Achille P. Bragers (1934)

CHAPTER III.

PLACEMENT OF THE CHORDS
IN RELATION TO GREGORIAN RHYTHM

Gregorian melodies can be analyzed as to their rhythmic structure in its smaller divisions (binary or ternary) from group to group, or in its larger form, embracing the whole phrase, generally referred to as greater rhythm. We presume that the reader is familiar with these theories. The general rule governing the harmonic support is: Only the notes having the *ictus* will receive the chord. There are rare instances where a harmonic movement outside of the *ictus* may be tolerated for the purpose of producing a smooth counterpoint. Although the *ictus* note is the only note receiving the chord, it should not be understood that *every ictus note* needs this harmonic support. On the contrary, this would produce a heaviness hindering the free flow of the melody. The placing of the chords will thus depend greatly on the character of the *ictus note* itself and its position in the phrase as a whole. The *ictus notes* may be classified as strong or weak. The *strong rhythmic ictus notes* which generally call for a harmonic movement are: (1) those having length such as the dotted *punctum*, the *pressus*, the *bi-stropha*, the *tri-stropha*, *ictus notes* with *episema*. (2) *Ictus notes* forming the *neums* of an *arsic* nature such as the note preceding the *quilisma*, and the second note of the *salicus*.

The *weak ictus notes* are those not included in the classifications above, and which in most cases could proceed on the harmonies of the preceding strong rhythmic point. These weak *ictus notes* are usually found in stepwise progression of ascending or descending *neums* of more than three notes. In compositions in which the character of the text has been fully preserved, we generally find that the atonic syllables (those having no primary or secondary accent) have been melodically treated with corresponding weaker rhythmic *neums*.

This first mode melody illustrates some of the strong and weak *ictus* notes described above. The S (strong) indicates the notes generally receiving a