who themselves were only gamblers with the nomenclature of Greek phraseology. The result was that in the early Middle Ages the technical apparatus of classical musical terminology was applied in a thoroughly misleading manner to the existing Plainsong, and this is the mischief which lies at the root of all our confusion of thought. To make all this confusion worse confounded, the invention of vocal harmony brought into existence yet another system of modal rules which possessed no real points of contact either with Greek theory or Plainchant practice, but which again adopted Greek nomenclature in quite another connection. We shall never clear the atmosphere until we accept the distinction between three differing systems:—

(1) The Greek modal system, which was primarily instrumental, and which carried with it the fundamental idea of exact pitch.

(2) The Plainsong system, which was fundamentally vocal, which possessed no sense of absolute pitch, but was based upon the actual rules of the singers in grouping melodies for practical purposes according to their Final and Dominating Notes.

(3) The later Mediæval modal system, which was distinct from the second and was the result of the practice of vocal harmony. This is the system referred to by Glareanus in 1547, in which the modes are fourteen in number.


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This differentiation between three almost entirely unconnected aspects of bygone musical theory will have to be faced sooner or later. The existence of accidental points of resemblance between one and another of them must not blind us to the fact that they were fundamentally different. They represent opposed ideals of musical expression, and what the author pleads for as a result of this recognition is, first, that the Greek titles should be entirely given up as a means of labelling the various Plainsong groups or modes (if we may still use the word), and secondly, that so far as the Greek names are retained for describing the later mediæval modal system founded upon the work of the Harmonists, it should be made perfectly clear that the meaning of those terms in that connection is entirely different from the meaning attached to the same terms in Greek music itself. If we must teach people about these things, let it be done with the greatest possible clearness, and let it be borne in mind that music before the sixteenth century, even within civilized areas, cannot all be accounted for under one general description.



Let us proceed to the second part of our subject, the teaching of the Plainsong melodies, as they now survive, to a given choir of singers. We take for granted all those qualities which go to make up the successful teacher—personality, sincerity of conviction, penetrative intuition, a power of arousing enthusiasm, and a knack of encouraging latent talent—in fact, all those things which make teaching tolerable to the instructor and profitable to the instructed. Beyond this, there is the further requirement of being able to select the important teaching points, to insist upon these, and to leave

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unessential details alone. The thing to be aimed at in teaching Plainsong is the perfect fusion of words and notes; and this can be secured by attention to the text and the notation, and by a ceaseless insistence upon rhythm. Tonality is an academic matter which may quite well be left alone: the man who talks learnedly about the Hypo-mixolydian Mode may sound very impressive to a choir of small boys, but he will not necessarily get good results out of them. The Plainsong melodies were written to be sung, not to be called by long names, and now that Plainchant notation is exact, and everything is classified and grouped in the books, we may rest assured that if the notes are properly sung the tonality will look after itself.

The first point to be made clear is the exact meaning of the notation. This is by no means so mysterious or so difficult to acquire as is often thought. The two Clefs in general use are 

and . The first of these denotes that the

line occupied by the  is the seat of the note C (or *Do*), and all intervals are reckoned from it in the usual manner. This C clef is not invariably placed on the third line; it is found both higher and lower, to suit the range of the melody and to keep the notes within the limits of the stave. The other clef denotes that the line bearing the sign  is the seat of the note F (or *Fa*). So that all we need remember is that the two usual clefs, C and F, simply mean that the lines bearing them are C and F (*Do* or *Fa*),

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as the case may be, and that the other notes are reckoned from them, all notes being those of the diatonic scale, save only the allowable B flat, which is specially marked with a flat sign. A G clef is occasionally used, and this always rests on a line which becomes G for the time being; but its occurrence is quite exceptional, and there is no instance of it in the musical examples which are given later. There is an instance of the B flat used as a clef, however, in the short *Kyrie eleison* on page 50. This means that in a piece so marked the third space always contains B flat, whether the note be specially marked or not. It is really the equivalent of having the C clef on the fourth line, or the F clef on the second line, but the placing of the permanent *b* in the third space saves the necessity for accidental flats later on. Of course, a clear perception of the meaning of the clefs is a necessary preliminary to a right understanding of the music, but it must be remembered that they represent approximate, and not exact, pitch. In leaving this part of the subject it may be useful to point out that the reason that the C clef does not always appear on the same line is quite a practical one. It is placed so as to bring the notes of the melody as nearly as possible in the centre of the staff, and to avoid the use of ledger lines in a melody of extended range.

Now we will examine the notes themselves, as seen in the *Kyrie fons bonitatis* on page 41. They fall into three main divisions, the square notes with tails (■), the square notes without tails (■), and the diamond-shaped notes (◆). The great point upon which the teacher must insist is that all three


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kinds of notes mean precisely the same thing as regards length or duration. This seems a most difficult matter for some people to grasp. There is a strong impression abroad that the tailed notes are longer than the square, and that the diamond notes are shorter. This is an entire misapprehension, and is based upon the fact that these same characters were borrowed for a time and used in connection with measured music, so that they then acquired an idea of comparative length. They have this kind of meaning in Merbecke, but it is a development of their original idea; in real Plainsong they all have the same length. If an inquiring chorister should ask why this is so, he may be referred to the article on "Notation" by Mr. Abdy Williams in the new "Grove." If this article be examined in detail it will be seen that it is not only a very splendid exposition of the whole subject of musical notation, but that it is so exhaustive and complete that no one who reads it will ever want to ask any more questions. For the present it must suffice to explain that the diamond notes are used invariably in descending groups because they look better than a succession of squares would look, and because they represent typographically the manner in which the copyists of the Plainchant manuscripts wrote descending groups with the side of the pen. Similarly, the tailed notes are a relic of the written manuscript, though they often, but not invariably, possess a significance in phrasing. The really important point, however, is that the shape of the note does not affect its value in point of duration.


There are one or two other minor questions about the notation which must be cleared up. In the

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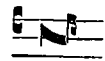
same musical example, *Kyrie fons bonitatis*, page 41 version (a), on the second syllable from the

beginning we find a sign  which looks at

first sight rather like a couple of notes sounded together. It is not a chord, of course, but merely an ascending group of two notes, the lower being sung first. After the breath mark in the middle of the line the sixth note on the first syllable of

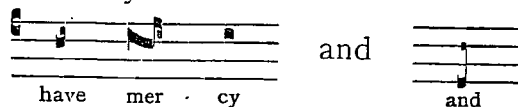
*e-ley-son* has a jagged edge above and below 

This is the *quilisma*, an ornamental note bearing a turn of a quarter-tone, which often is represented by an ordinary square in the MSS. of those countries where the voices were hard and not flexible. The actual effect in performance is to throw weight and extra duration on the note immediately preceding it, while the *quilisma* itself is touched quite quickly and lightly. This is the one departure in all the musical examples from the root principle of equality of length for all notes. If we look at version (c) of the same *Kyrie*, we find

on the third syllable a slurred character 

which stands for B, A, followed immediately by C, B. This slurred character never stands for more than two notes, the pitch of which is determined by the line or space on which the character begins and the line or space on which it ends.

In the same example, version (c), we have three instances of very small notes:



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These little notes—*liquescents*, they are called—are interesting because they show the subtlety with which the Plainchantists dealt with the niceties of textual pronunciation. All syllables requiring a definitely pronounced ending after their vowel sounds are done with were provided with a liquescent or semi-vocal note upon which the completion of the syllable was to be made. In the first instance the vowel-sound of “have” is vocalised upon the â, but when the vowel-sound is over we must get rid of the final “ve” before passing on to the next syllable. The Plainchantists provided a little additional note for this to be done upon; it is not an essential note of the melody, but usually an anticipation of the note which follows it. It shows how careful they were to safeguard the *legato* style in their singing, and how well they knew the way to secure vocal resonance in a large building. These finer points about the notation belong to the less simple forms of Plainsong, but they are better dealt with now than later.

Now we must turn to the most important point of all—the Rhythm. It is well known that rhythm is the life and essence of all pleasing sound, and that the smallest section into which either a succession of syllables or of notes can be divided is the rhythmic foot. This unit of movement may take two forms. It may be *Binary*, with one strong syllable or note followed by one weak syllable or note. This form is shown quite clearly in the following line:—

Praise | Gód from | Whóm all | blés-sings | flów.

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The *Ternary* form of the rhythmic foot, with one strong syllable and two weak ones, is shown nearly all the way through the phrase:—

Praïse to the Lórd the Al- migh-ty, the King of Cre- á-tion.

It must be noticed that the accented syllables in the above lines are not *longer* than the others but only *stronger*. And we will apply that principle of stress and non-stress to the following simple hymn melody:—

To Thee be - fore the close of day, Cre - a - tor  
of the world, we pray That with Thy wont - ed fa -  
- vour, Thou Would'st be our Guard and Keep - er now.

If this be sung as it would be read we get an emphasis on every alternate syllable, and this is marked in the melody by a slight increase of force. It is this application of the principle of good reading to the passive notes of the melody which lies at the root of all Plainsong rhythm. Our first example is so simple in its accentuation—in the regular succession of stress and non-stress—that it almost gives us periodic rhythm. We say “almost” because it will occur to the reader that all the points of stress are not of exactly equal importance. In the second line, for instance, the syllable “of” is

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less emphatic than the next strong syllable, “world.” In the third line the dominating accent is on the first syllable of “fa-vour.” This brings us to the next point, which is that there is more than one kind of stress in Plainsong—there is the primary stress and the secondary stress—just as there are varieties of force in speaking.

We will now take a Latin example, to show that this principle of accent by stress rather than by extra duration still holds good:—

Jam lu - cis or - to si - de - re, De - um pre -  
- ca - mur sup - pli - ces, Ut in di - ur - nis ac -  
- ti - bus, Nos ser - vet a no - cen - ti - bus.

Here again the accents are not always primary, and if this Latin illustration be compared as a whole with the English example given above, it will be obvious that the stress on the final monosyllables of each of the English lines is absent from the final syllables of the Latin lines. This is the characteristic difference between the two languages, and the advantage is with the Latin, for it gives a beautifully soft ending to each melodic phrase. In technical language, we end a line consisting of binary rhythmic feet with a single foot in ternary form—a most delightful device. And this is what is meant when we are informed that “the genius of



## 22 THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG

the two languages is entirely different." Those of us who use the Plainchant melodies to illustrate English words are quite conscious of the difference; we persist in our course because we believe that the old melodies, both by reason of their historic origin and of their own structure, are flexible enough to bear either treatment. There is just one other point in the foregoing example to which attention should be given. At the beginning of the second line in the words the periodic rhythm is broken by something which in strictly metrical music would involve a false accent. Instead of the normal accentuation, which would give—

"De-úm pre-cá-mur,"

we have to secure the effect of—

"Dé-um pre-cá-mur,"

and the melody is accented accordingly. Thus we begin that line in this particular verse with a ternary foot instead of a binary one. The root principle of verbal accentuation, coupled with the absence of bar-lines, makes this quite an easy thing to do and a delightful thing to listen to.

In the next hymn-melody we have the first approach to melodic ornamentation, for in the second line there are two notes to the weak syllable, "and":—

O God of truth, O Lord of might, Who or - d'rest

time and change a - right, And send'st the ear - ly morn -

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 23

- ing ray, And light'st the glow of per - fect day.

It is of the utmost importance that the two notes in question should not be hurried; the fact that both of them are softer than the single notes on "time" and "change" which immediately precede and follow them is quite sufficient to safeguard the rhythm of the text.

We now turn to a hymn-melody which provides us with an example of melodic ornamentation at its best. It is one of the most famous of them all, and the beauty of its melodic outline proved an inspiration to more than one of the polyphonic composers of the Renaissance:—

A - ve, ma - ris stel - la, De - i ma - ter al - ma,

At - que sem - per vir - go, Fe - lix cae - li por - ta.

If the reader will examine the first line of words alone, he will observe that each strong syllable in the text has only one note, while each weak syllable is ornamented. The root principle of the music has taught us to discard the question of length in relation to accent, and to rely entirely upon stress and non-stress for our rhythmic values. Thus the three strong syllables in, "A-ve, ma-ris stel-la," will be louder, and the three weak syllables will be softer, in spite of the fact that the ornamentation makes them actually longer in point of duration.

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The point now arises as to how far the melodic ornaments possess any rhythmical structure of their own. Are they themselves constructed upon a rhythmical principle, or are they merely successions of notes? Well, it has already been seen that a mental stress-point must occur after two or three (or, at most, four) syllables in language, and the same is true of successions of musical sounds. So that these ornamental neums, or note-groups, even though they fall on weak syllables, possess within themselves their definite points of stress. These stress-points are subsidiary things; they are of less importance, and therefore are less strongly marked, than the textual accents. But they certainly are not non-existent, nor are they exactly equal to each other. We may conveniently reduce the "Ave maris stella" melody to modern notation\* in order to see the effect of the various stress-points upon the tune. The three degrees of stress are marked ' ' ' in diminishing order:—



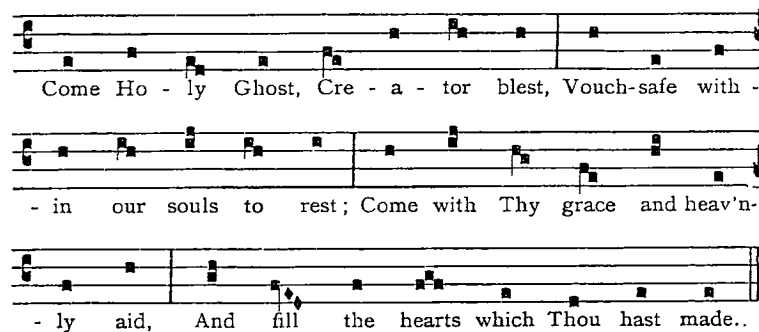
This analysis may look somewhat subtle and difficult, but the effect it produces is extremely delicate and beautiful, and a melody understood in this manner is neither crude nor uninteresting.

\* In the transcriptions into modern notation the notes of the Plainsong are represented by quavers. The crotchets are used only for such parts of the melody as are subject to a pause or *rallentando*.

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 25

It must be borne in mind that the Plainchantists were dealing with sheer melody, and that all their effects in contrast and colour had to be obtained melodically. Like the artist of every age, the Plainsong composer overmastered the limitations of his medium; he was precluded from any resort to cunning combinations of notes, so he secured the subtleties of emotional expression by an intimate use (which we seem to have lost) of the well-nigh boundless possibilities of the human voice using graduated degrees of emphasis. We may well believe that so far from being rough or inexpressive, the Plainsong melodies in their palmy days were intensely emotional. And we may well suppose that a patient investigation of their structure and qualities will reveal to us some measure of that touching beauty which appealed so irresistibly to the mind of the great Augustine in that far-off time when he listened to them with a breaking heart.

The remaining hymn-melody to be considered is characterized by the principle of melodic embellishment in a less extreme form. It is the version of the *Veni Creator* melody once current in England, though it is represented in most of our modern hymnals somewhat differently:—



## 26 THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG

In this hymn-melody the melodic ornamentation is distributed among strong and weak syllables in the proportion of four to eight respectively, and it is worth noting that in melismatic Plainsong generally the balance of ornamentation is invariably in favour of the unaccented syllables. The ornaments seem to be regarded as extraneous to the normal progress of the text; they are of the nature of added embellishment. This is quite a reasonable principle, and in practice it actually safeguards the sense of the words and secures lightness and ease in the bulk of the ornamental groups.

It is impossible here to enter upon a detailed discussion of the Tridentine reform of the liturgical chant in the sixteenth century; it will suffice to say that it is now generally admitted that the redistribution of note-groups then undertaken with the object of securing a uniformly greater number of notes on strong syllables was opposed to the whole structural scheme of the Chant. In reality this was an attempt to revive the classical idea of quantity as opposed to verbal stress, and to rearrange the notation so as to make the music suit this scheme. The result is found in the so-called Medicean Gradual, which vitiated the Plainchant heard in Roman churches right down to the end of the nineteenth century.

So far we have been dealing only with hymn-melodies. Now we will turn to the recitation of the Psalms—a source of unending inspiration to musical controversialists and clerical pamphleteers. It may willingly be admitted that the normal musical treatment of the Psalter leaves something to be desired; and it certainly may be claimed with equal reason that many of the pamphlets advocating

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 27

reform are either inadequately thought out or unfortunately expressed. The conscientious organist who examines every new proposal in a spirit of becoming inquiry will be told in one publication that the Psalms have no rhythm; in another it will be proved that not only is it impossible to sing a Psalm to a four-part chant, but that it is still more impossible to sing it to a unison tone. He can only be saved from desolating despair by the knowledge that the writer of the pamphlet has himself produced a Psalter from which alone we can sing a Psalm without “murdering” it. And if, with an enterprise which will face the worst, the docile musician studies this anti-Anglican and non-Gregorian Psalter at first hand, it is conceivable that he may find himself unable to understand either the treatment of the words or the meaning of the tunes. For the musical recitation of the Psalter is a matter of extraordinary complexity, and the present writer does not propose to advance anything new or original on this subject, but only to lay down a few of those outstanding features of Gregorian chanting which are almost as old as the Christian use of the Psalter itself.

If we take any verse of any Psalm we shall find that so far from having no rhythm, it is rhythmical all through. The rhythmic feet are not all binary and not all ternary, but the two kinds are found indifferently. For the purpose of illustration we will take three verses from Psalm 119, and will seek to apply several of the Gregorian Tones to this particular set of words. In these three verses the rhythmic feet are marked by dotted lines, and the accented member of each rhythmic foot has a stress mark printed over it. Our purpose will be to show that though the tones

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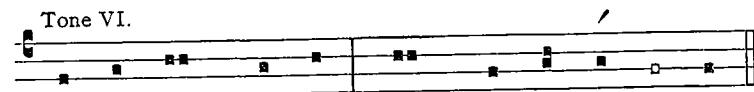
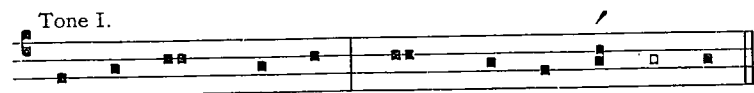
vary in structure the accentuation of the words need never alter:—

1. O stáb-lish thy wórd in thy sér-vant: that I may féar thee.

2. Be- hól-d my de- light is in thý com- mánd-ments: O quick-en me in thy ríght-eous-ness.

3. Só shall I ál-way kée-p thy lów: yéa, for év-er and év-er.

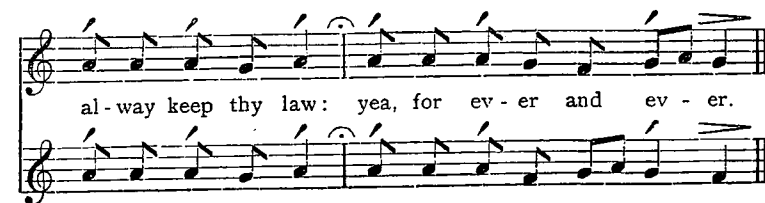
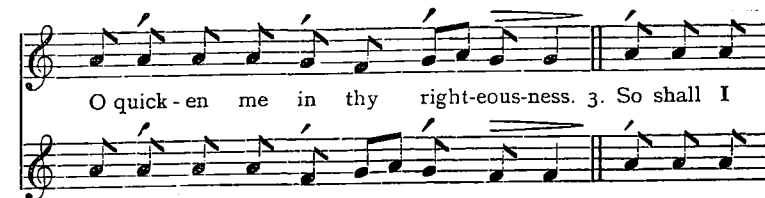
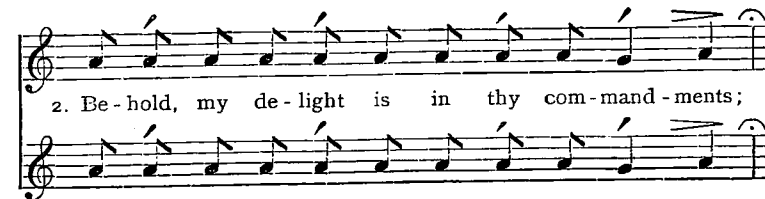
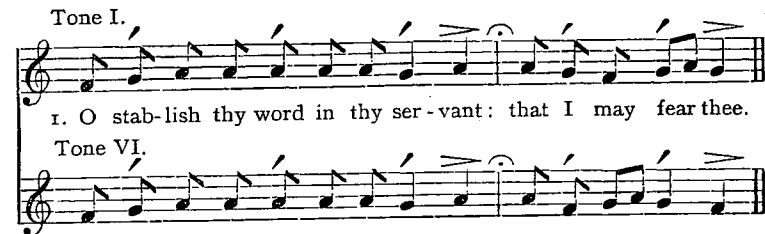
The English forms of Tones I. and VI. may be taken together, for their structure is identical:—



The first two notes (termed the Intonation) come only in the first verse, and the inflexion at the end of the first half of each verse is purely automatic—it takes the last two syllables, no matter whether they be strong or weak. The notes themselves, therefore, may be either strong or weak, according to the values of the syllables for which they are used. In the second half of the Tone (termed the Ending) there is a musical accent near the end, so that normally we must make the strong member of a rhythmic foot in the text fall there. This is easily arranged, because there may be either one or two

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 29

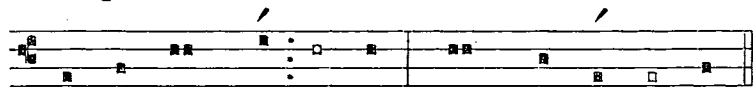
syllables and notes after the musical accent, the optional notes being shown by the hollow characters in the printed examples above. The application of these tones to the words in question is seen as follows:—



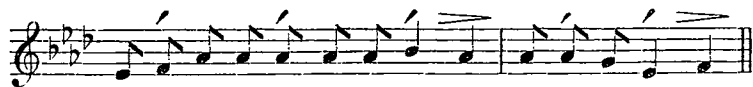
### 30 THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG

Although the above Tones appear very much alike, the musical effect of the Endings is quite different, for it must be borne in mind that the tied quavers are of full length. Thus in the Ending of Tone I. we have a melodic ornament on a strong syllable, while the Ending of Tone VI. gives the melodic ornament to a weak syllable of the text.

Now we turn to Tone II., in which a musical accent occurs in the Mediation as well as in the Ending:—



Here again each musical accent marks a point in the Tone which must coincide with a verbal accent, but as the first half of a Psalm-verse may end with the accented member or may have either one or two notes after it, there is no practical difficulty in the way here, while the Ending is treated as before:—



1. O stablish thy word in thy ser - vant : that I may fear thee.



2. Be - hold, my de - light is in thy com - mand - ments :



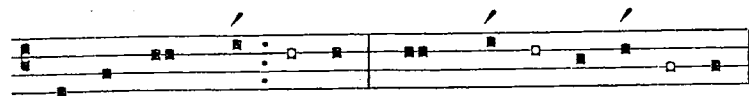
O quick-en me in thy right-eous-ness. 3. So shall I



al - way keep thy law : yea, for ev - er and ev - er.

### THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 31

In Tone V.—



we have an Ending with two musical accents, the normal form being suitable for binary rhythmic feet in the text. But the treatment of redundant weak syllables in ternary feet is provided for by the hollow notes, so that there is no difficulty in preserving the rhythm of the text:—



... that I may fear thee. ... O quick-en me in thy



right-eous-ness, ... yea, for ev - er and ev - er.

Tone IV. is interesting because it has a longer melodic formula in each half than any of the foregoing, though it possesses only one musical accent in each part:—

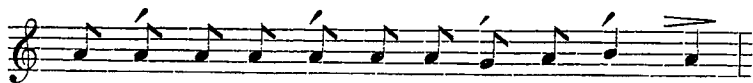


Its application to the specimen verses is seen as follows:—



1. O stab-lish thy word in thy ser - vant : that I may fear thee.

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2. Be - hold, my de - light is in thy com - mand - ments:



O quick - en me in thy right - eous - ness. 3. So shall I



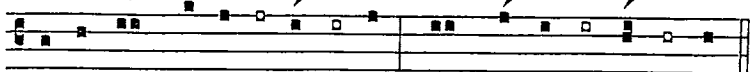
al - way keep thy law: yea, for ev - er and ev - er.

Tones III. and VII. are more elaborate than any we have yet considered, the first of the pair having a transferable musical accent in the first half:—

Tone III.

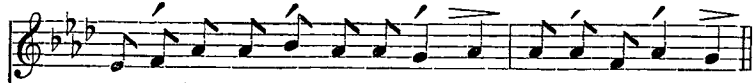


Tone VII.



These Tones may be set to the specimen verses as follows:—

Tone III.

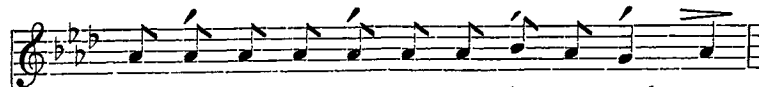


1. O stab-lish thy word in thy ser - vant: that I may fear thee

Tone VII.



### THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 33



2. Be - hold, my de - light is in thy com - mand - ments:



O quick - en me in thy right - eous - ness. 3. So shall I



al - way keep thy law: yea, for ev - er and ev - er.



Space forbids a detailed account of more than the typical Psalm-melodies which have been given above. But enough has been said to make clear the principles which govern the application of the notes to the words, and the reader now has all the necessary material for the construction of a Plain-song Psalter of his own, should he feel anxious to produce one. The outstanding feature of the simple Gregorian Tones seems to be the extraordinary variety of their structure. Of those which we have considered only Tones I. and VI. are really alike, and even in these the little difference in the

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position of the melodic ornament creates a real contrast in effect. Then in Tones II., V., and VIII., though the first half of each is constructed upon a uniform principle, there is real variety and contrast in the structure of the second halves. Tone IV. again stands by itself, and Tones III. and VII. have their own structural characteristics. If only we will rid ourselves of the idea that these Tones are tunes to be harmonized, and will realize that they are simple inflected recitatives for the voice, possessing a melodic strength which is in an inverse ratio to their accompanimental possibilities,\* we shall understand something of the real purpose of the Plainchantists, and we may even come to admire their extraordinary skill in avoiding monotony.

It may well be asked if such a system is not extremely difficult to the ordinary choir. The answer must depend to a large extent upon the choir. Simple country folk who have been accustomed to read the Psalms but not to sing them will find no great difficulty. But a choir which has spent its entire corporate life in fitting words to tunes will naturally find this principle of applying a melody to the text extremely difficult at first. The writer is not now referring only to singers who are accustomed to the ordinary seven-bar harmonized chant. Unfortunately, there are many choirs who sing the Gregorian Tones without any real appreciation of their rhythmic

\* Tone IV. is probably the most striking instance of this. If it is considered harmonically—from the point of view of the accompanist—it is extremely unsatisfactory, for it is well-nigh impossible to harmonize it for many verses in succession without a feeling of intense monotony. But if it is regarded melodically, and sung without any accompaniment at all, it “wears” extremely well for almost any length of time.

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structure, and those of us who advocate the use of Plainsong have but little right to criticise the Anglican system until we have set our own house more thoroughly in order in this respect. From the practical teacher's point of view there are two published Psalters which, in the writer's experience, will enable the rhythm of the Gregorian Tones to be respected by the singers. These are the “Sarum Psalter” of Mr. Palmer, and the new “Manual of Plainsong” edited by Stainer, Briggs and Frere. But even with these excellent books it is impossible to secure a really perfect rendering of the Psalms unless the teacher realizes the existence of the rhythmic feet with their strong and weak members, and is able to sing specimen verses to his choir with sufficient conviction to make them imitate him. The one way in which Plainsong cannot be taught is by “playing it over”; it is so intensely vocal that it must be taught by someone who has at least a choirmaster's voice.

In the examples of simple Psalmody which have been given we have dealt only with fundamental points. But Plainchantists are so frequently confronted with the statement that all Plainsong chanting is monotonous and that all other kinds of chanting are so universally agreeable, that one cannot forbear to say a word on this question to a public which is able to rise above the hasty impressions of the “man in the pew.” Gregorian Psalmody, sung antiphonally between boys and men at the interval of an octave, has elements of contrast and of variety which compensate for the lack of vocal harmony, even where that may be had. There are scores of places where the proper balance of parts does not exist on both sides of the

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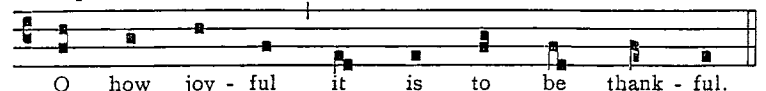
choir; even where it does exist the effect of the same melodic phrase, always accentuated in the same manner and always harmonized in the same way, must of necessity produce a certain atmosphere of sameness. This is now much more the case than it used to be, for the result of the application of a certain kind of voice-production to choir-training has been the elimination of the personal character of individual voices to a very great extent. It is not for the present writer to say whether this is a good thing or a bad thing, though most musicians are beginning to see that the loss of a singer's personality and of a choir's power of dramatic expression is too great a price to pay for smoothness of tone. But the man who always does a thing ten years after somebody else has thought of it is now engaged in riding particular vowels to death, and the result is that one may go to church after church and hear every voice sounding much like every other voice: that is to say, there is little or no variety of colour in the antiphonal singing of harmonized chants, and word-painting by the organist may obviously be left out of the question. When we compare the unyielding rhythm and fixed harmony of the modern chant-form, even when sung antiphonally, with the ever-changing rhythm of the words themselves when sung to the simple Gregorian inflexions by boys and men in alternation, it is possible to maintain that the latter method is not necessarily the least pleasing.

Before leaving this subject it is necessary to point out that musically the Psalm Tones are not complete in themselves, but that each pre-supposes the existence of a final Antiphon. The Psalm Tone and the Antiphon bear the same relation each to

### THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 37

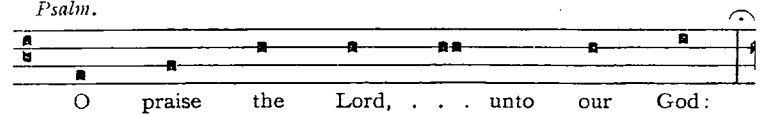
the other as the Recitative and Air in an oratorio. In the Latin service the antiphons are there, but in the English rite they may only be heard on special occasions. We may quote two examples of the connection between Psalm Tone and Antiphon Melody taken from the Service Book of the Gregorian Festival held at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1913. The first is a simple antiphon sung with the eighth Tone:—

*Antiphon.*

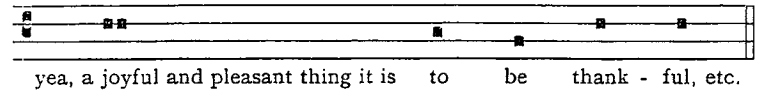


O how joy - ful it is to be thank - ful.

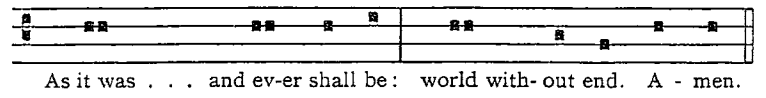
*Psalm.*



O praise the Lord, . . . unto our God:

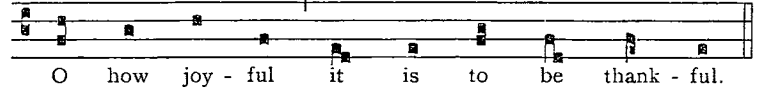


yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thank - ful, etc.



As it was . . . and ev-er shall be: world with-out end. A - men.

*Antiphon.*



O how joy - ful it is to be thank - ful.

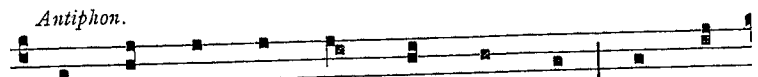
It will be remembered that earlier in the volume we dealt with the interpolation of these choruses or refrains after every verse of the Psalm in the days of St. Ambrose. Later on they were relegated to the beginning and end of the Psalm only. If the Psalm Tone be examined carefully in the light of



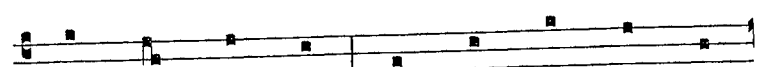
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the Antiphon Melody used with it, the purpose of the Intonation will be seen. It is to lead up from the last note of the antiphon to the reciting note of the Psalm Tone quite easily and naturally. The particular Ending of the Tone, too, has reference to the first note of the Antiphon which is to succeed it, and this is the explanation of the great variety of tone endings found in the *Sarum Tonale*, where there are forty-one in all. The other Antiphon to which attention is invited is rather longer—it consists of four divisions instead of two—and this is quite usual in the case of Antiphons to the Canticles as distinct from Antiphons belonging to Psalms:—

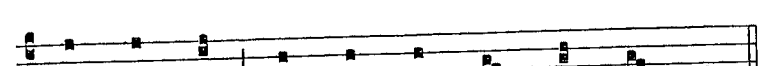
*Antiphon.*



Pre - serve us, O Lórd, while wá - king, and gúard




us while sléep - ing: that a - wáke we may

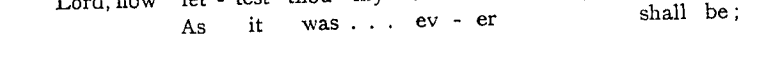


bé with Christ, and a - sléep may rést in péace.

*Nunc dimittis.*



Lórd, now lét - test thou thy sér - vant de - párt in péace:  
As it was . . . ev - er shall be;



ac - córd - ing to thý word.  
world with - out end. A - men. R̄. *Antiphon*, Preserve us, etc.

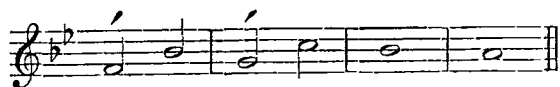
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When the Antiphons disappeared from the English service books in the sixteenth century the dependent Psalm Tones or recitatives were left standing alone, and they are so found in Merbecke and even as late as in Edward Lowe's *Short Directions for the performance of Cathedrall Service*, published in 1661. Mr. Lowe was one of Dr. Alcock's predecessors at the Chapel Royal, and his inclusion of the Gregorian Tones in his work, published after the Restoration of Charles II., goes to show that the use of the old music for the Psalms went on a good deal later in England than commonly is supposed. It is possible that a purist might urge that the non-use of the Antiphons is a sufficient reason for discontinuing to use their dependent recitatives for the Psalms. The obvious reply to that seems to be that the Gregorian Psalm Tones, even in their isolation, are worth doing for historical, practical, and musical reasons, and that, if necessary, a few notes on the organ in the form of an Antiphon Melody will give a very satisfactory musical result at the conclusion of a Psalm.

Before taking leave of the specimen Psalm Tones which have already been analysed, a few words seem necessary concerning their influence upon the efforts now being made to reconstruct the modern chant-form. Plainchantists ought to be large-hearted enough to regard every really scientific effort to reform the rendering of the Anglican chant with some amount of sympathy. The note of amateurishness is entirely absent from the work which has recently been accomplished in this direction by Dr. Robert Bridges and Mr. Seymour Pile, to name only two out of a large number of authorities who, along with Dr. Madeley Richardson,

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have devoted their attention to the grave problems of Psalm chanting. But one cannot help thinking that in throwing a modern chant melody into the melting-pot in order to secure freedom of recitation, there is a danger of running to the opposite extreme by producing a succession of notes which is so far formless as to be most difficult of memorization. Everyone will agree that it is essential to good chanting that the singer shall have memorized his melodic formula. The Gregorian Tone is easily memorized by reason of the fact that while it is mainly a free recitative it has just the amount of fixed accent necessary to secure some idea of definite form. A musical accent in a cadence is no bar to freedom of recitation, because every rhythmic foot in the text must have a strong member. It is the existence of redundant or optional notes for redundant syllables which places a strong syllable invariably upon the accented note, and so produces a melody which is free without being formless. Then again, in abolishing the metrical character of the modern chant there is a very grave danger of effecting an actual conflict between words and notes in melodic phrases which take a sudden leap upwards. If the reader will refer to the first halves of Tones II., III., V., and VII. given above he will notice that the musical accent often falls in a very obvious position, and that a rise of pitch in free recitation has a tendency towards producing accent. In a metrical phrase we can deliberately avoid this effect by the position of the bar lines, as in the opening phrase of the German melody:—



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But if the metrical character of this phrase were deliberately obliterated, and the same succession of notes were used as a free recitative, there would be an irresistible tendency towards emphasis on every syllable which was made to fall upon the second and fourth notes; and this kind of danger lurks in a great many modern chants which were composed from the metrical standpoint, and which we are attempting to use as unfettered recitatives. It is not unlikely, then, that a study of the Gregorian Tone-form in its combination of freedom with an easily remembered structure, and its intimate use of melodic progressions which have rhythmical values of their own, may conduce to a less drastic but more effective and permanent reform of the modern chant than sometimes is contemplated.

We have been dealing for the most part with the foundation truths concerning the Plainsong system, and it will not be necessary to say very much about the more ornate examples of the music. In the opening phrase of *Kyrie fons bonitatis*:—



we have a fairly elaborate and characteristic piece of melismatic Plainsong. There are but two accented syllables in the text (the first and fifth), but some ten or eleven subsidiary stresses occur in the note-groups, according to the principle already explained. We might well shrink from any attempt to adapt such a melody to the Responses to the Commandments in the English Communion Office were it not for the existence of a good

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precedent which dates from quite an early period in the Middle Ages. This precedent forms such an interesting little by-path of mediæval musical history that it is worth describing. At a time when exact musical notation had not been evolved, the existence of Plainchant depended upon oral tradition. The ecclesiastical musicians adopted the expedient of fitting the more ornate music with additional words in order to facilitate memorization, and the result of this process in connection with this particular melody is to be seen in the following curious mixture of Greek and Latin which was actually sung in the churches:—

(b)

Ky - ri - e, fons bo - ni - ta - tis, pa - ter in - ge - ni - te,  
a quo bo - na cunc - ta pro - ce - dunt, e - le - i - son.

After that, the adaptation of this melody to the English Responses can hardly be regarded as vandalism. It is, in fact, far less drastic in effect:—

(c)

Lord, have mer - cy up - on us: and in - cline  
our hearts to keep this law.

In this connection it may be of interest to refer to some of the sixteenth century adaptations of the

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 43

Plainsong melodies to the vernacular service. Whatever objections may be made to the use of the old music with English words, the objection of novelty is not one which can legitimately be advanced. Nor does the well-known service of John Merbecke represent all that was done in this direction, for that particular service has acquired an altogether fictitious importance in our view of Reformation musicianship. As a matter of fact, neither the *Credo* nor the *Gloria in excelsis* in Merbecke's *Booke of Common Praier Noted* can be traced to any Plainsong original. There is, however, a choir-book in existence (Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 34191) which probably came from St. George's, Windsor, and it contains a complete Plainsong setting of the English Communion Service which was made for the opening of Edward the VI.'s first Parliament. The time-honoured melody of the Nicene Creed, a simple composition in psalmodic form whose structure may be seen in the following table—

Cré - do in u - num Dé - um,  
et in ú - num Do - mi - num Je - sum Christum,  
et in - car - ná - tus est de Spi - ri - tu Sanc - to,  
et re - sur - ré - xit ter - ti - a di - e,  
et i - te - rum ven - tu - rus est  
cum glo - ri - a ju - di - cá - re

Pa - trem Om - ni - po - tén - tem  
Fi - li - um De - i u - ni - gé - ni - tum  
Per quem om - ni - a fác - ta sunt  
Se - cun - dum scrip - tú - ras  
Vi - vos et mór - tu - os.

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is there set to the English text quite skilfully and scientifically, as is shown below:—

I be - lieve in one God, the Fa - ther Al - migh - ty,  
 Ma - ker of heav'n and earth, and of all things vi - si - ble  
 and in - vi - si - ble. And in one Lord Je - sus Christ,  
 the on - ly be - got - ten Son of God. Be - got - ten  
 of His Fa - ther be - fore all worlds. God of God,  
 Light of Light, ve - ry God of ve - ry God.  
 Be - got - ten, not made, be - ing of one sub - stance  
 with the Fa - ther: by Whom all things were made.  
 Who for us men, and for our sal - va - ci - on, came down

# THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 45

from heav'n. And was in - car - nate by the Ho - ly Ghost  
 of the Vir - gin Ma - ry: and was made man. etc.

The whole of this interesting Communion Service is now published, in a transcribed form with an organ part added.\*

Another interesting example of adaptation, dating from the time of Henry VIII., is found in the same choir-book. It consists of the "Ambrosian" *Te Deum*, the Latin form from which it was made being shown by the following extracts:—

Te De - um lau - da - mus: te Do - mi - num con - fi - te - mur.  
 Te æ - ter - num Pa - trem om - nis ter - ra ve - ne - ra - tur.  
 Ti - bi om - nes An - ge - li, ti - bi cœ - li  
 et u - ni - ver - sæ pot - es - ta - tes:  
 Ti - bi Che - ru - bin et Se - ra - phin in - ces - sa -

\* No. 900, "Novello's Parish Choir Book" (Novello).

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- bi - li vo - ce pro - cla - mant: Sanc - tus, Sanc - tus,

Sanc - tus Do - mi - nus De - us Sa - ba - oth.

Ple - ni sunt cœ - li et ter - ra ma - jes - ta -

- tis glo - ri - æ tu - æ. Te glo - ri - o - sus

A - pos - to - lo - rum cho - rus. Te Pro - phe - ta - rum

lau - da - bi - lis nu - me - rus. Te Mar - ty - rum can - di -

- da - tus: lau - dat ex - er - ci - tus. . . . .

Mi - se - re - re nos - tri. Do - mi - ne, mi - se - re - re

nos - tri. Fi - at mi - se - ri - cor - di - a tu - a,

# THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 47

Do - mi - ne, su - per nos: quem - ad - mo - dum spe - ra -

- vi - mus in te. In te, Do - mi - ne, spe - ra - vi;

non con - fun - dar in æ - ter - num.

The English sixteenth-century setting, adapted from the above, is rather simpler, but the character of the Chant is most skilfully preserved. It runs as follows:—

We praise thee, O God: we know-ledge thee to be

the Lord. All the earth doth wor-ship thee, the Fa-ther ev -

- er - last - ing. To thee all An - gels cry a - loud, the heav'ns,

and all the pow'rs there - in. To thee Che - ru - byn and Se -

- ra - phyn con - tin - u - al - ly do cry: Ho - ly art thou,

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Ho-ly art thou, Ho-ly art thou, Lord God of Sa - ba - oth;

Heav'n and earth are re - plen - ish - ed with the ma - jes - ty

of thy glo - ry. The glo - ri - ous com - pa - ny

of the A - pos - tles praise thee. The good - ly fel -

- low - ship of the Pro - phets praise thee. . . . .

O Lord, have mer - cy up - on us, have mer - cy up -

- on us. O Lord, let thy mer - cy light - en up - on us,

as our trust is in thee. O Lord, in thee have

I trust - ed: let me ne - ver be con - found - ed,

# THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 49

This version (which is now published in a performing edition\*) may usefully be compared with Merbecke's treatment of the same melody given below. He was bound by Archbishop Cranmer's stipulation to place no more than one note on a syllable, and consequently his adaptation forms a kind of sketch outline of the original:—

We praise thee, O Lord: we know - ledge thee

to be the Lord. All the earth doth wor - ship thee,

the Fa - ther ev - er - last - ing. To thee all

An - gels cry a - loud, the hea - vens, and all

the powers there - in. To thee Che - ru - bin and

Se - ra - phin con - tin - u - al - ly do cry,

Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho - ly Lord God of Sa - ba - oth;

\* No. 893, "Novello's Parish Choir Book" (Novello).

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Hea - ven and earth are full of the ma - jes - ty  
of thy glo - ry. The glo - ri - ous com - pa - ny  
of the A - pos - tles praise thee. . . . .  
O Lord, have mer - cy up - on us, have mer - cy  
up - on us. O Lord, let thy mer - cy light - en up -  
- on us, as our trust is in thee. O Lord, in thee  
have I trust - ed: let me ne - ver be con - found - ed.

The same principle is to be observed in Merbecke's treatment of the Plainchant originals used for the shorter numbers of his Communion Service. His *Kyrie eleyson* :—

Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

### THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 51

is based upon one of the simpler settings in the Sarum Gradual :—

Ky - ri - e e - ley - son.

while his *Sanctus*, beginning :—

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of hosts.

is taken from the setting used in pre-Reformation times at Mass for the Dead :—

San - ctus, san - ctus, san - ctus Do - mi - nus De - us Sa - ba - oth.

We may well admire the amazing skill with which this work of adaptation was carried out, even though we may legitimately disapprove of the limitations imposed by the craze for syllabic simplicity in musical matters which characterized the Reformation ecclesiastics. But as a matter of fact it was this cramping stipulation which probably saved the English transcribers from the appalling blunders of their foreign *confrères* as shown in the Medicean Gradual. In spite of Merbecke's use of notes bearing ideas of comparative length, it is still possible to sing his adaptations with all the old rhythmic feeling of their originals, and his work, together with the slightly older transcription of the English Communion Office in the Edwardine MS. already referred to, provides the Church of England with the basis of a really popular system of

## 52 THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG

congregational worship-music characterized by authority rather than by novelty.

The really ornate specimens of solo Plainsong are not lacking in interest to the modern musician. Many of them present structural features which would be amazing were it not that a sense of form is an innate part of the natural equipment of everyone who has the power of expressing himself by means of sounds, no matter what the age may be in which he lives. We find any number of Plainsong compositions in which the writer has realized the necessity of balancing phrase with phrase, and has evidently been well aware of the cumulative principle of piling up a succession of effects, each incomplete in itself, but all leading up to a musical climax. A really skilful example of melismatic writing is to be seen in the following Gradual:—

Ad - ju - vá - bit \* e - am De - us  
 vul - tu su - o : De -  
 - us in mé - di - o e - jus, non  
 com - mo - vé - bi - tur.  
 Ÿ. Flú - mi - nis

## THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG 53

im - pe - tus lae - tí - fi - cat ci - vi -  
 - tá - - - tem De - i : sanc - ti - fi -  
 - cá - - - vit ta - ber - ná -  
 - cu - lum su - um \* Al - tis - si - mus.  
 (Final cadence)

Here we must bring this part of our subject to an end. Whether we regard Plainsong as a form of art with sufficient vitality to make a living appeal, or whether we regard it merely as a phase of musical history, matters little. Some knowledge of its characteristics must form a necessary part of the equipment of the student who would regard musical history and musical development as a complete thing. In view of our current appreciation of the value of the historic method in the study of musical theory, it is at least reasonable to push our investigations back to a point which lies behind the Polyphonic period, so as to include that great mass of melodic material which inspired the Polyphonists and made their own work possible.



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## 54 THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG

There never was a time when an appreciation of the value of the melodic idea was so urgently needed as in the present, but our legitimate grievances against some of the composers of the ultra-modern school must be sensibly weakened if we have only pointed them back to combinations of melodies as the earliest historic precedents in musical composition without getting behind all that to a system of music whose value lies in single melodies standing alone. If it be true that, in a sense, harmony is the accidental result of melodies in combination, it is equally true that all combinations of melodies rest upon a substructure of one-dimensional composition. Plainsong represents this root-form fully developed and carried to the point beyond which it must break down. Apart, then, from any practical value it may have, it must be accorded a place in the scheme of musical development. Moreover, it is possible that a study of Plainchant would lead to a higher appreciation of the subtle intimacy which can exist between words and notes, and this cannot fail to have a valuable influence upon the work of those who are called upon to illustrate in music the ideas of the poets or the eternal language of religious worship.

## THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG.

We have already seen that, so far from being a crude, undeveloped and unmeaning succession of sounds founded upon obsolete scales, Plainsong is a complete and developed vehicle of emotional expression, nobly simple in its syllabic forms, intensely subtle in its ornate phrases, and full of artistic devices within the limits of its own melodic construction. We are conscious that it throbs with rhythmic feeling; that its passive notes are enlivened primarily by the laws of verbal accentuation, and secondarily, in melodic ornaments, by the ascertained rules of musical stress and non-stress—of *arsis* and *thesis*, as they are termed in technical phraseology. It has this in common with the masterpieces of every age that its means are concealed in its effect. We now go on to see how far the rhythmical devices characteristic of Plainchant may be translated into instrumental language and applied to that instrument which by long tradition and continuous practice is pre-eminently associated with the accompaniment of Christian worship—the organ.

Now it is impossible for the author to conceal his own strong conviction that the instrumental accompaniment of Plainsong is artistically

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indefensible. It is foreign to the whole structure and meaning of the Chant, which is purely vocal and one-dimensional. Accompaniment in parts involves those who resort to it in two difficulties. In relation to music as a whole, Plainsong represents the accumulated result of Monophony—of one note at a time—which lies at the root of everything pertaining to tonal art. To combine other notes with a Plainsong melody, therefore, is to strike a blow at the foundation of its being. Moreover, to add something instrumental to that which is completely and exclusively vocal is to introduce an incompatible factor. That a writer can be found who is willing to take the accompaniment of Plainsong for his subject is a standing witness to the fact that, for the present, we have lost almost all touch with the monophonous idea in music. Yet not quite all, for the vocal cadenza still survives in some of the great classical songs. In these cadenzas—when all accompaniment ceases, and the voice floats off in an orgy of sheer melody unhampered by any considerations of accompaniment or of added parts—we have a survival of pure monophony and the exact counterpart of the root idea underlying melismatic Plainchant. It is impossible to imagine an audience being called together to listen to a plea for adding accompaniments to the purely vocal cadenzas in the classical songs, nor could the advocate of such a practice ever hope to get safely away from his infuriated hearers. Yet the monophonous character of Plainsong is so little realized to-day that a treatise upon its instrumental accompaniment is often regarded quite seriously:

Now that so many excellent reasons have been given for the non-existence of this essay, it

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may be well to state at least one on the other side. That reason is a very simple and practical one. It is that Plainsong accompaniment is in operation, and has been in operation in some form or other ever since the beginning of the Middle Ages. The official introduction of organs into churches seems to lie somewhere between the years 657 and 674, and it will readily be understood that at first they were not very good instruments. It is not at all certain that the organ was used accompanimentally from the first moment of its introduction; but even if it were so used the great bulk of the Plainsong melodies were already well established before that time, so that the limitations of the accompanying instrument could have had no effect upon the form or growth of the Chant itself. But it can hardly be doubted that the clumsiness of the early mediæval organ must soon have affected the light and rapid execution of the already existing Chant, for it is obvious that delicate shades of phrasing could not have been reproduced very faithfully upon an instrument whose keys were struck by the fist. And it is to this unpromising period that we must go for our first glimpse of an added part to the unisonous melodies. That added part appears at first to have been nothing more than a drone bass after the manner of the bagpipe; the accompanist placed one fist safely down on a note which would serve as a foundation and then did his best for the melody with the other fist. When the foundation note became intolerable he altered it, and this feature is characteristic also of the earliest type of part-singing, where we find a Plainsong melody sustained by one grave voice holding for a greater or less time a given foundation note.

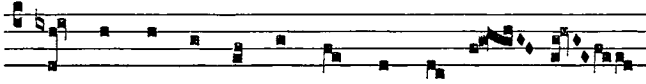
## 58 THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG

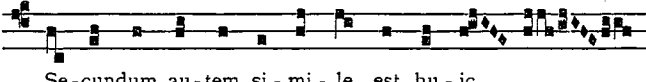
The name given to this type of singing—*organum*—points to the fact that it was an imitation of the accompaniment proper to the organ. Later on this added part acquired more movement, and went in contrary or parallel motion to the Plainsong. There is an eleventh century MS. at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in which the second, fifth and eighth stanzas of the *Kyrie rex splendens* are provided with a discant, and there we have the earliest known example of anything approaching real counterpoint. Unfortunately, that particular MS. is in neumatic notation, so that any transcription of it must be largely conjectural. But there is enough evidence to show that many of the early attempts to accompany Plainsong either instrumentally or vocally were rather more scientific than the unvarying succession of fourths, fifths, or octaves associated with the name of Hucbald. It is much to be wished that someone would thoroughly investigate the whole question of Hucbald's *organum* to see if some kind of canonic imitation could have been intended or not. The present writer is strongly suspicious about the whole matter, for if Hucbald intended that the fifth above and the fourth below should be sounded at the same moment as the note of the Plainsong melody, he was strangely at variance with the ascertained practice both of those who went before him and of those who came after. If canonic imitation were not intended—and of course that theory does land us in insuperable difficulties—then a possible explanation seems to lie in the suggestion (which is advanced with great diffidence) that the added fourths and fifths were originally the result of

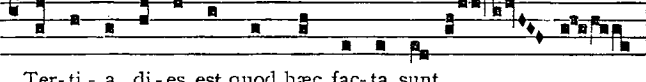
## ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 59

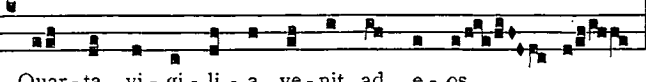
playing the melody in single notes on the organ, the instrument itself being provided with rudimentary mixture work which gave the added sounds. This explanation of the problem is not inconsistent with what is known about the history of organ tone, for it is generally believed that mutation work was introduced to brighten and to accentuate the quality of the unison rank.

But we must pass on to the practical question of the accompaniment of Plainsong at the present day. To begin with, we must remind ourselves that the Eight Modes are only the result of practical groupings on the part of the singers, and that in themselves the Modes possess no harmonic significance whatever, and no sense of individual "atmosphere." Let us examine the types of the Modes drawn up by the mediæval singing masters:—

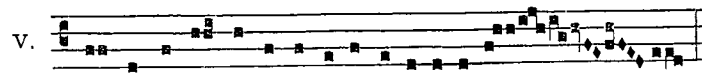
I.   
Primum quæ - ri - te re - gnum De - i.

II.   
Se - cundum au - tem si - mi - le est hu - ic.

III.   
Ter - ti - a di - es est quod hæc fac - ta sunt.

IV.   
Quar - ta vi - gi - li - a ve - nit ad e - os.

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V. 

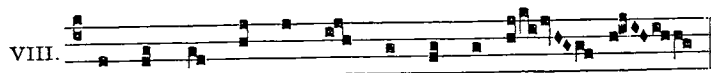
Quinque prudentes in-traverunt ad nuptias.

VI. 

Sex - ta ho - ra se - dit su - per pu - te - um.

VII. 

Septem sunt spiri-tus an-te thronum De-i.

VIII. 

Oc - to sunt be - a - ti - tu - di - nes.

All these are nothing more than vocal exercises based upon the melodic characteristics or mannerisms of the various modal groups. If we examine the words of them—

- I. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God ;
- II. The second is like unto it ;
- III. This is the third day since these things were done ;
- IV. He came unto them in the fourth watch of the night ;
- V. The five wise virgins went in to the marriage ;
- VI. At the sixth hour He sat over the well ;

### ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 61

VII. Seven are the spirits before the throne of God ;

VIII. Eight are the beatitudes ;

we find nothing beyond the sanctified humour of the mediæval quasi-mystic attempting a series of Scriptural puns upon the numbers, and failing rather dismally in No. II. There is certainly no suggestion either of melodic or of harmonic atmosphere; so that any classification of these types which may be attempted must leave that idea out of account. But if these typical melodic phrases are examined analytically it will be seen that they fall into four main groups. Modes I. and II. have D for their final, Modes III. and IV. end on E, Modes V. and VI. on F, and Modes VII. and VIII. on G. If the variations in the positions of the clefs be allowed for, it will be seen at a glance that the second of each pair of modal exercises ranges rather lower than the first. But still these are melodic characteristics, and they only affect the accompanist in so far that he must possess the singer's knowledge of the melodies before he can hope to accompany them with ease. And the one great harmonic inference which may be drawn from these modal exercises is that because every note in each of them is taken from the diatonic scale of C, with B flat as the one allowable accidental, therefore the materials of their accompaniment must also be drawn from a corresponding diatonic source. We need not stop to justify this conclusion, because its propriety is generally accepted now. For it is self-evident that in order to be appropriate, an accompaniment must have its materials drawn from the same

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source as the notes of its melody. To include in some parts notes which cannot possibly appear in another part is to set up a feeling of incongruity, if not of technical false relation. But what is called "modal accompaniment" has been such a bugbear to many an innocent student that one would gladly forego the name in order to secure the thing.

We can actually secure everything that is meant by the term "modal accompaniment" by limiting the materials of our harmonies to the notes of the diatonic scale with the flat seventh as an additional note, and this simple household prescription will enormously simplify the mental labour involved in harmonizing the Plainsong melodies when they are transposed either up or down to suit a particular set of voices. In fact, the term "modal accompaniment" seems to convey so erroneous an idea of the Plainsong modal system that it would be better to supplant it by the simpler term "diatonic accompaniment." And if it is once realised that all the notes of every Plainsong melody can be emptied out, so to speak, upon the notes of any diatonic scale with only a flat seventh added, we shall find that the accompaniment of Plainchant in strict style is not a matter of insuperable difficulty. The one rule of importance to be borne in mind is that which enables us to treat the final note of a melody correctly. It is obvious that to secure a feeling of real finality, we must have the octave below the melody note for the bass of the concluding chord. In Modes I., II., III., and IV. the final chords will be minor; in Modes V., VI., VII., and VIII. they will be major—not because of any academic rule, but merely because of the

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requirements of the diatonic scale from which the materials of the accompaniment are drawn.\*

But the materials of our accompaniment must not be everything. Modal or diatonic accompaniment can be heavy and dull, and it can obscure the meaning of the chant almost as disastrously as does chromaticism, though in another way. We may adhere closely to the notes of the modes, and may use only common chords and first inversions after the manner of the strictest text-books, and yet the accompaniment will be a hindrance if it is not rhythmical. It is because the writer believes the rhythmical accompaniment of Plainsong to be so little understood and so enormously obscured beneath the current phraseology about modality, that he proposes to direct every one of the musical illustrations to that side of the question.

We will begin by taking the simple hymn melody to *Jam lucis orto sidere*, which has already been examined. It is purely syllabic, and its rhythm depends entirely upon the verbal accentuation of its words. In the voice part the verbal accents are marked by increased stress, as in speaking; on the organ we could only secure an exact counterpart of that by opening the swell shutters for the strong syllables and closing them on the others, a device which may at once be dismissed as intolerable. So we are driven to the other device of punctuating

\* It is urged, not infrequently, that in accompanying a First Mode melody it is often desirable to introduce an F sharp into the final chord, so that the last note may be harmonized on the chord of D major. The practice of the Polyphonic composers is quoted in support of this, as well as the fondness of Bach for the "Tierce de Picardie" in the concluding chord of a minor passage. The obvious rejoinder is that neither Bach nor the Polyphonists were pretending to write organ accompaniments to Plainchant melodies. They were engaged upon constructive composition, and were as free to evolve their own harmonic devices as is any modern writer who produces a fantasia upon an old theme.

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the verbal accents by a change of bass when they occur. The following transcriptions into modern notation use the quaver to represent the notes of the Plainsong and the crotchet to represent all notes which are subject to any pause or *rallentando*; this is in accordance with the practice of the Continental authorities:—

Jam lú - cis ór - to sí - de - re, Dé - um pre -  
 - cá - mur súp - pli - ces, Ut ín di - úr - nis  
 ác - ti - bus, Nos sér - vet á no - cén - ti - bus.

There are several points in this harmonization which call for remark. The first is, that in order to secure the effect of strength on the second syllable of line 1, we begin the hymn with bare octaves; next that at the beginning of line 2 the writer of the hymn has obligingly written *Dé-um* instead of *De-úm*, so that we can appropriately begin that line

### ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 65

with a new chord, though that is a feature which applies only to this particular verse; then we secure effect of stress on the second syllable of line 3 in the words by keeping the preceding weak syllable on the same bass as that upon which the previous line ends. It is not very good, of course, to have a new bass for the final syllables in lines 1, 2, and 4 of the words, but it seems unavoidable, and in any case the difficulty would disappear with an English translation of the text, as the final syllables would then have emphases of their own. It will be noticed that on those three chords the bass moves nearer to the melody, and the more we compress our outside parts the weaker the effect will be.

The two points most open to criticism lie in the third line of the music. On the first syllable of *ác-ti-bus* it is more convenient to continue the C in the bass, though it has already been used for the preceding strong syllable; you may overcome the inherent weakness of this by thickening in the chord or by adding the pedal on *ác-ti-bus*. There is an excellent example of the use of the pedal for syllabic accentuation in the *Benedictus* of Sir George Martin's Communion Service in C. He takes the word "Hosannah" on the same chord, but in order to secure the predominance of the second syllable, he thickens in the accompanying chord and adds the pedal upon it, thus:—

Ho - san - nah, Ho - san - nah,  
 etc.

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But to return to our melody. There is a remaining weakness to be pointed out in that we have a new chord on the weak syllable *Nos*, at the beginning of line 4 of the words. That seems unavoidable, but if it be thought that this weak syllable is too heavily treated we could leave C in the bass and place F in the tenor, so as to give bare fourths just for the one syllable. But it would look like ugly part-writing in relation to the chord which follows it, and it is the kind of thing one would rather play than write down. Still, whatever criticisms may be made upon this harmonization, it does reflect the rhythmic accents inherent in the words and transmitted by them to the melody, and therefore it is the least mischievous form of accompaniment which can be devised.

Let us now consider another melody harmonized on similar lines. It is one of those already analysed at an early stage, and it is transposed down a minor third from its original seat; hence the key-signature of its harmonization is A flat instead of C:—

To Thée be - fóre the clóse of dáy, Cre - á - tor

of the wórlđ, we práy, That with Thy wónt - ed

Detailed description: This block contains two systems of musical notation. Each system consists of a vocal line on a treble clef staff and an organ accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat (F major/D minor). The first system covers the lyrics 'To Thée be - fóre the clóse of dáy, Cre - á - tor'. The second system covers 'of the wórlđ, we práy, That with Thy wónt - ed'. The organ accompaniment features a steady bass line with chords that support the vocal melody.

### ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 67

fá - vour Thóu Would'st bé our Gúard and Kéep - er nów.

Detailed description: This block shows a musical score for the text 'fá - vour Thóu Would'st bé our Gúard and Kéep - er nów.' It consists of a vocal line on a treble clef staff and an organ accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat. The organ accompaniment provides a harmonic foundation for the vocal line.

We will now turn to the Psalm Tones and see how far it is possible to reflect the binary and ternary rhythmic feet of the text in the organ accompaniment. We will take Tone I. first of all:—

#### TONE I.

1. O stá - blish thy wórd in thy sér - vant that í may

féar thee. 2. Be - hólđ, my de - light is in thy com - mánd - ments:

O quick - en me in thy ríght - eous - ness. 3. Só shall I

Detailed description: This block contains three systems of musical notation for 'TONE I.'. Each system has a vocal line and an organ accompaniment. The first system is for the text '1. O stá - blish thy wórd in thy sér - vant that í may féar thee.' The second system is for '2. Be - hólđ, my de - light is in thy com - mánd - ments:'. The third system is for '3. Só shall I'. The organ accompaniment is designed to reflect the binary and ternary rhythmic feet of the text.



### 68 THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG

ál - way kéeep thy lów: yéa, for év - er and év - er.

In this example it will be seen that the allowable B flat is sometimes used in the accompaniment. But here again it is the rhythmical setting out of the harmony which really matters, and it should be noticed that when the second half of a Psalm verse begins with a weak syllable, as in verses 1 and 2, the preceding chord is used again for it, and a new chord appears on the strong syllable which follows. In verse 3 the second half begins with a strong syllable, therefore it appropriately takes a new chord. Compare also the treatment of the Mediation (that is the inflexion at the end of the first half of the verse) in this Tone as it appears in verse 1 and again in verse 3. In the analysis of the Tones we saw that the use of the inflexion G—A was purely automatic; that these notes took the last two syllables of the half verse, whether they were strong or weak. But the harmonization must not be automatic; it should reflect the verbal accentuation.

Tone II. presents no new features except that in the Plainsong notation its reciting note is F, which is too low for ordinary use, so it is transposed up a minor third, and the signature of C consequently becomes that of E flat. Thus all the D's in the accompaniment are normally natural, because if the Tone were in its original seat B would normally be natural. But we may

### ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 69

also use D flat, because this note represents in a transposed condition the allowable B flat. In verse 3, where we end on an accented syllable and cut the mediation short in consequence, the D natural becomes a very useful note in the harmony and makes it perfectly clear that the second Tone is being accompanied, and not the eighth:—

#### TONE II.

1. O stá-blish thy wórd in thy sér - vant that í may

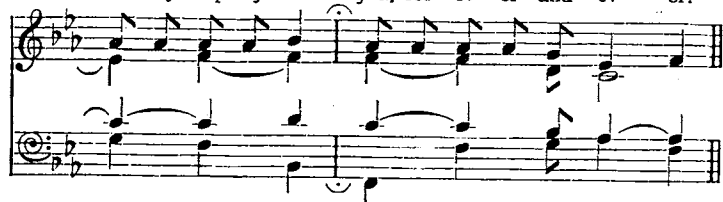
féar thee. 2. Be-hóld, my de-light is in thy commánd-ments:

O quick-en me in thy right-eous-ness. 3. Só shall I

E\*

### 70 THE TEACHING OF PLAINSONG

ál-way kéeep thy lów: yéa, for év-er and év-er.



We will take one verse of Tone VIII., which recites on C in the Plainsong notation. Here it is transposed down a major third, and the signature of C becomes that of A flat. So the G flat in the harmony is only the allowable B flat transposed a major third down also:—

#### TONE VIII.

3. Só shall I ál-way kéeep thy law: yéa, for év-er and év-er.



It is possible that when Tones II. and VIII. are transposed as above, so that A flat is the reciting note common to both, and we then find that D natural is possible in Tone II. but not in Tone VIII., and that G flat is possible in Tone VIII. but not in Tone II., the advocates of harmonic atmosphere in the Modes may think that they see a point of advantage. But obviously they will have left out of consideration the fact that these chordal differences in the harmonies of the Tones in question are not the result of modal atmosphere but only of

### ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 71

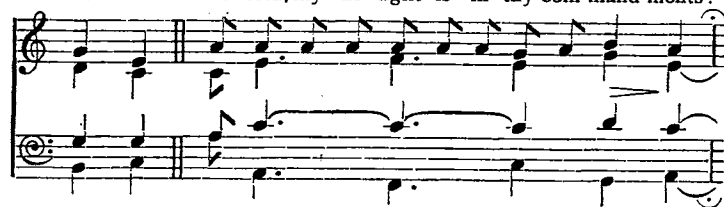
melodic transposition. We saw that Tone II. was transposed up a minor third, so that its reciting note became A flat instead of F. Therefore the introduction of G flat into the accompaniment of the transposed second Tone would really represent the interpolation of E flat if it were in its original position. Tone VIII., on the other hand, was transposed down a major third, so that the introduction of D natural would be equivalent to introducing F sharp into the harmony of the untransposed Tone. Therefore the suggestion of using the diatonic scale with the addition of the flattened seventh as a kind of common denominator to which the contents of all the modal groups may be reduced, will hold good, even through such apparent harmonic variations as have been pointed out. The harmonization of Tone IV. calls for no further remark:—

#### TONE IV.

1. O stá-blish thy wórd in thy sér-vant that í may



féar thee. 2. Be-hóld, my de-líght is in thý com-mánd-ments:



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O quick-en me in thy right-eous-ness. 3. Só shall I

Musical notation for the first system, featuring a treble and bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The melody is written in a simple, syllabic style.

ál-way kéeep thy lów: yéa, for év-er and év - er.

Musical notation for the second system, continuing the melody from the first system.

In the next harmonization, Tone V. is transposed down a minor third, so that it bears the signature of A instead of C:—

#### TONE V.

1. O stá-blish thy wórd in thy sér - vant that í may

Musical notation for the first system of 'TONE V.', featuring a treble and bass staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. The melody is more ornate than the previous piece.

féar thee. 2. Be-hóld, my de-líght is in thý com-mánd-ments:

Musical notation for the second system of 'TONE V.', continuing the melody.

### ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 73

O quick-en me in thy right-eous-ness. 3. Só shall I

Musical notation for the first system of the accompaniment, featuring a treble and bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The bass line is more active than in the previous piece.

ál-way kéeep thy lów: yéa, for év-er and év - er.

Musical notation for the second system of the accompaniment, continuing the melody.

Hitherto we have dealt with the accompaniment of syllabic Plainsong as used in metrical hymns and in the Psalms. The rhythmical treatment of the melodic phrases has been comparatively simple. We now have to deal with those specimens of the Chant in which melodic decoration appears. We found that, in analysing such melodies as *Ave maris stella*, there are two kinds of stress to provide for. First there is the verbal accent which safeguards the rhythm of the words, and then there is the secondary musical stress which gives life and meaning to the decorative notes. In the first line of the hymn there are three strong syllables coming on single notes, and three weak syllables fitted with two or more decorative notes, the first of each receiving a musical stress less intense than that given to the verbal accent. The plan adopted to provide an accompaniment for an example like this has been to change the bass on the verbal accent,

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but not upon the secondary musical stress when the latter falls on a weak syllable:—

A - ve, . . má - ris . . stél - la,

Dé - i Má - ter ál - ma, Át - que sém - per

vír - go, Fé - lix cáe - li pór - ta.

Thus the organ marks the primary verbal accent, but leaves the secondary musical stress alone, relying upon the voices to do justice to that. There is only a single exception to this plan in the above harmonization, namely on the last syllable of *stella* in line 1, where it is impossible to avoid changing the bass from D to A. This plan of marking the verbal accent on the organ and of leaving all secondary stresses to be shown only by the voices seems to be a perfectly sound one. But there is a certain school

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of accompanists on the Continent which holds that the organ should ignore the verbal accent in cases where it occurs in the neighbourhood of melodic decoration, in order to emphasise the subsidiary musical stress. The reason given for this contention is that "Nature requires that in a conflict between powers one be inclined to help the weaker." That sentiment is, of course, entirely admirable in some things, but if it were applied to musical accentuation as a whole it would inevitably lead to brain fever. And it seems to be entirely subversive of the root principle of Plainsong, which is to safeguard the verbal accent of the text, no matter how much melodic ornamentation there may be. We will notice one more example of a moderately ornate melody harmonized, so far as is possible, with a change of chord on the primary verbal accent instead of on the secondary musical stress, except where the two things collide, as they do on the words "fill" and "hearts" in the last line:—

Come, Hó - ly Ghóst, Cre - á - tor blést, Vouch-sáfe with -

- in our sóuls to rést; Come with Thy gráce and

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héav'n-ly aid. And fill . . the héarts which Thóu hast máde.

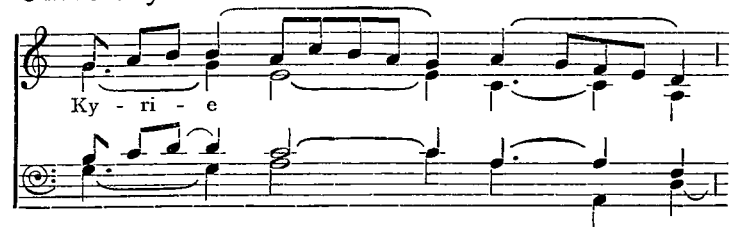


Now we will proceed to the accompaniment of a really ornate piece of Plainchant, the *Kyrie fons bonitatis*, and for this a slightly different version of the melody from that given in the former analysis is selected, because it enables us to see how these principles are being advocated by eminent European experts. This version of the *Kyrie fons bonitatis* is taken from the new Vatican Gradual which has given rise to several large books of accompaniments by various Continental organists. In this *Kyrie* we find a degree of melodic ornament very much in advance of anything which so far we have considered in these accompaniments. We find the words of the text occurring only at the beginning and end of the musical phrase, so that considerations of verbal accentuation are confined to the earlier and latter notes of the melody. All the intermediate section is taken up with pure ornamentation; the words temporarily disappear from view and are lost in the music. Therefore it is perfectly legitimate for the organ to take its rhythm from the notes at the point where the text ceases and to base its harmonic movements upon the musical stresses; indeed it must do this throughout the middle section in order to move at all.

The first harmonization is by Dr. Peter Wagner, director of the Gregorian Academy at Freiburg in

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Switzerland, and one of the professors at the University:—



The next harmonization is by Dr. Mathias, organist of Strasbourg Cathedral:—



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The next harmonization is by Dom Michael Horn, an Austrian Benedictine, and apparently he dislikes the look of the quaver, which he represents by a note of indeterminate character:—

Musical score for Dom Michael Horn's harmonization. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line with the lyrics "Ky - ri - e" and a piano accompaniment. The second system has a vocal line with the lyrics "e - le - i - son." and a piano accompaniment. The piano part uses various note values, including some that look like quavers but are written as longer notes.

The next harmonization is by Herr Max Springer, of Prague:—

Musical score for Herr Max Springer's harmonization. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line with the lyrics "Ky - ri - e" and a piano accompaniment. The second system has a vocal line with the lyrics "e - le - i - son." and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a more rhythmic accompaniment with many quaver notes.

## ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 79

The next harmonization is by Herr Franz Nekes, of Aachen, and you will notice that while he is more or less rhythmical, he introduces accidentals in two places without any great advantage being apparent:—

Musical score for Herr Franz Nekes's harmonization. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line with the lyrics "Ky - ri - e" and a piano accompaniment. The second system has a vocal line with the lyrics "e - le - i - son." and a piano accompaniment. The piano part is highly rhythmic and includes several accidentals (sharps and naturals) in the accompaniment.

In all the foregoing examples, except perhaps that of Herr Nekes, we find a substantial agreement as to the preservation of the verbal accent in the accompaniment, so long as the words last. But we must notice one more treatment of the same musical phrase in which a deliberate attempt is made to ignore the verbal accent in the organ part on the word *Kyrie*, in order to secure accompanimental weight on the subsidiary stress

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which falls at the beginning of the ornamental group on the second syllable :—

L. MANZETTI.

The method adopted to secure this effect is interesting. The first chord would necessarily indicate some amount of weight if the voices entered with it on a strong syllable. So the organ part is anticipated, and the voices enter after it is struck, leaving the accompanist free to give a new chord on the subsidiary stress. Thus the weaker thing is helped at the expense of the stronger; but it is impossible to avoid feeling that the result is fantastic, that it produces a conflict between the words and the accompaniment, and that it seems to subvert the fundamental law of musical rhythm.

In our survey of Plainsong from the accompanimental point of view we may summarise the melodies in three classes :—

- (a) The syllabic species, where textual accent alone determines the rhythm of the accompaniment;

### ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 81

- (b) The ornate species, in which the words often disappear so that we may follow the rhythmic stresses of the melodic ornaments themselves in determining the harmonic changes;
- (c) The mixed species, where textual accent usually prevails, so that subsidiary stresses may be left to the voices so far as is possible.

Of the three kinds the writer believes (a) and (b) to be easier than (c), and in some obstinate instances of the mixed species a free use of bare octaves will be found extremely useful. In the following harmonization of the *Dies irae* melody by Dr. Wagner we find this device made use of, possibly to an exaggerated extent :—

Day of vengeance! day of sor - row! Fie - ry.. morn that

Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la, Sol - vet sae - clum

knows no mor - row—Seer and Sy - bil's word to bor - row.

in fa - vil - la; Tes - te .. Da - vid cum Si - byl - la.

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Hear th'un-earthly . . cla - rion knell-ing Thro' dim vault and  
 Tu - ba mi - rum . . spar - gens so - num, Per se - pul - cra

char - nel dwell - ing, All be - fore . . the . . throne com - pel - ling.  
 re - gi - o - num, Co - get om - nes . . an - te thro - num.

Forth they bring the book - whose wri - ting, By its ter - ri -  
 Li - ber scrip - tus pro - fe - re - tur, In quo to - tum

- - ble in - di - ting, All the world with dread is smi - ting.  
 con - ti - ne - tur . . . Un - de mun - dus ju - di - ce - tur . . .

# ACCOMPANIMENT OF PLAINSONG 83

The altruistic type of accompanist avoids helping the stronger power at the expense of the weaker by opening the same melody thus:—

Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la,

So far, nothing has been said about the kind of registration which may best be used in playing these accompaniments. Nor will it be necessary to deal with this point, because the printed accompaniments explain themselves. It is obvious that they are based upon the idea of a soft and unobtrusive background; they would be impossible on large-scaled unenclosed diapasons, or on reeds of any kind. Such registration as is likely to draw attention to the accompaniment is to be avoided.

There is no real necessity for Plainsong accompaniments to be invariably of the four-part type. In the actual performance of any of the foregoing melodies, when sung by a competent choir, the author would not hesitate to omit duplicating the singers' notes on the organ, and to play merely the undercurrent of three-part harmony which would be left. Nor is there any reason why the melody should always appear in the topmost part. In the accompanying of Psalms a certain amount of inversion is both legitimate and agreeable. But all these things are merely variants of the root principle laid down. The main point to be remembered is that the player is accompanying words rather than notes.



