

# THE MUSICAL SHAPE OF THE LITURGY

## PART III: THE SERVICE OF READINGS

Music gives the various liturgical acts of the Mass each a characteristic style; at the same time, it articulates and expresses its overall shape. This is the sense in which Gregorian chant is intimately connected with the liturgical action;<sup>1</sup> this is one reason the Second Vatican Council declared Gregorian chant to be the normative music of the Roman rite.<sup>2</sup> The musical shape of the Gregorian Mass as a whole was the subject of the first part of this article.<sup>3</sup> On the grounds that the living tradition is the best school of the liturgy, the Gregorian Mass as traditionally practiced until the council was essayed, and the reforms subsequent to the council were evaluated as they brought about an alteration of this shape.

As a general principle, the parts of the ordinary of the Mass constitute various liturgical actions in themselves, while the propers serve to accompany other actions, specifying through music the character of these actions. However, this description is inadequate for one group of chants — the gradual, alleluia, and tract. They far exceed the small amount of ceremonial which takes place during their singing. They can be seen as a musical complement to the lessons which precede and follow them. Yet from their earliest history, they have been considered self-sufficient parts of the service of readings, and in fact they are the most extensive and elaborate chants of the Mass. They deserve closer attention, both in their musical function and their relation to the rest of the service, both in their history and in their practice.

This is particularly important, since one of the options of the new missal is to eliminate these chants, replacing them with what is called the responsorial psalm. While the missal states that the chants of the *Roman Gradual* are the first choice and this responsorial psalm is second, the liturgical books printed in this country, whether official books for the celebrant and ministers, or hand missals of various sorts for the laity, give only the responsorial psalm.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the gradual has gone the way of the Roman canon, and has been effectively replaced by the second choice,<sup>5</sup> and this on the grounds of restoring an earlier and more authentic practice.

How does the history of the service of readings establish a precedent for this replacement, and what does it show about this service when sung with Gregorian chant from the *Graduale Romanum*? What conclusions can be drawn for the practice of the liturgy? First a few principles concerning the nature and the use of historical knowledge will be established. Then a sketch of our knowledge of the early history of this part of the Mass will be made. On this basis an interpretation of the shape of this service and of the functions of its various parts will be essayed. Finally some practical solutions will be suggested.

History is not a science in the sense that the natural sciences are. The natural sciences proceed by reasoning and experimentation to determine laws which have a universal validity. There is little question that under similar circumstances, similar results will be obtained, since the general validity of the law is understood.

History, on the other hand, deals with facts and events and the explanation of



their causes. Its primary knowledge is factual, and beyond the extant documentation, the facts cannot be further determined by experiment. The events of history are often the result of the most disorderly concurrence of causes, causes which can no longer be isolated and tested or verified. Among the causes must be included the exercise of the free choice of the human will, the results of which cannot be reduced to confirmable law.

Further, the knowledge of any particular event is at the mercy of the vicissitudes of time, since the documentation can at best be partial, or worse, fragmentary. The knowledge of the causes of historical events is contingent upon the preservation of the documentation; but it also depends upon the imaginations and viewpoints of modern interpreters. For the ancient and medieval periods, the sparsity of documentation is such that the discovery of new facts may radically alter the state of knowledge, and may spark a new interpretation which is diametrically opposed to older ones. The history of liturgy and its music is no exception, and the interpretations of the liturgists and musicologists are sometimes highly speculative at best, or worse, in the service of misconceptions or even polemical purposes.

One of the greatest difficulties in the history of the liturgy is that for a certain period only the texts survive. Priest-scholars, accustomed to reciting the office from the breviary and saying low Masses, understandably have been most interested in the history of the texts, and much liturgical scholarship does not get beyond it.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, a liturgical rite is an integral act in which the elements of music, gesture, vestments, and the like play a decisive role, and relate one to the other in specific ways. Some liturgical actions are definitely determined by their texts; for others, the text is almost an afterthought. The task of the historian of the liturgy, then, must include the synthesis of all of the significant elements in an understanding of the total rite.

What documentation is there of the liturgy and its music from the first millennium, and what conclusions can be drawn from it? The first stage of documents consists of incidental mention of psalm or hymn singing and of the lessons upon which sermons were based, and record of the official institution of specific practices.<sup>7</sup> Two sorts of mention of singing are of interest; 1) there are occasional references to singing "in a melodious tone,"<sup>8</sup> and to ornate methods of singing;<sup>9</sup> both of these are from the Eastern church. There are occasional mentions of the singing of psalms before the gospel in the sermons of St. Augustine (354–430).<sup>10</sup> This seems to have included a response repeated by the people, at least in some cases. For four of these St. Augustine cites the texts of the refrains.<sup>11</sup> Curiously, only one of the texts cited by Augustine occurs in the Gregorian repertory, on Wednesday of Passion week. St. John Chrysostom (d. 404), however, cites two psalm refrains, which must have been well known in the Eastern church: "Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus," on Easter Sunday, corresponding to the same text for the gradual for Easter Sunday universally sung in the Western church; and "Oculi omnium," also found in the earliest Gregorian repertory.<sup>12</sup>

St. Augustine documents the division of roles in the service of readings in the following way: "audivimus apostolicam lectionem. . . . , audi psalmum . . . . , audistis et evangelium;" "we have heard the epistle, I have heard the psalm, and you have heard the gospel."<sup>13</sup> The conjugation of the verb articulates the parts of a long sermon in which the three parts of the scripture receive commentary successively; it designates obliquely the assignment of the



epistle to another reader, the psalm to the congregation, and the gospel to the preacher. Nevertheless, the choice of the verb places the emphasis upon hearing rather than doing.

The introduction of specific pieces into the liturgy is often documented. For example, Gregory the Great (590–604) is said to have extended the alleluia to the whole year except for Lent.<sup>14</sup> There seems to be no record of the specific introduction of the gradual or the tract, and they have often been assumed to have been an inheritance from the synagogue by way of the Christian church in Jerusalem. The presence of the two texts given by St. John Chrysostom in the Gregorian repertory suggest some specific link to the popular responsorial psalmody of the East; on the other hand, the absence of most of the texts given by Augustine raises the question of the continuity between accounts of popular responsorial psalmody and the graduals of the Gregorian repertory.

It might be objected that this argument bases itself only upon the continuity of the texts, and in a time when the texts were not fixed, this does not necessarily disprove a continuity of musical practice. That may be so, but there is no direct extant evidence of the continuity of the musical practice at all, and so the asserted relationship of popular responsorial psalmody and the Gregorian repertory remains unproven.

The next stage of documentation consists of a series of liturgical books for the services. The *sacramentaries* contain the prayers of the celebrant of the Mass. The earliest manuscripts date from the seventh century, but some are thought to contain material dating back to the pontificate of St. Leo I (440–461).<sup>15</sup> *Lectionaries* contain the texts of the lessons to be sung; these date from the seventh century on, with contents going back as early as the fifth century; they show that much of the Roman cycle of readings was fixed toward the end of the sixth century.<sup>16</sup> *Ordines* are books with specific rubrics for the services; while they give no specific texts, they prescribe in detail the course of the service. They are the earliest sources for the specific rubrics for the singing of the graduals and alleluias. The oldest of them dates from ca 700;<sup>17</sup> by this time the gradual and alleluia are intoned by the soloist, and the choir sings the respond. *Cantatoria* are books with the specific texts of the gradual, alleluia, and tract; they provided the texts to be sung by the cantors. The earliest of these is from the late eighth century.<sup>18</sup> *Graduals* without melodies, showing all of the proper chants date from the beginning of the ninth century.<sup>19</sup> Both these books show a fixed order of texts, but yet no record of the specific melodies. *Tonaries*,<sup>20</sup> provide lists of the proper chants, grouped according to mode. The earliest of them is dated circa 800. These books document the use of specific texts, and the designation of mode is a witness to some musical continuity with notated chant repertories.

The first sources which give any musical notation date from the very end of the ninth century and from the beginning of the tenth. They are graduals and antiphonaries written in staffless neumes,<sup>21</sup> and while they provide no pitch notation, comparison with later notated versions verifies that they are essentially the same melodies. At the beginning of the eleventh century the pitches are identified in one manuscript by alphabet letters placed beside the staffless neumes;<sup>22</sup> other manuscripts give lines to the neumes, definitely prescribing the pitches,<sup>23</sup> and it is only a short step to the square notation by which the chants are still notated.

Thus, there is certain documentation of precise melodies only from the end of



the ninth century. It is assumed that these are not newly composed melodies, and that there is a considerable continuity of melodic tradition, perhaps back to the time of Gregory or before. However, the existence of another whole repertory of chants for the Roman liturgy, now called old Roman chant,<sup>24</sup> whose melodies are slightly simpler but obviously closely related, raises the question of whether there was some systematic reworking of the repertory which produced the chants we now call Gregorian. Some scholars place this event in the Carolingian empire, and rather late.<sup>25</sup> Bruno Stäblein has proposed the third quarter of the seventh century in Rome, and gives convincing arguments for this.<sup>26</sup> In any case, there are no extant melodies which surely represent the responsorial psalmody mentioned by the Fathers.



The tentative nature of the conclusions which can be drawn from this material might best be illustrated by citing three conventionally held viewpoints, and demonstrating how recent scholarship has suggested revision of them. These three concern the biblical precedents for the alleluia and their survival in the liturgy, the structure of the lessons and chants in the early liturgy, and the nature of the practice of melismatic psalmody.

It has been thought that the responsorial singing of the alleluia was prescribed in the very texts of the psalms themselves, for a number of psalms give “alleluia” either at the beginning of the psalm text, or at the beginning and end. Where it is not given at the end, it is taken for granted that it is to be sung at the end. Thus, the present method of singing the alleluia — alleluia, psalm verse, alleluia — is viewed as a survival of that practice. Ewald Jammers, in his recent study of the history of the alleluia,<sup>27</sup> has pointed out that there are rather two different indications in the book of psalms. One is for the last few psalms of the psalter, Ps. 147–150, and includes an alleluia at the beginning and the end of the entire psalm. They are the psalms assigned to Lauds, an example of which is found in Ps. 150 of the Lauds of the Easter Vigil of 1956.<sup>28</sup> The greater number of psalms consistently show an alleluia only at the beginning; these are the Hallel psalms, 104–106, and 110–117. This manner of performance is also to be seen on Holy Saturday. The alleluia of the Mass is intoned by the priest and repeated by the people (on Holy Saturday, three times, each time on a higher pitch); the first verse of Ps. 117 is sung (recalling the *Haec Dies*), followed by the whole Ps. 116. The alleluia serves to announce the beginning of the psalm. The only response is the immediate response of the people. Given the historian Sozomen’s account that the alleluia was sung in Rome only on Easter,<sup>29</sup> this is most likely the sole surviving alleluia which shows a continuity with the responsorial practice of the scriptures. Jammers points out that the continuity suggests even the Last Supper, when the Hallel psalms would have been sung. How ironic it is in view of this information that the new *Graduale Romanum* prescribes that the alleluia be repeated at the end of the psalm verse, and the complete psalm 116 is omitted. In order to restore a hypothetical primitive practice, the only surviving example of the real practice is altered.

A common conception which has been claimed as precedent for the new lectionary is that there were three readings in the early church, one from the Old Testament, an epistle and a gospel, and that the two chants were placed one after each of the first two lessons. Upon closer scrutiny, the historical precedents fall apart however. Emil J. Lengeling, in his article “Pericopes” for *The New*

*Catholic Encyclopedia*,<sup>30</sup> summarizes the historical documents for the order of the lessons. It seems clear that the sequence Old Testament, epistle, gospel was never a consistent feature of the Roman rite. Certainly by the time of the extension of the alleluia to the whole church year, the sequence of lessons was clearly fixed at only two. The evidence cited for the separation of the chants is the ember days, when several lessons are sung, each followed by a chant. These are special cases, however, like Holy Saturday, where the pattern is that of vigils and not of the Mass, and they cannot demonstrate what the pattern might have been for other days. Further, on festive occasions, when three lessons are found, for instance on Christmas (still to be found in the Dominican liturgy), the two chants still follow together upon the second lesson. It is true that other rites had more than two lessons, many more, but the pattern of three lessons with the two chants separated is insufficiently documented.

A third example is a more general one: the nature of the chants in melismatic psalmody. It has always been understood that the graduals, alleluias, and tracts were pieces which were passed on by oral tradition. Further, the excellent analyses of the process of centonization made by Ferretti<sup>31</sup> have shown the formulaic character of the chants. Yet the function of formula in the context of oral tradition has not been understood. By oral tradition it has been assumed that the innumerable pieces have been passed on note for note, and retained by a monumental feat of memory. It has been suggested that the reason the chants were notated was that they had become, by a process of gradual development, too elaborate to be remembered. The corollary of this is that they are now overly elaborate and ought to be simplified.

Leo Treitler, in two recent articles,<sup>32</sup> has attempted a more thorough understanding of the nature of oral transmission by emphasizing the fact that oral transmission is tied to the formulaic nature of the pieces. He applies concepts of the formulaic and communal composition and oral transmission of a work which were developed by scholars of middle European and Homeric epic poetry.<sup>33</sup> The formulaic process allows the repertory to be seen in simpler terms. Each piece is the unique application of that set of formulae to the particular text at hand. Given this understanding, the process of melismatic psalmody makes sense as a manner of delivering the various psalm texts to be sung by a soloist. The continuity of this practice with Hebrew practice suggests its antiquity. Although the precise form of the extant pieces may not antedate their fixation in notation by very much, the soloistic and formulaic process in the pieces is undoubtedly quite old.

This argues strongly against Gelineau's thesis about the gradual chants — that they are overly elaborate, and must be reduced to the simplicity of a psalm tone.<sup>34</sup> The currently widespread singing of the responsorial psalm to the psalm tones of the office, then, is totally unhistorical. The characteristic tones of melismatic psalmody suit soloistic delivery. The office psalm tones suit common choral recitation of the psalms. To transfer the tones of the office psalms, whose function is to allow a simple delivery in choir for the individual singer as prayer, to the gradual of the Mass, whose function is the melodious delivery of the psalms to listeners, is a drastic and utterly fundamental error of the confusion of quite different purposes.<sup>35</sup>

There is another issue concerning the history of the responsorial psalm and



the people's participation in it. The practice of the early church is held up as a model of popular participation, and the singing of the gradual chants by the choir as a corrupt, late practice, which robs the people of their rightful share in the singing of the Mass. Yet the telling of the whole story casts a different light upon the matter. The simple fact is that at the time when the popular participation in the responsorial psalm is documented, the Mass commenced with the first reading. There was no introit, *Kyrie*, or *Gloria*. All that the people had to sing was one paltry response at the psalm! A Gregorian Mass today, in which the people sing the ordinary and the choir and soloists sing the propers, favors the people much more. What the people sing is more substantial, is conducive to a more stable practice, and can make use of much finer music.<sup>36</sup>

There is yet a further twist. In the hope of restoring an ancient practice, an entirely new one has been created. Now that the texts of the responses and the verses have been printed, so that the parishes will burst forth in song, what do they do? They obediently recite the texts without melody. A new genre has been created — recited psalmody, more exactly, spoken song.<sup>37</sup> This is something hitherto unknown in the solemn services of the Roman rite; it is as if a Protestant church were to speak the texts of the hymns without tunes. The obvious absurdity of the latter suggests what the defect is in the former: a musical practice cannot be created by prescribing a set of texts and hoping someone will set them to music. Text and music in the liturgy have always grown up together; pieces have always been assigned to the liturgy as total text-music entities. This is true for the psalms in the office, this is true for the hymnody of the Protestant churches, this is true for the graduals of the Mass. It would have been better to have paid closer attention to those authentic pieces we have than to grasp at the straw of the non-existent congregational responsories.

What can be understood of the existing Gregorian repertory as a received practice, illuminated by historical and analytical information? The first purpose of the study of its history should be to understand the nature of the existing traditional practice; the first purpose of analysis should be to understand how it actually works, to reflect upon its elements and their relationships, and in fact, to embody these understandings in the performance of it. This will now be essayed for the service of readings.

The gospel forms the high point of the service of readings. Each part of this service is given a musical setting which at once specifies and furthers its own function, and at the same time plays a role in leading to the gospel as the high point.

The singing of the service as a whole provides the musical basis upon which the difference of styles becomes apparent. The smooth movement from part to part is easily accomplished. In addition, while the singing of all of the texts leaves room for inflection and declamation, its elevated tone suits the dignity of the solemn service, and preserves the declamation of the texts from idiosyncratic, arbitrary, and exaggerated styles of emphasis.<sup>38</sup>

While all of the lessons are from the scriptures, all of the books of the scriptures are not alike, and the tones used for the singing of these lessons differ in certain respects as the books differ. These tones distinguish three kinds of lesson, the prophecy, the epistle, and the gospel:





Durandus<sup>39</sup> distinguishes Old Testament lessons from New, and points out that, while the cadences of the Old Testament lessons descend, those of the New Testament rise. Further, as I have pointed out, there is a certain harshness in the tone for the prophecy by the juxtaposition of the tritone in the two cadences, and something of the character of prophecy in the trumpet-like interval of a fifth.<sup>40</sup> I have recently observed that when this tone is sung in a resonant church, it is the half-step downward cadence which also has a harsh quality; the recitation tone grows and rings full upon repetition, and lasts through the singing of the half step below it, creating an internal cadence which is somewhat dissonant; the opposite effect can be observed at the final cadence, and in fact, the lower note of the fifth can be perfectly tuned to the over-ring of the upper, resolving the sense of dissonance created at the mid-cadence. These features are probably not consciously noticed in the hearing of the lessons, yet when given some attention by the singer, they can enhance the singing of the prophecy.

The epistle tone has a persuasive, rhetorical quality that the others do not have; this is because it makes more use of the cadence of the text, that pattern of accents which closes the clause or sentence. The cadence is one of the most important elements in the rhetorical delivery of a text. This is particularly so in Latin, where the qualities and kinds of cadence are thoroughly and carefully controlled by the authors. Each cadence consists of two accents, each with one or two unaccented syllables following. These accented syllables which constitute the acknowledged articulation of a Latin phrase receive a musical definition which is melodic enough to add a pleasant and persuasive quality to their delivery. The working of these cadences is partly due to the periodic construction of a Latin sentence — it is end-oriented; that is, words essential to the meaning occur at the end of the sentence; the important words and the emphasis of the musical cadence coincide. The form and the content thus reinforce each other, and the integrity of the thing is beautiful.<sup>41</sup> The termination has a finality that is given a strong emphasis by the use of an alternate recitation tone which reverses the movement of the other final cadences: in the body of the lessons,  $c \rightarrow b$ , at the termination,  $b \rightarrow c$ . Often this corresponds well with the final sentence of the lesson which can be a strong summarizing line or a concluding exhortation.

The gospel rightly deserves the position of honor among the lessons. It represents a culmination of all that was in the Old Testament, and the rest of the New Testament is its application. But it is more than that. On a literal level, it records the very words of the Lord which He spoke. On a figurative level, moreover, the liturgical presentation of the gospel constitutes the presence of Christ Himself, the Word, Him whose mere Word is sufficient unto salvation, as the faith of the centurion recounts in the gospel, "say but the word . . .," and as the communion prayer reiterates. It is perhaps due to this unique sufficiency of the Word that the tone for the gospel is the simplest, allowing for the most direct delivery of the very words which are the words of salvation. The high honor due



to these words in the liturgy comes about by their being placed at a point of culmination, and while they themselves remain simple and direct, the liturgical activities which surround them constitute a setting in which they themselves hold the place of honor. Thus the crown into which the highest jewel is set is the context of chants and ceremonial. Let us consider first the chants, both in themselves and as they contribute to the whole shape, and then the ceremonial.

Just as the liturgical use of the lessons recognizes different functions in the tones to which they are sung, so also the tones to which the psalms are sung recognize the unique character of that book. Whereas the lessons discussed above have the support of music in their delivery, the psalms are more essentially musical pieces. They are in their very origins the texts of liturgical music. Their received texts include titles, now unfamiliar to us, which are understood to have named the tune to which they were to be sung. While the melodies to which they are sung have undergone development and revision, they are now, nevertheless, the normative melodies to which those psalms are to be sung. There are different melodies according to the liturgical use of the psalm, which range from simple recitative to elaborate melisma.<sup>42</sup> Whereas in the Mass, the psalmody generally accompanies another action, this is not quite so for the gradual chants. They must be seen as more than accompaniment.<sup>43</sup> In fact their use in the Roman liturgy of the classical period illustrates that they constituted something like a reading out of the scripture. Before the time of Gregory the Great, the singing of the gradual was reserved to deacons, on the same grounds as was the singing of the gospel — the reading of the scripture was the function of the ordained clergy.

This has been understood by some scholars of the liturgy, who have yet made the mistake of taking the text alone as constituting the liturgical act. For them to read the psalm text is sufficient to fulfill its liturgical function. Yet the history does not bear this out. In spite of the early inclusion of a people's refrain, the psalm verses were sung by soloists; indeed the tracts, whose pre-Vulgate texts attest to the continuity and antiquity of their practice, constitute solo singing of the verses only, without response. That this singing achieved a degree of elaboration must be taken for granted, and that by the time of Gregory, they were elaborate melismatic chants, as we know them now, though perhaps not in the final form in which we know them. Gregory the Great released the deacons from the duty of singing these pieces; he wished them to be chosen for their piety, and not for the beauty of their singing.<sup>44</sup> His action has an interesting corollary: he thereby acknowledged the difficulty of the chants, and their desirability, and by his act he authorized their continuance. They remained the province of the minor clergy, and their character as lessons was thereby retained.

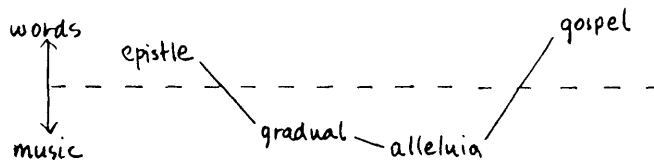
That the extant repertory of Gregorian gradual chants has a primarily musical function can be confirmed by analysis of the pieces. They show a feature not found to such an extent in any other of the chants; this is the marked use of end-melisma. In the tone for the epistle, the accent of the text determines the location of the few points of melodic movement; this is essentially true for the psalmody of the office as well. The principle can be seen in the other chants for the Mass, though to a lesser degree. The gradual, however, consists of any number of departures from the text in the placement of long melismae upon the final unaccented syllable. This is not for want of syllables, for the very melisma may be preceded by the recitation of several syllables on a single note.





If the gradual is characterized by such melismae, the alleluia is constituted by them. The jubilus, the long melisma on the final “—a,” is the most characteristic feature of the alleluia, and it is sung not once, but usually three times. These musical elaborations over the text and even away from the text are the glory of the Gregorian repertory and have their own proper function in the liturgy. While the contemplation of the literal sense of text is a part of hearing them, the hearer may be allowed to depart from that sense and be moved by the sheer sacred affect of the music. They are firmly rooted in the texts of the psalms, but they flourish far above the ground of that meaning.

This is the function of these chants, and while they are justified in themselves as creating a contemplative and sacred affect, they form a complement to the lessons as well. There is a subtle progression in the service which moves between more and fewer words:



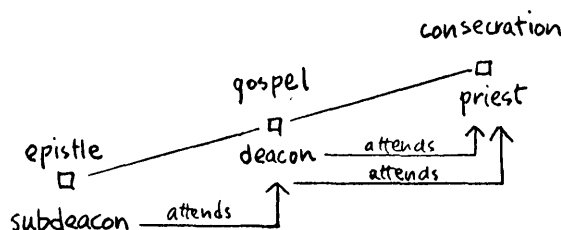
The most wordless piece is that which precedes the Word itself, and constitutes the best possible preparation for it. In the context of the gradual and alleluia the words of the gospel are fresh, the mind is at rest but attentive. There is a receptivity which is in the most spiritual sense of the word an excellent psychological preparation for hearing the Word.

Historically the gradual chants were themselves subject to expansion and elaboration. Ordinations were given between the gradual and alleluia (suggesting the alleluia is more a preparation for the gospel than a complement to the preceding lessons). From the repeat of the alleluia the sequence developed; from within the gradual and alleluia the polyphony of the Notre Dame era grew. In Germany vernacular hymnody developed as a paraphrase of the sequence, and the hymn *Christ ist erstanden* was sung immediately following the sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*. Bells were sometimes rung at the sequence, and the sequences themselves formed the point of departure for liturgical dramas. For the most part, these developments were eliminated after the Council of Trent, but they are symptomatic of the impulse to expand that already climactic portion of the service.

In addition to these musical elements, the whole context of ceremonial supports the pre-eminent position of the gospel. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this is the way in which the rank of the clergy reflects a hierarchical relationship between the parts of the Mass. The two parts of the Mass as a whole can be seen as each culminating in a central act, which is in a special way the presence of Christ. The first is the gospel, where Christ is present in his own words. The second is the consecration, where He is present in His Body and Blood. The sacramental presence is the greater, and it is effected by the priest. The presence in the gospel is the lesser and is preparatory to the sacramental one; its minister is the deacon. By this hierarchical assignment of ministers, the relationship between these two parts of the Mass is characterized. The relationship between the two lessons within the service of readings is reflected similarly;

the sub-deacon reads the epistle — a lesser ranking minister reads the minor lesson.

These relations are made more visible by the fact that the lesser minister attends, or accompanies the higher. Thus, the sub-deacon sings the epistle essentially by himself, while the deacon and priest remain in their places. The deacon then sings the gospel, attended by the sub-deacon, while the priest remains in his place. For the Mass of the Faithful, the priest goes to the altar, and he is attended by both the sub-deacon and the deacon:



This sort of relationship would not be clear if the deacon did not sing the gospel, or if a minister of lesser rank did not sing the epistle. In fact, it was central to these two orders, since the rite of conferring the sub-diaconate included the presentation of the book of epistles, and that of the diaconate, the gospels. There was, then, a specific reason for the order of sub-deacon; it was a liturgical one, and its ability to set a kind of third dimension to the ranking of the clergy gave the solemn Mass considerable shape.

The relationships among the ministers at a solemn Mass is one which is projected and clarified by movement. It has been fashionable recently to claim a role for dance as a liturgical art, on the scanty precedent of David's dance before the Ark or certain extinct customs of the Mozarabic rite, and then to experiment with expressionistic para-liturgical dancing, either at the gradual or the offertory. Now dance is an art which orders bodily movement to a purpose; but the liturgy already has its arts of movement. These are the orderly movements of the ministers and the acolytes; they involve certain fixed formations, configurations which differ for each part and differentiate it from the others. The motions are largely those of moving from position to position, though some are purposeful motions in themselves. Incensation is one of these; its rhythm is regulated on the lowest level by a well-known measure of time, the pendulum. The censor can be swung only with a regular motion, and this motion is very carefully choreographed in the books of rubrics. While no steps for the feet are prescribed, the motion of the censor is, and the priest's other motions follow it naturally and rhythmically. The motion of the individual is thus clearly delineated.

The motion of acolytes is another matter. It would not do for them to march in step, and, in general, the music to which they move is committed to other purposes than helping their movement. Rather, the movement of acolytes is simply controlled by symmetry. They are deployed in pairs, and in general they move two-by-two, symmetrical to the central axis of the sanctuary or to some other focal point. I have observed a single acolyte serving Mass, and have been dismayed at how amorphous and purposeless his motions seemed, only to have

him joined by a second, who moved in complementary fashion to him, and the combined motion was orderly and beautiful. Symmetry is an essential feature of the delineation of sacred space. When motion is added to symmetry there is a delineation of a sacred action. These motions are not the highly cultivated steps of a ballet, just as the singing of the lessons is not the highly articulated recitative of opera; rather, they are ordered to the shape and purpose of the whole. For all the talk by the theorists of opera of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a synthesis of the arts, this had already been going on for centuries in the traditional liturgy.

The location of the singing of the gospel contributes to its pre-eminence. The history of this place is somewhat complicated, but it was essentially a matter of finding a rationale for considering what might conventionally be considered a pre-eminent place. The final solution was to the right of the celebrant as he faced the congregation. This is a practice which still has a secular significance in seating honored guests at the head table of a banquet to the right of whoever presides. In churches which were “oriented”<sup>45</sup> the gospel side was the northern side, and an additional significance was attributed to this location: the North represented the cold territories of the unconverted, to whom the gospel must be addressed; thus it was sung facing slightly northward.<sup>46</sup>

In the liturgy of the *Ordines Romani*, the gospel was sung from an ambo, a kind of pulpit with several steps leading up to it.<sup>47</sup> The progression to the gospel was made clear by reading the epistle from a lower step, singing the gradual and alleluia from the higher step, but yet not the highest, and only the gospel from the top of the ambo. This gave the psalmody sung upon the step (*gradus*) its name, gradual.

A kind of progressive elevation is given even to the gradual itself, according to Durandus, when the entire responsory was repeated. The repeat of the responsory was to be sung by the choir at a pitch a step higher than the first time.<sup>48</sup> This is seen today in the progressive elevation of the alleluia on Holy Saturday.

A distinct location for the singing of the gospel provides the occasion for a procession to the place. The procession is preceded by the deacon’s receiving a blessing from the priest, and saying his own preparatory prayer. The procession is accompanied by acolytes bearing candles and incense. The gospel book is incensed, and signs of the cross are made; the book is held for the deacon while he sings the gospel. The congregation stands as a sign of honor to the presence of the Word, just as one stands when a distinguished person enters a room. The book is venerated by the deacon upon completion of the reading.

All of these ceremonial activities set the gospel as the high point and give it a place of honor. In turn similar ceremonies honor the Eucharistic presence of Christ, and some are more extensive, setting the Eucharist as worthy of even greater honor. The two ceremonies take a formation appropriate to their different characters: at the gospel the motion and the formation is basically in the direction of proclamation, whether it be facing the congregation directly or partly northward. At the consecration, the motion is altar-ward and the formation suggests a more hieratic order.<sup>49</sup> They are accompanied by the following: 1) candles, two at the gospel, six at the consecration; in each case the candle is a sign of the presence of Christ; 2) incense, more frequent at the consecration; 3) a person of higher rank performing the consecration; 4) each is the occasion of a tone of simplicity in the midst of complexity, silence, in the case of the consecra-



tion; 5) if the people kneel, each is accompanied by a change of stance for the congregation; the kneeling is a more notable change, since it is used for the first time in the Mass at the consecration.

What alterations to this pattern are to be found in the *Novus Ordo Missae*? The question of language aside for a moment, there are two significant ones. One is the addition of the third lesson and the interspersing of the gradual and alleluia chants between the lessons. While the historical precedents for this are largely unacceptable, the practice as a simple innovation has something to be said for it. The duration of the service is lengthened a little, and the sense of climax is mitigated somewhat by separating the gradual and alleluia; however the movement from prophecy to epistle to gospel creates its own sense of progression through the three levels of those readings. The overall effect is to make the service of readings a bit more weighty and a bit less agile.

The other is the reordering of the tracts during Lent and Holy Week, particularly those for Holy Saturday. Much of the reordering of the pieces of the *Roman Gradual* seems arbitrary and useless; nevertheless, with some exceptions, it does not affect the shape of the service, since like pieces are exchanged for like. For Holy Saturday, the assumption seems to have been that all of those pieces based upon the mode eight tract melody are interchangeable. Thus the new *Roman Gradual* calls for seven canticles in the tone of the mode eight tract, one of them borrowed from the depths of Lent. This overlooks several essentials of this service. It was a vigil service; four canticles were sufficient even when there were twelve lessons. Further the accustomed four canticles were a special application of that tract melody: they were called *cantica*, not *tractus*. The slight difference is reflected in the fact that they are the simplest use of these melodies, eschewing anything but the main melodic formulae; their verses are somewhat shorter than many mode eight tracts. With the background of having heard the longer and somewhat heavier tracts for the whole of Lent, these pieces take on a certain motion and familiarity that suits the unique Easter vigil. The insertion of too many pieces, or of some of a different character tends to make that portion of the whole service much too ponderous, and it thereby loses some of the anticipatory joy and motion which it formerly had. This can be easily remedied, since the rubrics call for chants from the *Roman Gradual* or other suitable songs; clearly the older usage of these tracts is preferable, and they are therefore to be taken as the other suitable songs, and can be used where they always have been.

The question of language poses a greater dilemma. The use of Latin for the lessons seems to be preempted by ecclesiastical legislation, even though the people may have translations at hand. Two other solutions have been used, each with its problems. One has been the solution at the Church of St. Agnes in St. Paul, Minnesota, where the Mass can be sung in Latin outside of the lessons. Here as well, the eloquent reading of experienced lectors and clergy compensates for the lack of a sung tone. There is, however, some loss of continuity, and the festive character of the solemnly sung gospel. The other solution is to attempt to sing the lessons in English. This has been the solution at St. Ann Chapel in Palo Alto, California, where a pastoral fiat left no choice but to have a Mass thoroughly mixed in language. The absence of the continuity provided by music was destructive to the shape of the service. The singing of the lessons in English was thought to be strange at first, and for some it remains so. Likewise, it must



be admitted that the epistle tone is not entirely satisfactory. However, the continuity and balance of the service as a whole has been thereby saved; the sung gospel takes its place as the culmination of the service of readings.

Finally, let us suggest some practical applications. The distinction between the gospel and epistle sides should be maintained. The Old Testament lesson ought to be read from the epistle side.

Where possible, in the solemn form of the Mass, three ranks of clergy should be used; the deacon should sing the gospel, and a deacon or vested lector the epistle. The difference of the Old Testament lesson from the epistle might be shown when a deacon sings the epistle by having the prophecy read by a vested lector.

A procession should be made to the gospel, including candles and incense. It should be timed carefully to arrive at the place where the gospel is sung as the repeat of the alleluia is completed.

The lessons ought to be sung, especially the gospel, even if it be to a simple recitation tone. If the lessons of a solemn Mass are not sung, at least the foresight of Father Jungmann in predicting the use of the vernacular over twenty years ago ought to be observed:

. . . the liturgical reading cannot long remain on the level of a prosaic recitation that looks only to the congregation's practical understanding of the text. The performance must be stylized, much in the same way as . . . for the priest's oration. The reader must never inject his own sentiments into the sacred text, but must always present it with strict objectivity, with holy reverence, as on a platter of gold. This can be done by avoiding every change of pitch — the *tonus rectus*.<sup>50</sup>

Care should be taken, in exercising the option of choice of versions of the scriptures. The liturgical proclamation of the scriptures demands the use of good English. The available versions should be compared for each pericope and judged on a long term basis; the historic versions should be included in this consideration. Ultimately, one version might be chosen and used consistently. On the other hand, one version might excel in the translation of a certain kind of book, and another in another. In any case the temptation to make a *cento* of several versions, taking the reading of one here, another there, should be resisted. A further consideration might be whether the congregation has a translation in the form of a missalette. Following a translation while another is being read is a certain distraction, and the benefit of the alternate translation must outweigh the potential distraction in the disparity with the one at hand.

Since the reading of scriptures is in some respects an exercise of the teaching authority of the Church, it is best if the lessons be read by someone in orders, or in his place, by someone who has been delegated, and whose delegation is shown by being vested in some fashion.

For certain churches or certain more solemn occasions, additional sequences might be sung. The rubrics of the *Novus Ordo Missae* require only three sequences<sup>51</sup> but admit others as optional. They must be chosen carefully, since among the vast number of sequences there is some divergence in quality.<sup>52</sup>

There are certain things to be avoided in the service of lessons. Avoid improvised, *ad hoc* solutions. Things must be weighed carefully and well practiced. The usage ought to be consistent from week to week. In the long run, erratic liturgical practices damage the credibility of the liturgy.



Avoid carrying the book in procession held high above the head. The Roman rite has its own manner of carrying the book, and that is at chest height. The practice of carrying the gospel book held high is borrowed from the Byzantine rites, where it belongs to the entire context of the rite. There the book and the priest have been behind the *iconostasis*, or icon screen, and have not been visible; it is a kind of manifestation there, and carried by a priest very solemnly vested.

Avoid *Ersatz* music. The mere writing of something in musical notation does not make it music. Even the simplest music must be judged by canons of liturgical art: does it confer solemnity upon the rites? Does it add delight to prayer?

WILLIAM PETER MAHRT

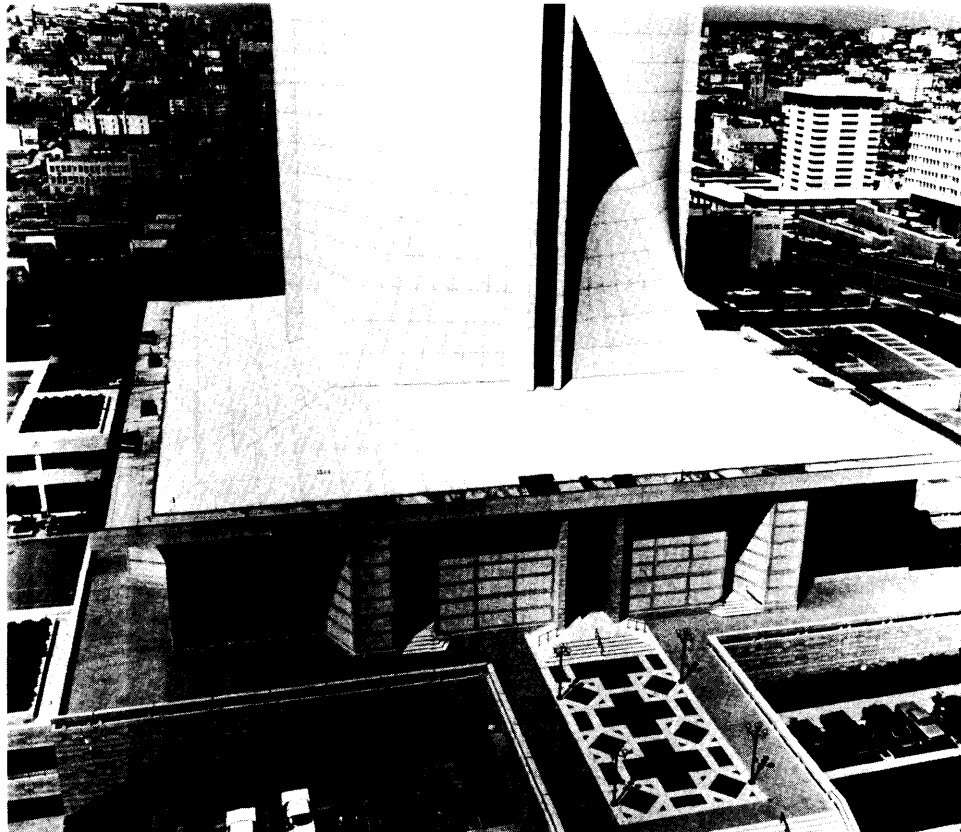
#### NOTES

1. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Article 112.
2. Constitution, Art. 116.
3. "Part I: The Gregorian Mass in General," *Sacred Music*, Vol. 102, No. 3 (Fall, 1975), p. 5–13.
4. In spite of the requirement that periodically issued hand missals should contain all of the options, I have seen no "missalette" which includes the texts of the gradual and alleluia from the *Roman Gradual*.
5. Even in sung Masses of some solemnity these have become the norm.
6. The special historians of music, architecture, etc. have their own limitations of point of view.
7. For a chronological listing of documents through the sixth century, see Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1958), p. 38–42.
8. Eusebius, cited in Gustave Reese, *Music in the Middle Ages* (New York: Norton, 1940), p. 62.
9. Cassian, cited in Peter Wagner, *Einführung in die gregorianischen Melodien, I: Ursprung und Entwicklung der liturgischen Gesangsformen bis zum Ausgange des Mittelalters*, Dritte Auflage (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1911; reprinted, Hildesheim: Olms, 1962), p. 33.
10. See W. Roetzer, O.S.B., *Des heiligen Augustinus Schriften als liturgie-geschichtliche Quelle* (Munich, 1930).
11. See Bruno Stäblein, "Graduale (Gesang)," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, V (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1956), col. 637.
12. Stäblein, *op. cit.*, col. 636–7.
13. Sermo CLXX (de Tempore, 49), *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 38, col. 926–933.
14. Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
15. See Henry Ashworth, O.S.B., "Sacramentaries," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, XII (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 792–800.
16. See Emil J. Lengeling, "Pericopes," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, XI, p. 129–138.
17. Their complete texts are edited and published in Michel Andrieu, *Les Ordines romani du haut Moyen Age*, 5 vols (Louvain: Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense, 1931–1956; reprinted 1960–1965).
18. The Gradual of Monza, published in René-Jean Hesbert, ed., *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* (Bruxelles: Vromant, 1935; reprinted, Rome: Herder, 1967).
19. Several published in Hesbert, *op. cit.*
20. Michel Huglo, *Les Tonaires—inventaire, analyse, comparaisons* (Publications de la Société française de Musicologie, 3e série, 2; Paris: Heugel, 1971).
21. Several are published in the series *Paléographie musicale* (Solesmes: Imprimerie Saint-Pierre, 1889–1937; reprinted beginning 1955).
22. *Le Codex H. 159 de la Bibliothèque de l'Ecole de Médecine de Montpellier (XI<sup>e</sup> siècle): Antiphonarium tonale missarum*, *Paléographie musicale*, Vol. 7, 8 (Solesmes: Imprimerie Saint-Pierre, 1901–1905).
23. Several of these are also published in *Paléographie musicale*.
24. An edition of this repertory is found in Margareta Landwehr-Melnicki, ed., *Die Gesänge des altrömischen Graduale Vat. lat. 5319* (Monumenta monodica medii aevi, II; Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1971); it contains an extensive introduction and discussion of the repertory by Bruno Stäblein. A general introduction to the repertory in English by Robert Snow is found in Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant*, p. 484–505.
25. For example, Richard Crocker, *A History of Musical Style* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), chapter 1.

MAHRT: READINGS



26. Bruno Stäblein, "Die Entstehung des gregorianischen Chorals," *Die Musikforschung*, XXVII (1974), 5–17.
27. *Das Alleluia in der gregorianischen Messe, eine Studie über seine Entstehung und Entwicklung* (Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen, Heft 55; Münster: Aschendorff, 1973), p. 30–39.
28. *Liber Usualis* (1956), p. 776kk.
29. Jammers, *Das Alleluia*, p. 10.
30. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, XI, p. 129–138.
31. Dom Paolo Ferretti, O.S.B., *Esthétique grégorienne* (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1938).
32. "Homer and Gregory: The Transmission of Epic Poetry and Plainchant," *The Musical Quarterly*, LX (1974), p. 333–372; and "'Centonate' Chant: Übles Flickwerk or E pluribus unus?," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXVIII (1975), p. 1–23.
33. Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).
34. Joseph Gelineau, S.J., *Voices and Instruments in Christian Worship*, translated by Clifford Howell, S. J. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1964), p. 193–199 and p. 161.
35. It is always amusing to reflect upon the incongruity of hearing the psalm tones of the office used for the gradual at Mass. Is this the result of all the reforms of the Council, and the consummate product of liturgical scholarship? Most church musicians have known this practice for a long time, but considered it a stopgap; it used to be called "Rossini proper."
36. I have been present at a service in which the introit was replaced by a hymn, the *Kyrie* was sung in English by the people, the *Gloria* in Latin by a choir, and the responses to the psalm by the people in English; both the *Kyrie* and the psalm response were set to such impoverished melodies that one could truly say that they had not been set to music — it conferred no solemnity upon the rites; it added no delight to prayer. If the people are going to sing, it must be music which they sing; this is for two reasons: 1) technically, poorly written material is *more* difficult to sing, and 2) the singing of *Ersatz* music cannot possibly provide the edification of true music, because that edification comes *intrinsically* from the beauty of the music, not just from the fact of doing it.
37. It is true that Protestant churches have practiced the "responsive psalm," and this may have suggested it to the reformers, for ecumenical reasons. This is a false kind of ecumenicism, for one of the greatest things we have had to offer the ecumenical dialogue is the beauty of our liturgy.
38. For instance, I have observed the words of the consecration said variously "This *is* my body," or "This *is* my body," or "This *is my* body," certainly a distraction.
39. Herbert Douteil, CSSp, *Studien zu Durantis "Rationale divinatorum officiorum" als kirchen-musikalischer Quelle* (Kölner Beiträge zur Musikforschung, LII; Regensburg: Bosse, 1969), p. 79.
40. *Sacred Music*, Vol. 102, No. 3 (Fall, 1975), p. 8.
41. Unfortunately, the adaptation of this tone to English is problematic; the English cadence is less regular and well-defined than that of the Latin, and the cadences are sometimes clumsy. English is, further, a language that is less periodic — its most important stresses come in the midst of lines; the coincidence of cadence and stress does not happen, and the integrity of the thing is threatened.
42. See William Peter Mahrt, "Gregorian Chant as a Fundamentum of Western Musical Culture," *Sacred Music*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (Spring, 1975), p. 7–10.
43. The German term *Zwischengesänge*, intervenient chants, is in this context certainly inadequate. Perhaps the term "gradual chants" might better express their function, since they were all originally sung from the step, and their function might yet be said to be that of a step-wise culmination to the gospel.
44. Wagner, *op. cit.* (n9), p. 87.
45. That is, it is situated so that the congregation and the priest, as they face the altar, face east.
46. Joseph Andreas Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, tr. Francis A. Brunner, 2 vols. (New York: Benziger, 1951, 1955), I., 411–419, discusses this history in detail.
47. See Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 86 for an illustration of an ambo.
48. Douteil, *op. cit.*, p. 90–91.
49. Mass "facing God" is still a legitimate option, and perhaps expresses the different emphasis of the consecration better than that facing the people; the basic impulse is an upward one, and the whole action of the canon is addressed to the Father, a form of address which is suitably emphasized by a motion and a focal point which directs the attention upward.
50. Jungmann, *op. cit.*, p. 409.
51. *Victimae paschali laudes*, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and *Lauda Sion*.
52. Not many are readily available in modern edition, though some are found in the Solesmes publications, *Cantus selecti* and *Variae preces*.



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# SACRED MUSIC

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