



St. Alphonsus', Grand Rapids, MI

## OPEN LETTER TO ANTIPHON

### Dear Monsignor Mannion:

As chairman of the editorial committee which produced *The Adoremus Hymnal I* was intrigued by the essay-length review of our hymnal by Father Anthony Ruff, O.S.B. in the Fall 1998 issue of your admirable publication *Antiphon*. Unfortunately Father Ruff makes a number of assumptions about the intentions of the editors which are either incorrect or, in some important cases, correct but which indicate a serious difference of opinion to which I would like to respond.

*The first category of incorrect assumptions includes things which Father Ruff assumes we intended and praises us for having achieved when in fact we did not intend such results.*

Perhaps it is quibbling to say so but we did not intend to place the emphasis on "ritual music." We intended to place the emphasis on the Church's formal teaching on "sacred music" and to use those suggestions about congregational singing which the Church has put forward explicitly since 1958 in *De musica sacra et sacra liturgia* and which it repeated, with some modification, in *Musicam sacram* (1967). The fact that we share something in common with the "ritual music people" of the Milwaukee Report is interesting but should not obscure the serious differences the editorial committee (all members of the Church Music Association of America) has with the rest of their agenda. This is why we did not use the term "ritual music."

However I am still confused about what the reviewer's true position is. On page 26 he praises us for employing "ritual music," and for being a part of the "growing consensus across ideological boundaries on the importance of singing *the* liturgy rather than singing *at* the liturgy." He then seems to reverse his position by chastising us on page 30 for saying that "in an authentic "sung Mass" (*Missa Cantata*), priority is given to the liturgical texts intended to be sung." Notice that we did not say hymns are *forbidden* as sub-

stitutes for the propers during a sung Mass but that, following Vatican II, *Musicam sacram*, and what I thought was the reviewer's own position on page 26, *priority* should be given to the actual texts. If we did not think that the substitution of hymns for propers was allowed and even necessary in many cases currently we would not have produced a hymnal for use at Mass.

The reviewer also praises us for the "ecumenical dimension" of our hymnody which came as a bit of a surprise to me since when we were compiling the hymns we wanted to stress Catholic identity. Of course a number of the hymns came out of Protestant sources originally but have since lost their specific "Protestant character." There are also many hymns such as "Hail, thee festival day" (#414) or "Komm Gott Schoepfer" (#442) which were created by Protestants but which in text and/or tune ultimately came out of the Roman rite. We were in essence "reclaiming" these hymns. I suppose it is due to this misunderstanding that Father Ruff "question(s) the ecumenical appropriateness" of Father Richard Wojcik's text in #562 "Round Peter's chair may all unite; From blinded eyes the veil withdraw." I am sorry but if we believe Papal Primacy to be true it logically follows that those who do not are "blind" (probably in most cases not culpably) because they do not "see" the truth.

As for what we mean by "standard English," I would offer this definition: "the formal English spoken and written today outside of the influence of academic, governmental, and church bureaucracies." Of course since people today do not say "thee" and "thou" the traditional hymns would fall into the category of "traditional religious English." In regard to the issue of not altering traditional texts, the editors were fully aware that "Hark! the herald angels sing" was originally "Hark, how all the welkin rings" and that many hymn texts have been altered in the past. There is a considerable distinction, however, between the natural evolution of individual hymn texts through the centuries and the systematic attempt over the past 20 years to bowdlerize virtually all hymns of so-called "sexist" language and traditional religious English expressions.

Father Ruff raises the issue of the paucity of contemporary hymnody in the *Adoremus Hymnal*; and since several other people have asked about this, I think this would be a good time to respond. The purpose of the *Adoremus Hymnal* in regard to hymnody was to provide a small core repertoire of traditional hymnody. It was meant primarily to shore up the tradition and with the short amount of time we had to produce the hymnal it would have been next to impossible to hunt down many truly worthy contemporary hymn texts. When time comes for a second edition we will be in a better position to do this, and I would appreciate any suggestions.

*A second category of assumptions includes things the reviewer incorrectly assumes (or suspects) we intended and for which he chastises us.*

The most important of these is that we deliberately and with malice of forethought did not include any responsorial psalms and included only a few Alleluia/Gospel Acclamations. Again, I have to plead lack of time. Each of the three editors has other employment and the amount of details involved in producing the kind of hymnal we did was incredible. We had intended to begin work on a separate "musical lectionary" which would have included all the appropriate responsorial psalms and Gospel acclamations but this was put on indefinite hold by the publisher due to the then nebulous status of the the NAB lectionary and the rumor that Rome might not continue to permit alternative lectionaries, such as the more traditional RSV. We may begin work on this project in the near future but that is up to the publisher. At any rate, the decision to exclude responsorial psalmody was purely practical. There was no sinister ideological agenda behind it.

Also non-ideological were the omission of the rubric for distributing the cup to the faithful and the alternative words for "brethren" at the *Orate fratres*. These were simple mistakes, although I do think that "brethren" is an excellent enough word.

As to Father Ruff's statement that the chant organ accompaniments "in many cases follow the imaginary (sic) ictus" he is almost right. The organ accompaniments follow the ictus in *all* cases. All three members of the editorial committee are devotees of the

Solesmes method in regard to chant rhythm. His assertion that the music should just follow the “natural text accents” would seem to put him in the camp of Dom Pothier along with my editorial predecessors Dom Ermin Vitry and Monsignor Francis Schmitt. Indeed the relationship between music and text has often been a vexed one and there have been several memorable disputes in the history of opera. However, the fact that people go home singing the arias and not the recitatives should caution against viewing the success of Gregorian chant as due to it being a heightened form of text declamation. To be sure, the relationship between text and music in chant is a close one, but ultimately “Mistress Music,” to use Dom Gajard’s term, gets the upper hand.

Another point about chant has to do with our decision to employ the traditional square note notation. Originally two-thirds of the editorial committee recommended using the traditional notation only for the much simpler responses and acclamations but not for the Ordinaries. The publisher vetoed our recommendation saying that the chant notation adds to the “sacral look” of the hymnal and that the rudiments of chant notation can be picked up in fifteen minutes. While that is true as far as it goes my concern was that even though the rudiments of chant notation can be picked up in fifteen minutes most Catholics in charge of buying hymnals for a parish today (pastors, music directors, liturgy committees, etc.) would not know that and would immediately reject the hymnal with the comment “it’s all Greek to me,” and move on to another hymnal. In addition to this, picking up the rudiments of chant notation and becoming fluent are two different things.

However, after the publisher’s decision, I comforted myself with the thought that modern notation is used for all the chants in the organ edition and that the CD’s provide recordings of all the chants which will help people learn the music. Perhaps the extensive use of chant notation will inspire Catholics to once again learn to read square notes, something many Catholic school children and all priests were taught little more than a generation ago.

On this matter, I must confess that I am completely nonplused by Father Ruff’s claim that “four-line notation is a late-nineteenth century reconstruction ...” The invention of the four-line staff goes back to Guido d’Arezzo in the 11th century and with the attendant square note heads has served as the form of musical notation for official liturgical books ever since. Granted there have always been slight variations (e.g. Solesmes’ dotted punctum and vertical episema were innovations) but the basic four-line staff and square note heads have been used consistently from the medieval manuscripts through the printed post-Tridentine *Medicean Gradual* up to Benziger’s 1964 altar edition of the Roman Missal which I came across recently tucked away in the cupboard of a parish sacristy. Even Anglican John Meerbecke’s English chant in his *The Book of Common Prarie Noted* (1550) uses the four-line staff and square notes. The first official liturgical book I know of to employ modern notation is the 1965 Roman Sacramentary published by Catholic Book Publishing. I am in full concord with Ignatius Press that such notation is an icon *par excellance* of sacred music, I just hope that for the sake of hymnal sales more Catholic liturgical musicians are inspired to learn to read it than currently are able.

***The final category of assumptions which Father Ruff makes are ones in which he correctly assesses the editors’ intentions and on which he seems to have substantial philosophical disagreements with us.***

Father Ruff is quite correct in assessing that we are “traditionalist church musicians.” We intend to promote the theology of sacred music developed by 20th century popes and enshrined in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Father’s claim that the three qualities of sacred music central to this theology are not specifically listed in Sacrosanctum Concilium is disingenuous. The introductory article of Chapter VI states that the church admits all types of music into the liturgy “which have the *requisite qualities*.” (emphasis added) Since those qualities had been consistently identified since Pius X’s 1903 motu proprio as “holiness, artistry, and universality,” all men of good will (standard English) should be able to infer what the Council Fathers meant by “requisite qualities.”

Interestingly, Father Ruff admits that the instruction *Musicam sacram* (1967), which was meant as a specific implementation and clarification of Chapter VI of the liturgy constitution, mentions these qualities by name. However, he tries to undercut this fact in two ways: first, by claiming that the qualities were mentioned only due to some last-minute political maneuvering of “traditionalist church musicians;” second, by making much of the fact that “universality” is not mentioned. As to the first claim, the fact that people have to maneuver to state the truth usually means that other people are maneuvering to prevent the truth from being stated. As to the second claim, Pius X himself said that “universality” comes naturally when the first two qualities (holiness and artistry) are present, so it probably was not felt necessary to mention it — however a footnote at this point refers to article 2 of the *motu proprio* which does, of course, mention “universality” along with the other two qualities. Also one has to actually read what Pius X means by “universality” to see that, properly understood, it in no way conflicts with inculturation — properly understood (but that is another article).

As for the distinction between the Proper and the Ordinary not being operative anymore, I concede that point. Certainly the terms are not used in the General Instruction to the Roman Missal and there does seem to be “a different principle of organization” in that document, but that just proves the extent to which influential liturgists succeeded in promoting their reforms in the new Missal above and beyond anything the Council Fathers actually called for. At the beginning of his review Father Ruff says that “many people are curious how the recently-founded Adoremus organization understands liturgical renewal” and that “this hymnal provides an apt opportunity to examine its work.” In an article for the August-September 1996 issue of *Catholic World Report* entitled “A Reform of the Reform” Father Joseph Fessio, S.J. co-founder of Adoremus is quoted as saying that “(t)he ‘practical and immediate’ goal is to take the liturgy as it is today in its approved form and *try to promote its celebration in a way that is in continuity with previous liturgical tradition.*” (emphasis added) This celebrating of the current liturgy more in the light of tradition could be seen as a hallmark not only of Adoremus but also of the *Adoremus Hymnal*. This is not unlike the “re-catholicizing” of the liturgy promoted by *Antiphon* but goes beyond the recovery of an ethos to the recovery of a concrete historical praxis.

I hope that this has clarified any questions about the *Adoremus Hymnal* raised by the review.

Sincerely,  
KURT POTERACK, Ph.D.