

Are we allowed to replace the Mass Propers with hymns? Should we? Professor László Dobszay answers in the below article, printed in *Sacred Music* (Vol. 130, No. 3, Fall 2003).

THE CHANTS OF THE *PROPRIUM* *MISSAE* versus *ALIUS CANTUS APTUS*

1.

What arrangement of the Mass chants emerges before the eyes of an unbiased reader of the Liturgy Constitution promulgated by the Second Vatican Council? If we disregard what happened *after* the Synod, and concentrate our attention upon the text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, this is the picture we receive.

The Mass is celebrated in most cases in Latin (Art. 36), although **some** parts (lections, bidding prayer : Art. 54) sometimes (when and where it seems useful) resound in the vernacular (Art. 36/2). The faithful are able to chant the responses, the acclamations and the Ordinary also in Latin (Art. 54, cf. Kyrieale Simplex). Gregorian chant has pride of place in liturgical singing (Art. 116). The chants of the Proper are sung by a choir or schola (Art. 114), from the *Graduale Romanum* in the great churches, and from the *Graduale Simplex* in the smaller ones (Art. 117); but the congregation, too, may join the Chant (Art. 114), singing psalms and antiphons (Art. 30). The chant is complemented by sacred polyphony taken from the heritage of sacred music, or from a repertory of new compositions. These take their texts chiefly from the Sacred Scriptures or the liturgical books (Art. 121), correspond at all points with the spirit of the liturgy (Art. 116) and are characterized by the hallmarks of a true ecclesiastical thinking (Art. 121) and by true art (Art. 112). Careful instruction has prepared the laity to take their part in liturgical singing, and so each part is sung by the very person concerned (Art. 28, 114), and yet in the way required by the nature of the given part (Art. 112). Congregational religious hymns are also accepted during the various devotions as well as in the liturgical celebrations “in keeping with rubrical norms and requirements.” However, in consequence of all these stipulations the meaning of ‘congregational hymnody’ has been changed: people sing not only vernacular hymns but also many parts that are integral compo-

nents of the liturgy. It therefore seems right to distinguish the **cantus populi** (the chanting of the people) from **cantus popularis** (popular religious songs). The first of these is plainly the task of present and future; it is the great task of the liturgical renewal in the field of congregational chant.

The Liturgy Constitution of 1964 was followed in 1967 by the Instruction *Musicam Sacram*, whose intention was to apply general principles to living practice. As a matter of fact, we can say that this Instruction describes essentially the same ideal set forth in the conciliar document. It retained the rules concerning language but in view of increasing demands for the vernacular, it explained those norms more broadly. The Instruction emphasized the recitations of the celebrant, ministers, and lectors; it recognized the choir and the schola; it made clear the fact that the very nature of the liturgy is justification for having some parts only listened to by the faithful, and that this practice does not contradict *actuosa participatio*. The 1967 Instruction re-stated the privileges of Gregorian chant in the liturgy. With regard to the congregation, the document again placed the dialogues, acclamations, psalms, antiphons, refrains and hymns in first position, whilst also acknowledging, in second place, the usefulness of **cantus popularis**. Finally, *Musiam Sacram* confirmed the norms enforcing the quality of sacred music, and the need for it to be worthy of the celebration and of the temple, whilst banishing from the church *expressis verbis* all instruments associated with a merely secular atmosphere. Unfortunately, however, detailed definitions are lacking. For instance, how is one to decide what is “worthy of the dignity of the liturgy,” or what can serve the “holiness of the temple,” or what kind of music should be rejected as unworthy, artistically inferior or “secular”? In other words, little direction is given on how to judge in concrete cases. History, of course, testifies that norms of this kind can scarcely be defined exactly, but even so, principles of a somewhat more detailed nature, along with corresponding guarantees, would surely have prevented the events which followed.

2.

The anthrax in the envelope was paragraph 32 of the 1967 Instruction. It says:

In some places there exists the lawful practice, occasionally confirmed by indult, of substituting other songs for the Introit, Offertory, and Communion chants in the *Graduale Romanum*. At the discretion of the liturgical or the competent territorial authority this practice may be retained, on condition that the songs substituted fit in with those parts of the Mass, the feast, season. The texts of such songs must also have the approval of the same territorial authority. (DOL 4153)

In plain language, this means that under certain conditions, other songs can be sung in place of the *Proprium Missae* or Mass Propers. The Instruction still seems to make a distinction by referring to the “other songs” as “substitutions.” But what is the exact meaning of “these songs . . . must be in keeping with the parts of the Mass” (Art. 36)? “Compatibility with the nature of the liturgical service” and of any given part, as a regulative factor for all music, is a recurrent theme of the Instruction. In these paragraphs of *Musicam Sacram*, “the nature of the liturgical part” (Art. 9, 34, etc.) is a criterion not only for the content, but also the form. For instance, characteristic of the Introit is its antiphonal structure, rather than a simple reading of it with a view to the start of the Mass. We recognize the Introit primarily by its being antiphonal. Now, if we concentrate upon this central fact we would naturally think that any substitution for the Introit should also be antiphonal, “according to the nature of the liturgical part.” But the Instruction is not clear about the will of the Consilium. And the second condition, approval of the territorial authority, is likewise ambiguous. What exactly is to be approved: the religious song itself, or its quality as a substitute for the Introit? This involves a great difference! Thousands of old chant books and hymnals were approved with respect to religious correctness (in faith and morals): the *nihil obstat* is displayed prominently in each

of them. Does that mean that the songs published in such a book can be introduced into liturgical use, for example to substitute for the Introit?

The General Introduction to the new Missal went a step further, by saying that the Proper chant (Introit, Offertory, Communion) may be a piece from the *Graduale Romanum* or the *Graduale Simplex*,—“**vel alius cantus aptus**”—or anything else which is appropriate. This sounds rather like the hoary joke about the *causa bibendi*, the rightful reasons for drinking: *dies natalis, infirmatis corporis, adventus hospitis, vel alia causa*—a birthday, bodily weakness, arrival of a guest, —or any other reason. One feels compelled to ask, what need have we of all other arguments, if “any other” reason suffices as justification? Why bother with the *Graduale Romanum* or *Simplex*? Why make any effort toward liturgical and musical education, if any “*alius cantus aptus*” is good enough to replace the Introit? In other words, the *Graduale Romanum* is no longer the norm. People have always sung something at this point in the service, and they will continue to do so. The crucial difference now is, that what was previously regarded as a “substitution” for the liturgical chant, will be regarded as equivalent to that chant, indeed as itself a “liturgical chant.” The goal of the reform was always not simply to sing “something” during the Mass, but to sing the Mass itself. And now, as an effect of the permission for any “*cantus aptus*,” the *Graduale* has *de facto* disappeared.

And in practice, the fact is that this rule of unlimited substitution swept away the Proper of the Mass. Moreover, it also effectively removed the norms which the Council had established for liturgical music in general. In recent times, no single territorial authority in the world has interfered in what is sung in the Mass—save that sometimes they protested against the traditional ecclesiastical chant. In the event any such territorial authority had actually intervened, there were no canons to which they could refer; had there been any such canon, they would have had merely legal power but no actual competence entitling them to take a stand on questions such as: what is secular, what is worthy of the liturgy, what is, and what is not in keeping with the parts of the Mass? And finally, if they took a stand, no one took notice of it. The fact is that in the universal Church today, it is only the caprice of the local priest, cantor or lay committee of the parish council (each changing from time to time, from person to person, from place to place) which determines what will be sung as the Introit of, for example, the Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

And experience reminds us that there was still another consequence. At the very moment in which the choice of chants is left in the hands of local personnel instead of the Church Universal, the standards of measurement change from objective norms to so-called “pastoral need,” which is but a euphemism for the real or imaginary taste of those present in the liturgy. And thus all demands upon, and norms governing *musica sacra* become illusory. No song can be rejected because it is unworthy of the liturgy, for the counter-argument is at once at hand: “Our people like it”; “This congregation favors it”; “The song is fitting for this age group”, and so on.

We have thus far spoken of the moral and musical disintegration of Catholic liturgical chant, a matter of no little import when we recall the majestic words with which *Musicam Sacram* explains that the sacred music of our own day should not be unworthy of the past (Par. 59). Now, however, we turn to an analysis of the question from the viewpoint of the liturgy.

3.

The concession **alius cantus aptus**, in fact, does not touch upon music alone: it carries away with the music the liturgical text itself. The General Instruction of the Missal is speaking not about the tune of the Introit in any musical setting, but about a concession to allow singing anything in place of it. Whilst the conciliar Liturgy Constitution prescribed that composers set texts from the Bible or the liturgical books, the Missal imprinted with the name of that same Council seems to be quite indifferent toward the

texts of the chants to be performed during the holiest and most canonical celebration in all of Catholic worship.

We can express this as follows: henceforth the Church entrusts no liturgical message to the chant. To put it another way: henceforth chant does not take part in the self-explanation of the liturgy. More rudely put: the chant is no longer an integral part of the liturgy. The past Council, of course, said the exact opposite: the music *qui verbis inhaeret necessarium vel integram liturgiae sollemnis partem efficit* (SC 112); the music which inheres in the words is an integral part of the solemn liturgy. With permission for the unregulated “cantus aptus,” chant ceased to inhere in the words (since these words can be anything), and ceased to be an integral part of the liturgy (since it does not carry the message of the liturgy determined by the Church).

As we know, the Roman liturgy took ninety percent of its Proper chants from the Bible, at least two-thirds of these from the Psalms. The gradual declension can be described in a (fictitious) series of steps:

- + At first, both Gregorian and Byzantine chant sang the psalm on a tune appropriate to both the textual structure and the liturgical situation.
- + The psalmody cites the liturgical text exactly, but the musical setting does not correspond perfectly to the shape of the words (e.g., mensurated melody, music directed by harmonies, or polyphonic arrangement).
- + The psalm is chanted in strophic psalm paraphrases, in the style of choral psalms or “Geneva” psalmody. Such paraphrases frequently deviate from the direct meaning of the words, and still more from the form connected so closely to the content; moreover, many things are added to the psalms. But the identity of the psalm remains discernible, and the verses are regulated by the sequence of ideas in the psalm. The Proper chants replaced by such stanzas can still be recognized.
- + Finally, the Mass Propers are simply replaced by strophic congregational hymns inherited chiefly from the Baroque or Romantic era. Plainly, this change produces no benefit in terms of liturgical singing, and the disappearance of the liturgical words which the priest, at least, had prayed earlier, is a serious loss. Such songs are a far cry from both the content of the liturgical text and the “nature of the liturgical part”: all liturgical singing is completely homogenized on the schemes of recent poetical forms, which are alien to the sphere of responses and antiphons mentioned in the Liturgy Constitution and the Instruction *Musicam sacram*, as well as to the free biblical prose. (Some hymns of this type simply violated all legal boundaries and replaced even the Ordinary of the Mass with such Baroque-Romantic “Mass-songs,” thus also sabotaging the musical realization of the liturgical renewal.)

In other countries, musicians attempted to create a new repertory of refrains to be sung by the congregation. These compositions to texts from the Bible or the liturgical books, fulfilled the desire for singing in alternation, in cooperation with the schola or cantor and congregation. Three objections, however, cannot be overlooked:

- a) The majority of the tunes themselves are forced and unnatural compositions. (The musical reasons can be analysed.)
- b) The texts are in most cases independent of the extant Proper chants, and they convey the message of the composer instead of the liturgy.
- c) The chief problem is that most of these compositions are rarely used, not merely because of their unattractive music but rather because of man’s innate desire to spare himself any pointless and unnecessary labor: why work so hard to teach new melodies and new methods of singing, if the well-known strophic hymns are of equal rank with the liturgical chanting?

New strophic hymns have also been composed. In some instances, fine textual elements (such as hymns of the Eastern Church, for example, or selections from classical Christian writers) have found a place in these newer hymns. But most of them remain

pale and diluted copies of Baroque-Romantic religious lyrics set to music which is but a variation on 19th century triadic clichés. From the liturgical perspective they share the same deficiencies we observed in the case of the inherited repertory of *cantiones*.

As the declension continues its downward trend, there follows cheap musical material adapted under the pretext of “folk traditions” (which in actual fact are known very little, or only superficially). I have explained in another study that the melodies in the actual “folk tradition” consist chiefly of secular music material or—in the best cases—paraliturgical popular repertory. The number of surviving ethnomusicological remains or “relics” which meet the standards governing liturgical use, is insignificant. But deep and careful analysis of such musical data can indeed call our attention to certain “universal” musical factors, attitudes and archaic forms which can also be instructive for church music.

Finally, the principle of *alius cantus aptus* has opened the door to light music, which at first was used only as a means of religious propaganda (similar to the usage of some sects), and then gradually penetrated into the liturgy itself. It should have been clear to everyone that we are dealing here with secular music, something far beneath the level of *verae artis formas* (SC 112), and with texts theologically cheap (if not heterodox) and independent of the message of the liturgy. The only argument put forth by its advocates, is its attractiveness to some groups of young people. But if the majestic principles of the Conciliar Constitution and the post-conciliar Instruction (both of which call for a music worthy of the sacred precincts of the Temple, worthy of the heritage of the past, etc.) did not, even in this instance, supply motives for the prohibition of secular music, then we are quite right in saying that the ringing phrases of ecclesiastical documents have no regulative force and indeed, no meaning at all. I have yet to hear any protest by ecclesiastical authorities against this destruction of sacred music, this abandonment of the musical dimensions of liturgical renewal . . .

And yet one reads glowing reports of how good even the very highest prelates feel today at hearing the juvenile music which resounds in the Masses of young people! Such is the real value of the vague “principles” which do not go beyond *quaedam sanctissima verba*, venerable but absolutely ineffective verbiage. This is the ultimate logical consequence of article 32 in *Musicam sacram*, and of those four small innocent words in the Missale Romanum: “vel alius cantus aptus.”

I do not claim that it would be easy or unproblematic to re-implant the Proper chants of the Roman Mass into the mainstream of liturgical practice in the Church today. We shall return to this question in the final chapter of this study, where we shall discuss in greater detail the question of religious congregational singing. But first, we turn our attention to the tradition of the chants of the Roman Mass, and after we understand its essence and its qualities, we can consider the tasks of the present. Our study will proceed in two steps: first, an analysis of the contents of the *Graduale Romanum*, and secondly its functional and historical reality.¹

4.

The ancient religions (Judaism, for example, or Eastern and Western Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism) each have their own sacred book as the basis for their ritual. Indeed, they have no “church music”; instead they chanted the holy words in a liturgical context. As the eminent scholar Ewald Jammers puts it,

The essence of Christian liturgical chant is the monophonic, unaccompanied vocal performance of God’s word . . . Man does not ‘compose’ music to God’s word, instead, he pronounces it. But at worship he does so by speaking not in the language of the everyday, the language of the marketplace, but rather in a solemn singing voice. And yet, this ‘pronouncing’ does not and cannot add anything to God’s word . . . human utterance is elevated and transformed in the cult to become as it

were the mouth of the self-revealing Deity, of Revelation proclaimed, of the incarnated Word, and to become in the common prayer, the spokesman of the Church.

The Roman Church adhered to the biblical word more consistently than any other rite. For a long time, she was reluctant to receive even the hymns of a St. Ambrose. This attitude was surely grounded not only in reverence toward the Sacred Scripture but also in vigilant defense against heresies. But today, can we say that this danger is non-existent? Have we no reason to fear a deformation in the content of the liturgy, an intrusion of one-sided or deficient doctrines through the predominance of man-made words?

However, in the Roman rite, the chanting of the Holy Book means more than merely singing a paragraph from the Bible. The majority of the texts chosen for liturgical chant entered the liturgy as a result of three or four centuries of theological reflection. The material selected for chanting in the liturgy is a particular manifestation of authentic Christian theology. The connection between a text chosen for chanting, and a given solemnity or liturgical season, is based upon the contemplation and interpretation of generations of Church Fathers. The feast was interpreted by the explanation of the Biblical verse and, *vice versa*, the explanation of the Biblical verses took place in the liturgical context of feasts.

For instance, when Psalm 2 was adopted in the Christmas liturgy, its background was a deep understanding of Christmas; the mystery found its appropriate expression in Psalm 2. And on the other hand, the precondition of such an adaptation was the Christological understanding of Psalm 2, which included its connection with the mystery of the Nativity. The context of the Christmas feast is deficient without the inclusion of Psalm 2, and the interpretation of Psalm 2 is deficient without the dogmatic content concerning the Second Divine Person. Psalm 2 (the Introit and Alleluia verse of the Midnight Mass) is closely related to the letter to the Hebrews (Epistle of the Third Mass of Christmas Day) and to St. John's prologue (the Gospel of that Third Mass).

Everyone who is familiar with the liturgy of the praying Church is aware of the importance of Psalms 18, 24, 79, and 84 in the spiritual message of the Advent season, an importance not inferior to that of the lections and prayers. These psalms, as they occur and recur, pray into the mind precisely that content of the Advent season and its mystery which is given by the praying Church—and not by individuals. The responsorial psalm is one element in this process, but not a self-sufficient one. The singer and the listener are influenced in different ways by the main verses chosen from the psalm and performed in a melodious way, and by a longer section of the psalm.

Therefore, he who removes the Proper chants from the Mass of the day or season (e.g. Advent or Lent), mutilates the liturgy and diminishes the content of the feast, by depriving the praying Church of an excellent means of fully understanding the feast being celebrated. It is totally false to suppose that the full content of a given liturgical celebration can be adequately transmitted by the readings and prayers alone, whilst omitting the chanted texts. What these Biblical texts transmit, cannot be replaced or indeed even approached by the poetic songs and hymns, as precious as they may be. And even if such texts would remain close to the Biblical words, they remain human words, taken out of the Biblical (i.e. inspired) context. I dare say that whoever removes the proper chants, mutilates and diminishes as well the theology which lives not only in manuals and textbooks, but also in the spirituality of the praying Church, the *Ecclesia orans*.

It is also remarkable that the Scriptural texts are introduced not at the level of private devotional reading, but within the cultic community, and moreover at fixed points within the liturgy. Earlier meditative explanations of the liturgy probably exaggerated the conscious planning of every single word and sentence within the liturgical fabric. But at bottom, they were right: the texts were included within the liturgy because of their content which had been grasped in theological reflection; but their meaning was frequently enriched and their efficiency augmented when they were situated within a given liturgical environment. One example will suffice to document this point.

A. The first Sunday of Advent takes the text of its Communion chant from Psalm 84, *Dominus dabit benignities, et terra nostra dabit fructum suum* . . . The Lord Himself will give His benefits; and our land shall yield its increase. The psalm speaks of the Messianic age, when the earth answers the heavenly blessing with abundant fruits of virtues: “Fidelity shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven.” Taken in itself, the psalm describes a series of events: grace radiates down from on high; the ‘earth’—meaning man—brings forth many kinds of just deeds. In fact, however, this prophecy is fulfilled in one Person, God made Man, who is in one Person both the justice descending from heaven as well as the One Man who possesses fidelity. He is peace; in Him is salvation near indeed to those who fear Him; He is the glory dwelling in our land (*habitavit in nobis*), kindness and Truth meet in Him, Justice and Peace shall kiss in Him. God not only gave His grace, but He Himself became, in the Second Divine Person, grace and the source of grace for us. But at the same time He is the blessed fruit of the earth, the *fructus*. What *fructus*? “*Fructus ventris tui*.” The womb of Mary is the earth that bore this fruit, the human nature of Jesus. Hence the genealogy is an integral part of the liturgy: the genes, the seeds of Him Who descends and takes flesh in Mary’s womb descended from Adam and were transmitted from generation to generation. God gave His grace (*caeli rorabant desuper*) and our earth bore its fruit (*aperavit terra et germinavit Salvatorem*): the God-Man. We sing this chant during the Communion, the time when God gives His grace to us, and if we receive Him as Mary did, then the humus of our own soul will bear its fruit . . . the life of God’s children.

The question remains: is there an “*alius cantus*” that is “*aptus*” to include and express this mystery in one sentence, with such heavenly sensitivity and naturalness?

B. But we may proceed farther. The Proper chants are imbued with a special kind of poetical power, which is lacking in strophic poetry, even in its most wonderful hymns. The chants of the Proper announce the great truths of Christian doctrine and liturgical theology, in most instances, without direct didactic persuasion, without decorating the teaching with lyrical ornaments. They are “poetical” by speaking with the vocabulary of the Bible, i.e. with adapted words. In a certain sense they resemble similes, chiefly when they quote from the Old Testament. The theological truths are transmitted, and yet—concealed in their intimacy. Simple words and images are, as it were, dropped into the mind of the listener, where they come to light; figurative speech becomes reality in prayerful silence.

An authoritative expert in aesthetics has explained that the essence of great poetry is an enigmatic oscillation between the layers of meaning, and between the temporal “points” (what is past, present, and future progress) in the poem. This same oscillation is present in the liturgy not as an outcome of creative will, but by the Divine reality: the same Poet, God Himself, pronounced the Old Testament, uttered the Good News, fulfilled and fulfills both in the sanctified life of the Church. When we sing a Proprium chant, we always think (or at least we feel or sense) more than is actually delivered by voice and lips. We surmise the fulfillment itself in the words, and therefore they are the words of the heavenly liturgy. This tactful, discreet poetry is hardly attainable by the plain language of ecclesiastical poetry.

I offer another example. Most of our Paschal chants speak of Easter in approximately this fashion: Christ is truly risen; the women and the apostles found the empty tomb; Christ is victorious, He has conquered Satan; He gave us the hope of resurrection. All this is very true, of course. But the Easter Introit sings: “I arose, and am still with thee, alleluja: Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me, alleluja: Thy knowledge is become wonderful, alleluja, alleluja.” These are words from Psalm 138 which contemplates with enthusiasm God’s omnipotence, and this enthusiasm is expressed in the psalm: “Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising.” The singer is with God during the night, and again when he awakes in the morning: “forthwith I am with you.” Plainly, the singer of the Old Testament speaks with a double meaning: he speaks of God’s presence in the life of man; God sees all our actions, “thou hast foreseen all my ways.” But

with the same words the psalmist says that he is with God both in good fortune and in bad, i.e. day and night, sitting down and rising up.

This truth was realized to an eminent degree in the life of Christ Himself. God was with Him quite as much when Christ said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" as when He said on Easter morn, "I arose, and am still with thee." As the Easter morning High Mass commences, we do not blow up the joyful trumpet singing Christ's Resurrection, but instead the voice of Christ Himself sounds forth out of a deep silence through our lips, to the Father: "I am still with thee" . . . Thou hast laid Thine omnipotent hand upon me and raised me. Thy knowledge is become wonderful in mine eyes, that knowledge which guides and guards the paths of all men, but in a quite exceptional sense the path of mine, of Your Son. This knowledge is not something that takes note of events after they have occurred. Thy knowledge is not the result, but the cause of the events. . . . Christ is united most intimately with the Father. And although He has "power to lay down His life, and power to take it up again," still He does not now say, "I am risen by my divine power," but rather He whispers to the Father, in the intimacy of the Trinity's innermost life: I am still with Thee, Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me.

Because baptized Christians, ever since the Easter Vigil, grow together with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection, both the individual Christian and the Church as *persona publica* may say the same thing to the Father: "I am risen, and after the long night of sins I am again with Thee, because Thou hast laid Thy healing, forgiving, vivifying, resurrecting hand upon me." When the Church intones the Introit on Easter morning, she is so profoundly one with Christ, that she does not speak to Him in the third person, but rather the Head with the Body united to it, speaks in unison to the Father through our lips.

With this in mind, I ask once more: where is the "*alius cantus*" that is able to speak with such strength, such theological profundity, such poetic intimacy, but also with such simplicity, of the Paschal mystery? With what majesty does the celebration of Easter rise up out of the silent depths of this personal (and mystical) dialogue! And how powerful the pedagogical effect of this poetry which teaches us to regard our religion primarily as a very personal union with God, and not merely adherence to a group of people, as it were, to a party or some "community." We learn to seek this inner truth without despising the external form which delivers the inner meaning. It is enough to read (or better: to sing) the daily Introit chants of the Easter octave to see how the Mystery, with its many dimensions, unfolds in the Church's chant.

C. Neither can we disregard the form of the texts. The Introit of the Ascension begins thus: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven?" Whom do we hear speaking in this chant? It is the speech of God, of course, and then of the Church—but in the words of the angels. This is a chant of representation. And we have already seen Christ speaking in the Easter Introit, "I am risen and am still with thee . . ." This, too, is the language of representation. The Introit of the second Sunday in Advent proclaims, "People of Zion, behold the Lord shall come to save the nations . . ." And who is speaking here? It is the Church as herald of the Good News who begins to speak in this chant. It is a chant of announcement. Or the words of the Introit for the third Sunday in Lent, beginning "Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net . . ." Who is speaking now? God puts these words on the lips of the whole Church and the souls who make up the Church. This is a chant of imploring. . . .

All these examples have one thing in common. In them, someone speaks. Now, when we listen to a strophic hymn, this precise effect of *locutio directa* is diminished, indeed disappears completely. When we sing even the finest hymns, we feel they are the compositions of a poet—it is the poet who speaks in these chants. And that difference is a consequence of the form. There, the flow of thoughts, the length and linkage of phrases, the selection of words is defined and determined by the poetic form, by its rhythmic structure and rhyme. The poem is *artefactum*, an artificial construct, artistic


opus. And when the result is not of the highest quality in either its theological or poetical dimension, then we sense even more vividly that the necessities of the poem direct the thought, rather than *vice versa*. One need not at all despise sung poetry in hymns, even those of extra-liturgical origin, in order to recognize that hymns can never be such speech-like texts as one finds in free biblical prose.

Since the chants of the Mass proper, with but few exceptions, are based upon biblical texts they are, again with but few exceptions, manifestations of a “spiritual speech” rather than “poems.” Finding their own pleasant articulation, they proceed with the naturalness of speech; the singer can take it on his lips as speech delivered in a special way. This is what Ewald Jammers meant when he affirmed that “Man does not ‘compose’ music to God’s word; instead, he pronounces it. And he does so at worship by speaking not in the language of the Everyday, the language of the marketplace, but rather in a solemn singing voice.” Psychologically, the prose form always approximates speech more closely; when pronouncing a text of this kind, we feel more easily that we are praying. This is not to say that prayers in strophic form cannot be uttered with a prayerful mentality. But even then, there always remains something that makes us feel we are speaking “in quotation marks.” “I lift up my soul to Thee, O God . . .” Here, the form suggests that an individual person (or a collective person such as the Church) is telling his Lord, “I lift up my soul to Thee.” Compared to this directness, strophic speech in most cases sounds like the repetition of a poem . . . or a song.

D. Finally, it behooves us to recall that the Proper chants of the Mass are linked to the liturgical seasons and times, not just in a general fashion, but quite specifically, by virtue of their content. The very oldest choir books of the Roman liturgy eloquently testify that the overwhelming majority of these chants belonged to fixed days, and these assignments remained untouched up until 1970. The same texts were written in the Missals, and if they were not sung, then the priest prayed them. In doing so, the Church clearly expressed her desire that each chant stand in a fixed position, which simply means that on this day, at this liturgical position, this is the chant, and not any other.²

Exactly when and how this “properisation” of the Mass chants was achieved, is another question altogether. For now, we are not interested in this question, nor in deciding whether the many speculations aimed at justifying the given position of a chant and its interrelationships with other parts of the liturgy through historical facts or spiritual reflections, are true or not. We simply accept the fact that in the minds and hearts and memories of faithful Catholics there gradually emerged, over a period of 1200 years and more, a network or web of associations between the experience of a particular liturgical day, and the chants “proper” to that day. Such associations were truly “catholic,” in other words universal within the Latin liturgy. All felt a part of it, anyone might refer to it: the Sundays were named after their Introits (e.g. *Laetare, Gaudete, Quasimodo*); people dated their private letters by referring to the same chant; composers created music, not to texts, but to the Offertory or the Introit of a given day. For a Christian who lived in and with the liturgy of the praying Church, this order of chants coalesced with the full liturgy of the day, and it contributed to the high degree of fixity in the Mass Propers (as opposed to the frequent variations in the Divine Office). So it is by no means an accident that certain chant forms were excepted from this uniformity. In spite of the unchanging fixity of Introits, Graduals, Offertories and Communion, the Alleluja and the Sequence presented a wide field of opportunity for the creative forces of various geographic regions.

This universality and continuity in space and time bore rich fruit, and brought great blessings. Over and above the psychological associations, such universality nurtured a feeling of stability and promoted the reverence of which a long tradition is worthy. It radiated, and thus taught, discipline; it made palpable such an “impersonal anonymity” as cannot be achieved simply by concealing the authors’ names. . . . For my university students it always came as a shock to open Dom Hesbert’s *Antiphonarium Missarum Sextuplex* or the eleventh century Gradual of the Roman basilica of St. Cecilia, and to



find there, on the same days, the same Proper chants as they read in the *Liber Usualis* printed in 1950. And without any coaching from me, their first question after the initial surprise was, “Then why should we sing others, instead of these?” Why, indeed . . . ?

The last Council offered an opportunity to make these blessings of the Propers available for the entire People of God, transcending the relatively restricted spheres of those familiar with Latin, or the users of bilingual missals. The fateful paragraph 32 of the 1967 Instruction, however, deprived the Church of these blessings. The Instruction (and indeed the “Missal 2000”) pretend that we have a Proper of the Mass—whilst everyone knows that today, the Mass Propers are actually sung in barely one Mass in ten thousand. In the real world of today, the *mundus hujus temporis*, the content of the Proper chants is not what the Church desires to communicate through them, but instead what people attribute to that content in many tens of thousands of churches in many tens of thousands of ways.

On 16 March 2002 the Congregation for Divine Worship sent a letter with detailed observations on a proposed translation of the Roman Missal submitted by a number of Episcopal conferences. Section IV, paragraph N of these observations says, with all desirable clarity: “Since it is already permissible, as specified by the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, to use other sung texts in place of the antiphons given in the Missal, the Conference may wish to publish separately a set of such texts, and perhaps some of the antiphons prepared for the present project may eventually qualify for inclusion in such a publication. The Congregation would not be opposed to such a measure provided that the texts chosen be doctrinally sound. However, in the case of texts from Sacred Scripture, it is the sacred text itself that should determine the qualities of the music to which it is to be set, rather than vice-versa.” This principle does not seem to have been followed consistently in the antiphons given in the part of the project that the translators have labeled the ‘Antiphonal.’ The antiphons to be printed in the Missal should appear within the Mass formularies, as in the current *editio typica*.

In sum, there is today no defined liturgical context authoritatively attached to the Proper chants by the Church. Which is to say that chant—excepting the Ordinary and the interlectionary chants, in the best case—plays no part in carrying the content of liturgy. The Proper chants have ceased to be an integral part of the liturgy.

5.

If we wish to understand the present situation and our tasks within it, we should not neglect the main lines of the historical process which led to the present, since all the elements of this description will be helpful in considering the possibilities of today and tomorrow.

As far as its formal aspect is concerned, the Catholic Mass in Late Antiquity was an almost uninterrupted dialogue in cantillation between the celebrant, the deacon, the lector and the assembly. This form was “ordinary” in the broad sense, and what we today call the Ordinary of the Mass was part of it. For example, the Kyrie was a litany refrain, the Sanctus an exclamatory response to the Preface, the Agnus a litany section, the Gloria a series of acclamations. The *Ordinarium Missae* in this narrow sense was an element within a larger series of cantillations, itself a cantillation that sounded similar (without being identical note for note) to the so-called “*Missa Primitiva*” or “*Missa Mundi*” we know today as Mass XVI and XVIII in the *Liber Usualis*. The 1967 Instruction on *Musica Sacra* is therefore perfectly correct in giving preference to the responses, acclamations and Ordinary of the Mass among the “parts which pertain to the faithful” (*partes quae ad christifideles spectant*).

According to our present-day knowledge, the most ancient item of the Proper was the psalm lection which was not a “chant” as we understand that term today, but part of the Liturgy of the Word, itself also a reading, recited by a lector. In contrast to other lections, this reading might be more ornate, depending upon the capabilities of a “psalmista” with better musical training. Though its tone was defined by the tradition, actual real-

ization in practice was the result of the individual improvisation of the lector-psalmist. Today one can still hear an analogous chant in orthodox Jewish communities where the cantillation may be simpler or—by extending the scale and inserting emblematic elements—more ornate, indeed sometimes even passionate, according to the singer's talent. The Gregorian Tract (Ambrosian: *Cantus*) is in all probability the descendant of this solo psalmody.

From the fourth century there is evidence indicating that the congregation could also join in the psalmody by chanting a refrain. For instance, in his *Confessions* (IX, 12) St. Augustine relates how, at the death of his mother Monica, after the first shock of loss was mitigated, his friend Evodius took up the psalter and intoned Psalm 100 “with the whole house making the responses”: *Misericordiam et justitiam cantabo tibi, Domine*; Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord. Such responsorial psalmody was an integral part of the Divine Office, and frequently introduces Augustine's sermons on the Psalms. But the sources are unclear as to whether this kind of psalm-singing was part of the Mass or not. Some think that the Psalm in the Mass remained a solo chant for a longer period of time, and was immediately succeeded by the Gradual chant of the Roman Mass.

According to historical progression, the next element might be the Communion. In the earliest stages it was not truly a “proper” chant because the selection of psalms (e.g. Psalm 33, 148 etc.) was, analogously to the *koinonikon* of the Byzantine liturgy, enough to cover the whole year. This psalm, too, was a solo piece, and the links between the Office Responsory and the old Communion repertory suggest the existence of a stock of emblematic solo psalmody common in the ancient Mass and Office liturgies, but not yet divided into clear-cut genres.

It is also worth noting that historically, the chant after the Scripture reading had no direct thematic link with the foregoing lection. It was rather an independent psalm, connected with the reading only indirectly, through the general theme of the liturgical season. Indeed, the name “responsory/responsorial” did not mean that the chant is somehow “responding” to the reading, but rather referred to its inner structure. The idea of coordinating lection and (“responsorial”) psalm emerged first in the twentieth century commentaries, which the post-conciliar liturgical books attempted to realize in practice.

During the next period of the Roman liturgy's history, the period of the *scholae*, the “psalmist” (psalmista) remained the qualified performer of the Proper chants. The *scholae* were founded primarily to serve the liturgical life of the well-endowed great basilicas, whilst in the smaller towns or village communities the older and simpler usage was retained, namely leaving all the elaborate chants to the soloist.

The emergence of the Introit and Offertory chants is already associated with the *scholae*. The daily liturgical practice of the major basilicas required the presence of more than one psalmist, so that they could take turns singing the “professional's” chant individually, and later in common or in alternation according to musico-liturgical customs. Such groups may have acted as a *schola* even before the institution itself was formally established and properly named. Group singing in the *schola* led to the elimination of improvised elements, to fixation of the melodies, and to creation of a kind of canon of selected sacred texts, at least for smaller areas. The raw material of their chanting naturally consisted of the formulae inherited from the earlier solo chanting. But in the very moment when this set of formulae was applied to fixed words, more and more individual pieces came into existence. The creation of individual pieces was not only necessary but also possible in the context of choral singing: the existence of the *scholae* as the *collegium* of professional singers, and the mutual control which it implied, established the conditions for memorizing a growing repertory within the parameters of the oral culture.

As far as the texts of the Proper chants are concerned, the earlier “free choice on the basis of traditions” has gradually changed to the concept of repertory, based upon the

theological reflection referred to earlier, i.e. the background of Christian liturgical interpretation of the psalms. The first stage in stabilizing a fixed repertory was not the equivalent of some sort of a Roman Antiphoner of Masses. Lists of selected psalm sections or verses could have been fixed first, then distributed according to liturgical genres of chant and assigned to specific feasts or within particular seasons. The process would have been completed with the achievement of lists or registers simply arranged in the numerical sequence of psalms, for instance a register *per annum*, traces of which can be found in the Lenten Communions as well as the post-Pentecost Introits and Offertories of the *Graduale Romanum*.

At some point in the seventh century, the collected set of liturgical Proper chants was arranged and completed in a way that linked each of them to a precisely defined day of the liturgical year. Recent research points to the probability that this arrangement was made gradually, proceeding from one type of chant to another. Although there existed no master plan to coordinate all the Proper chants of a given day, tradition sanctioned their cohesion. Thus the “properisation” was completed, and the result was an admirable structure. Its value was guaranteed on the most fundamental level by the quality of the individual texts, i.e. their biblical origin; on a second level by the theological interpretation defining their approximate liturgical position; and on a third level by their order arising from the arrangement within the annual cycle, the system of *anni circulus*. And of course this applies conversely as well: the biblical words and their theological-liturgical interpretation have immensely enriched the liturgical year. This arrangement *per anni circulum* helped to fix the structure of the calendar; it made the individual days more characteristic, well distinguished and memorable. The Roman Fifth Instruction of 28 March 2001 (“Liturgiam authenticam”) frequently refers to the “identity” of the Roman liturgy as something to be preserved. Of course, the *Graduale Romanum* arranged *per anni circulum* is (was?) surely a preeminent part of this identity!

Before we proceed, two lessons should be drawn from what has been said thus far. First, the music of the Proper chants was not an emotional or “feeling” element of the liturgy. Rather, in its proper way, it has a part to play in the communication system of the liturgy. Second, the congregation did not take part in the performance of the Proper chants, since they pertained to the semi-professional or professional singers. This fact does not at all point to any lack of, or deficiency in *actuosa participatio*, but rather is the manifestation in practice of a basic principle of liturgy: the distribution of roles. The skeleton framework of the rite was presented in the ongoing cantillation and dialogue; the delivery of lections was the task of lectors, the singing of psalms was chiefly the task of the psalmist(s) or the *schola*.

* * *

This situation changed as the Roman liturgy spread throughout the whole of Western Christendom. The Roman rite propagated by the missionaries included not only the priest’s Sacramentary, but the *Antiphonarium Missae* as well. The agenda were not determined by local conditions but by an objective liturgical ordo, and the new local churches had to “grow up” and into this task. The manner of celebration could be a little different, but its essence was fixed by a canon. Medieval Europe was able to create and support the corporative bodies and institutions which guaranteed the basic unity of the Proper chants whilst allowing for legitimate variations within that unity. An essential element of the medieval school system was the teaching of music, and so the “chorus,” which existed in the great cathedrals as well as in the smallest village churches assured the chanting of the Propers, which resounded all over the *orbis catholicus*. In this context, the term “chorus” of course does not mean a modern choir, but rather the entire liturgical corporative body: in cathedrals and larger churches the chapter, priests, clerics, schoolboys and their instructors; in the village church perhaps no more than the priest, a teacher and three or four lads. At various times and in different places one finds divergencies in the distribution of chants amongst soloist(s), selected schoolboys, or the

whole choir. However, the basic repertory of sung texts and melodies was essentially the same across the entire area of the Roman rite. The medieval choir extended the ideal of the *schola* to the community of all literate persons. An historical precedent for efforts in recent centuries would have been to incorporate, by an extension of Christian schooling, increasing numbers of lay folk as members of this “extended schola.”

In the Middle Ages, scientific education reached only a narrow segment of the population, though it was not restricted to the clerisy. A fuller participation of the faithful in the communication system of the liturgy was limited also by linguistic boundaries. As a consequence, the *schola* gradually assumed the role of the congregation in the basic stratum of liturgical chants, that is to say in the cantillation of responses and Mass Ordinary. Eventually, the Mass Ordinary itself became a cycle of schola chants, approximating the musical style of Proper pieces. And with the exception of the lections, the orations and other recitations, the structure of the different types of Mass chants began to amalgamate.

Though it is fashionable today to profess that one is scandalized by these changes, from a theological point of view they are in no sense an abuse. Sane principles solidly support the belief that the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered not by those present, but always by the universal Church. When Holy Mass is celebrated or, so to say, realized and actualized in its right order, the Church acts for the benefit of the entire community, every member of which partakes of its blessings through the channels of grace. The content of the liturgy is what the Church says and does in it; the participants join in the *actio prae-cellenter sacra* according to their own way and capacity.

Originally viewed as liturgical texts delivered in a special way, the liturgical chants of the Proper gradually changed to become *compositions* on liturgical texts. In a further logical development, the musical setting itself (at least on some days and in some types of chants) adapted the musical language of the time, in other words the contemporaneous style of polyphonic art music.

These developments were also influenced by the multiplication of Masses which did not come about for pastoral reasons, viz. to offer the faithful more occasions to choose when they wished to attend Mass. The fact is that in addition to and outside of the High Mass, the faithful wished to commemorate the Blessed Virgin or their patron saint or their dear departed, and so during the late Middle Ages, an increasing number of Masses was celebrated at side altars in honour of individual saints, etc., according to the intentions of the donors. In most cases, singers were also provided for those Masses, and they were paid by the “foundations” of donors. In the absence of such singers, however, the celebrant himself read (some think that at an earlier stage, he sang) all the chants of the Mass.

* * *

After the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church retained this principle: the chants of the Proper are an integral part of the Mass, hence should be sung in Latin (as Gregorian chant or a polyphonic setting), or at least recited by the celebrant. But by this time, as a consequence of historical processes, the system of institutions that formerly maintained and supported the continuity of chanting, had collapsed. In some churches there remained choirs (*capellae*) executing the pale and “boring” Gregorian Propers as a ritual obligation between the performance of two splendid movements of a polyphonic Ordinary. Some monasteries were also able to maintain the regular singing of the Proper chants. In the majority of Masses, however, it was left to the celebrant to read the texts in silence whilst the congregation nurtured its own religious feelings and passed the time in singing the pious hymns created under Protestant influences. The mere reading of the Proper chants desiccated the texts into brief “logia,” bits of connective tissue between the “important” parts of the service. No wonder, then, that for many, the Proper chants became an obligatory but very subordinate, non-essential part of the liturgy, incapable of offering much spiritual sustenance, even to the priest celebrant.

Problems of this nature were but of marginal interest to the religious movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and only the liturgical renewal which began in the nineteenth century (Dom Gueranger, Bishop J. M. Sailer) foreshadowed a reversal of the decline. The best efforts at reform, however, encountered serious obstacles, and the results were rather narrowly circumscribed. But their real significance lay in the “appeal” they voiced, to look for and work toward a better future. The apostles of liturgical renewal urged the establishment of choirs in many churches, with appropriate musical formation to enable them to sing the chant, including the Proper chants (largely to Gregorian tunes), according to the rules of the Church. What was lacking, unfortunately, was the supporting system of institutions which would guarantee the universal and uninterrupted achievement of this goal, independently of personal and individual zeal.

Along with the other texts, the Proper chants were also transmitted to the faithful in the bilingual missals whose influence was enormous. For many Catholics the missal became their most important spiritual nourishment, more important perhaps than even the Bible, because once drawn into the rhythm of the Church’s life, they received God’s word and the Church’s prayer within the vivid context of the liturgy, under the protecting wings of liturgical observation. Such persons also became attached to the Proper chants, as to sacred texts . . . but only as texts. In contrast to mere reading of a text, singing that text expands it, uniting the sacred space, “flooding” it, and filling it with sound. At the same time, singing a text extends it in time by prolonging the duration of the holy words; and thus, touches not only the intellect, but other spheres of the heart and soul, as well. The liturgical renewal greatly enriched and supported both priests and lay folk by publishing explanations of the liturgy. Drawn from good sources, these commentaries transcended the moral preachments of Baroque and Enlightenment schoolbooks and did not fail to include the chants of the Proper, interpreting them too in the spirit of the liturgy. It is regrettable that these commentaries did not reach the entire larger community of the faithful, and even more regrettable that they did not permeate the great majority of the clergy, either. Complete success was not achieved because of three failings or deficiencies: 1) The liturgical renewal remained more of an exhortation and a pious desire than a concrete programme energetically taken up and vigorously executed by the entire institution of the Church. 2) No mechanism was developed for combining true preservation of Latin with the linguistic communication of the liturgy to persons unfamiliar with Latin. 3) There was no bold creative action to find ways of presenting music to people of an age which had become unable to perform universally the Proper chants in their full form.

Vatican II was predestined to accept and pass on the noble legacy of the century-old liturgical renewal and to solve the problems which had emerged. But though the principles of the Council’s Liturgy Constitution promised the restoration of liturgical singing, events after the Council in fact led to the disappearance of liturgical singing.

6.

Before we begin to examine the possibilities in actual practice today, we shall summarize as clearly as we can what has been said thus far.

What are the *Proprium* or “Proper” chants of the Roman liturgy? They are sacred texts chosen chiefly from the Bible, sung in a liturgical context (i.e. performed as appropriate to the individual moments or actions of the Mass) on the various days of the (Church) year.

Why were changes introduced after the Council?³

In the case of the *Proprium* chants, we may surmise that aims like the following were involved : a) to draw the entire congregation into the singing; b) to offer ordinary or conventional texts in place of the biblical verses which require from the faithful a higher degree of liturgical formation and knowledge, and yet also: c) in the vulgar tongue, on simple tunes; d) and to abrogate or dissolve the fixed position of a given chant, i.e. its con-

nection with a given day and a given part of the liturgy; e) so as to permit the use of a repertory pleasing to various ethnic, social, or age groups.

The reader can judge for himself, which of these objectives harmonizes with the heritage of the Roman liturgy and with the conciliar Liturgy Constitution. In any case, the goals listed above are very useful as indicating the difficulties which face anyone who wishes to propose a solution.

The question can be divided into its three component factors: performer (Who sings?), performed (What is sung?), and performance (How is it sung?).

A. Neither history, nor the nature of the liturgy, nor the norms of the Church or of the Council, nor even the postconciliar regulations vindicate the need of having the Proprium sung by the entire congregation. The Church fulfills her prophetic function in the Proprium chants, and it is absurd that the entire congregation should “prophesy” to . . . the entire congregation. General congregational participation is a good thing—but only if the content, the message of the liturgy is not sacrificed on the altar of “active participation,” for that would mean that the Greater is being sacrificed for the sake of the Lesser in importance.

We have already noted that the historical succession of groups which chanted the Propers might be this: psalmist—schola—“cappella musicale.” The medieval model (choir) comes closest to transforming the Proper chants into that of the full assembly (whilst admitting that some chants remain the province of small groups or individuals, as they were in the Middle Ages). In other words, the level of musical literacy today permits the congregation to be a “chorus,” a liturgical corporate body. But even so, that is not necessary. The Introit, Offertory or the Communio (sometimes also the Gradual, Alleluja and Sequence) should be performed by well-prepared singers. Alternatively, those pieces (or sections of them) can be divided amongst the singers and the congregation.

And just who are these “well-prepared singers”? The Instruction “*Musicam Sacram*” of 1967 lists three; the large choir (*cappella musicale*), the schola, and the cantor (psalmist). This series represents three steps or stages back into history—or, if you will, three increasingly broad areas of possible realizations. A large choir or cappella established in a cathedral or *ecclesia major* (a “greater church”)—as the Instruction requires!—should be obliged to sing the full Proper. There are many more parish churches where a schola—consisting of ten or twelve chanters, let us say—can be organized, whose primary task would be precisely the chanting of the Proprium Missae. The Instruction advises and admonishes that even where a large choir or a schola is functioning, there is need for a cantor or psalmist who can perform some parts alone, who leads the singing of the congregation, or who alternates with it in all the Masses.

The best thing the Church can do in this area is to impose obligatory regulations and demand allocation of appropriate budgetary resources (as was customary during past centuries) so as to assure the presence of cantors or singing groups in each church, at the greatest possible number of Masses.

The proper location of these singers is between the sanctuary and the nave, in an area suitably furnished and arranged so that they can carry out their function and direct the chant of the congregation. Since the responses and parts of the Ordinary are sung by the people, the chief task of these “well-prepared singers” is to chant the Proper, alone or in alternation with the people, supporting their chants, as conditions require.

If the presence of a cantor(s) is assured, and their training and formation is successful, then the problem is already half-solved. If over a few decades we have loyal and competent singers who take their place in each parish church, every day (or at least every Sunday) in all the Masses, then a new liturgical tradition would surely emerge organically from the old one—and that in an unexpectedly brief period of time!

The Proprium Missae Romanae is the Proper of the Roman Mass! Here, the first and most urgent task is to abolish *instante* the **alius cantus aptus**. Until this path of ‘escape’ is closed, all efforts will be vain and fruitless, indeed stillborn! If substitution is per-

mitted at all, it must be by way of exception only, under strictly defined rules (which differentiate according to the peculiar characteristics of the various Proper parts) . . . and the permission should specify the acceptable types of substitutes.

Such strictness is not meant to imply or require that henceforth only the tunes of the *Graduale Romanum* should be sung. (We shall discuss the melodies below, under the heading “how.”) We have already noted how the Roman Proprium Missae developed in two or three formative stages, each of which possessed special advantages. The first period was the *ad hoc* selection of psalms. There is little reason and less need to return today to that period. The second stage, with sets of recurrent Proper chants set to melodies varying from week to week, would be useful in parishes unable to master **all** the chants of the entire church year. Two examples of this device can be mentioned: the *Dominicale* in the Ambrosian *Antiphonarium Missae*, and the new Roman *Graduale Simplex*. The Ambrosian *Dominicale* presents a dozen Introits, Offertories etc. in one series for the season *per annum* which are used cyclically, by turns.⁴

I believe it is unfair to criticize the *Graduale Simplex* for ignoring and indeed confounding the musical differences between Mass and Divine Office. These “simpler melodies” were not intended to displace the “great melodies” from churches where the singers are capable of chanting them. Instead, the idea was to help churches where otherwise, in the absence of such *simpliciores modos* there would not be any liturgical singing at all. Furthermore, it is not only the elaborated pieces of the trained scholar which bear a high value. Simple tunes can do so as well, in their proper environment, with their monumental liturgical and musical beauty, which is evident chiefly when they are sung by large groups of people.

The greatest difficulties were concealed elsewhere. The *Graduale Simplex*, of course, is bound to the Latin. And when in practice the Latin tongue was excluded from the great majority of Catholic Masses, then the *Graduale Simplex* which had been produced at such great effort, lost its function, and became superfluous. And it was in consequence of being bound to the Latin texts that Dom Cardine, the architect of the *Graduale Simplex*, made his choices only from the Office antiphons, since no one wished to create new “Gregorian” melodies. And thus the *Graduale Simplex* lost its link with the “canonical” texts of the *Graduale Romanum*.

However, once the language changes to the vulgar tongue, the adaptation of “authentic” chant melodies is no longer necessary. So the *Graduale Simplex* may be regarded from two coigns of vantage: either as a repertory for use at Latin Masses, or as a model for vernacular liturgical chant, in which case nothing prevents the creation—following the principles and methods of the *Graduale Simplex*—of easier versions of the “original and authentic” Proper chants, for congregational use.

And so, from the theological, liturgical, and historical considerations presented up to this point, we may sum up in this proposition: once the practice of **alius cantus aptus** has been eliminated, the Roman liturgy will need a “canonized” series of Proper chants which should be sung in all Masses. (The “how” is discussed in the paragraph which follows.) Such a “canon,” however, may contain two systems or series :

- a. a strict order of Proprium chants arranged according to days and genres, identical with the 1200-year old traditional system;
- b. a second, simplified (“simplex”) order of Proper chants assigned to feasts and seasons according to the principle of “sets” of chants. The two systems should not be completely independent of each other: if the simple series (largely in the vernacular) should not be set to fixed Gregorian tunes, the various texts of the “strict” Proprium may also be combined with simple melodies and may serve as a “seasonal” Proper. Moreover, the most important section of a longer piece could function as an “easy” refrain, shifting the remainder over into the verses. A possible canon of “simpler” Introits for Lent, for instance, might be *Invocabit, Reminiscere, Nos autem*—supplemented by others depending upon circumstances.⁵

Substitution, in the strict sense of that term, is not contemplated, but other possibilities will be proposed below. Moreover, the official “canon” itself may contain alternatives (for instance the historical *Rorate/Memento* pair as Introit on IV Advent), and some space may be allowed to the local traditions, chiefly in the Sanctorale.

In any case, it is possible to conceive a specifically enumerated Proper which maintains the identity of the Roman rite, is suitable for universal use, and “canonic” enough to be regarded as an integral part of the liturgy, whilst being flexible enough to permit realization in practice if the necessary effort is appropriately made. Confusion, arbitrariness, and corruption of taste would be eliminated in such a case.

In the post-Tridentine period there were two possibilities for performing the proper chants: to have them either chanted by professional singers (in Gregorian tunes, or occasionally polyphonic settings), or read silently by the celebrant at the altar. Today, given the heightened awareness of the inner nature of the liturgy and the needs of the present situation, it is plain that more possibilities are required. Whether or not a “canonized” Proper will actually be able to survive, depends chiefly upon the available ways of performing it.

- a. The manner of performance which most closely approximates the ancient living tradition is of course the chanting of the Proprium from the *Graduale Romanum* by trained singers (or, if the standard of musical literacy permits, by a well-trained congregation). Although the 1967 Instruction *Musicam sacram* (par. 33) recommends that to the extent possible according to conditions (*quantum fieri potest*) the congregation join in chanting the Propers, at least in the form of easier refrains, this is not prescribed by liturgical law, and as we know, the Proprium did not originally belong among the “parts which pertain to the faithful.” Hence we should retain the words of the Instruction: such congregational participation is desirable—*quantum fieri potest*.
- b. The wish of the 1967 Instruction (par. 31/32) is that if possible, the Proper chants should be sung on the tunes of the *editio typica* in the *Graduale Romanum*. Though I concur on this point, I believe that the restrictions should be mitigated in certain cases, for instance, when it involves some widely-known pieces like the Christmas Introit *Puer natus est nobis*. Today we have a far greater appreciation for the local traditions of plainchant, whose revival is a noble goal. The Central European or so-called pentatonic dialect of Gregorian chant is much easier than the Italo-French diatonic dialect, and its broader use may contribute to the wider extension of Gregorian practice. In the spirit of the last Council, the door is now also open to new compositions on the Proper texts, on the condition that they harmonize with the nature of the words and of the liturgy.
- c. Recent research has shewn that it was premature to conclude that Gregorian music is so closely linked to the Latin texts, that its melodies cannot be adapted in vernacular translations. Plainchant is not an “opus-music” the way that the art music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is. With taste, talent, and knowledge of style, the melodies can be adjusted to the recipient language without harm to the music. Where experts are able to translate pieces from the Proprium along with their melodies (as were the Anglicans, for instance, who possess some nicely made adaptations), then their use is preferable, even in combination with the Latin version. Moreover, new vernacular compositions may also emerge, chiefly if they embody the free form and rhythm of the text. (The musical language of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries is rather alien to the text as well as to the liturgical function.) The end result of such a process will probably approximate Gregorian chant.
- d. The “full settings” of Proprium chants are typically performed by the schola or large chorus (*cappella*). The 1967 Instruction also envisions the situation in which a solo psalmist (cantor) takes over the role of the schola. I recall a visit to Venice nearly forty years ago, during which I happened to attend a weekday morning

Mass in a Venetian parish church. The entire Proper was sung by a soloist from a pulpit in the sanctuary. It was a great experience for me, indeed (if I may say so) one of the most beautiful Masses I ever attended.

- e. The chanting of the full proper is not incompatible with the desire of involving the congregation. For example, the most important phrase of the text can be excerpted and then inserted as a refrain at an appropriate point of the fully chanted piece performed by psalmist or schola. Or a melodic refrain which remains unchanged over a longer period of time (for example through the entire Advent season) may respond to the message transmitted by the professional singer.
- f. Thus far we have discussed performance of the proper chants by a psalmist or a schola, alternating (or not) with congregational chanting. A greater degree of active congregational participation might be achieved in either of two ways. First, the same pieces (texts) could be chanted on easier tunes. That would involve three steps: using simpler, less ornate melodies; abbreviating the lengthier texts; choosing model melodies which are easier to combine with different texts. The second way to achieve this goal, is to substitute seasonal antiphons for the daily Proper chants. In other words, use the “second series of the canon” mentioned earlier, sung either in Latin or the vernacular. The best melodies for this purpose are the recurrent model-melodies such as one finds in the *Graduale Simplex*, though one should also not exclude re-arrangements of Gregorian tunes or new “chant-like” compositions based upon Gregorian music. The *Graduale Simplex* in Latin and/or the vernacular can serve the needs, at a lower level, of congregations or psalmists and scholae with less training. It can also be used in the simpler “little Masses” of a well-provided parish church. All of these levels permit “full-quality” realizations of the Proper. What follows, are only substitutions.
- g. Where even the tunes of the *Graduale Simplex* seem too difficult, cantillation formulae can be provided for the Proper chants, perhaps after the fashion of Carlo Rossini or Edmunds Tozer, for example. Four or five such “tones” suitable for delivery of texts which vary in length, and able to be combined with a psalm-melody, can, in small communities, announce the content of the text with appropriate solemnity. Gregorian schemes which hardly find a place in today’s “new liturgy” can also be used in this role.⁶ It is not at all too difficult to select suitable tones from the historical patrimony of Gregorian and Ambrosian music. Neither is it a great problem to adjust for the peculiarities of various languages. And new tones might also be composed.
- h. Is there any place in such a system for strophic congregational hymns? Not if full musico-liturgical validity is the goal. In cases of real necessity, however, and under appropriate conditions a congregational hymn might be taken as an element in a combined Proper chant, whereby (for instance) after the cantor or other person delivered the official Proper text on one of the appointed tones, the congregation joins in a well-selected hymn. And which congregational hymns might fulfill this function? In order of increasing distance from the ideal form, such hymns might be 1) a strophic paraphrase of the Proprium chant itself; 2) an appropriate section of a strophic psalm-paraphrase such as e.g. chorale-psalms or the “Geneva” psalms; 3) sixteenth century Hungarian versified psalms; 4) translations of liturgical hymns; 5) other congregational hymns evaluated and ranked according to their liturgical content. In this context we are not speaking of a general approval of the songs by the local Ordinary, but approval with specification of use. The possible liturgical location of each individual hymn should be evaluated carefully, and each day should be assigned its own list of possible hymns, after the fashion of some of the early Lutheran orders of service. And this ultimately leads to the notion of “hymn-pericopes,” of course with two or three alternatives for each point. If the complementary use of strophic congregational hymnody is appropriately regulated, and if such hymns are artfully combined

with recitation of the official Proper chant, then the authenticity of the Proprium Missae has been recovered whilst giving some freedom to good decisions. Eventually, some type of a Gradual-Cantional could publish with local authorisation the liturgical assignments of the unison congregational hymns whilst ensuring their connection with the official texts and recitation tones.

- i. Finally, there is the (mere) “reading” of the Proper. In cases where nothing at all is chanted (*missa lecta*), the celebrant is obliged to read these texts. But that is insufficient: such reading should also be obligatory when something other than the Proper chant is sung (**alius cantus aptus**). And the drawbacks involved in mere reading must likewise be eliminated. First of these is the all-too-short duration of a “read” Proper: it flies by in a matter of seconds. Then there is the fact that the acoustical realization of such reading does not even remotely call to mind “singing” the text. And thirdly; mere reading reduces the Propers to the level of private prayers of the priest which are lost in the torrent of other texts said by the celebrant.

In the antiphonal pieces one should retain the alternation with the psalm. And the Offertory ought to regain its admirable verses. (It was a great loss to the Roman liturgy when these verses were omitted in the twelfth century.) The antiphon or response ought to be read together by the celebrant, cantor, lector, ministers, and even the congregation, whilst the psalm (or verse) is performed by any of the participants. If possible, the lections could be done *recto tono* so as to prolong their duration and approximate more closely to singing. And one might even countenance organ accompaniment of such a recitation, in order to distinguish it from the other orations and recited texts.

The solution outlined above, is perhaps a radical cure for present-day maladies. The suggestion of several possible devices or procedures offers concrete assistance for actual practice, though their number is limited and they are arranged in an hierarchical order so as to exclude completely liberty of choice (**alius cantus aptus**). This proposal allows room for decisions at the local level (language areas, diocese, parish) for various occasions (types of Masses), but that allowance is counterbalanced by norms for preserving the identity of the Roman liturgy. The message of the liturgy entrusted to the chanter, is defined, but legitimate variations are arranged in concentric circles according to their relationship to the canon. Finally, this proposal safeguards the predominance of Gregorian chant which is allowed to function as an ideal model for vernacular adaptations and new compositions, without becoming a rigid mould or form which must be followed blindly.

7.

Although this study deals with the Proper chants, I may be permitted to append two paragraphs, dealing with the Ordinary chants and the use of popular songs, respectively.

A. The 1967 Instruction *Musicam sacram* and the General Introduction to the new Roman Missal both delineate very clearly the importance of the chants of the Ordinarium Missae and the apposite liturgical norms. The problem here, is channeling in the right direction our efforts at realizing these norms in practice.

- a. In opposition to the abuses appearing here and there, it is necessary to repeat verbatim that the texts of the Ordinary must not be replaced by something else! It is permissible, however, to add tropes to the Kyrie. It seems needful to offer frequent reminders that the Kyrie, Credo (sung, if at all possible!), Sanctus, and Agnus should normally be chanted, in accord with the ancient tradition, with congregational participation.
- b. It must be stressed yet again that the parts of the Mass ordinary are not insertions in the Mass, but belong to the same stratum of the Ordo Missae as do the texts and cantillations of celebrant and ministers. In order to stress this fact, and to promote the necessary degree of unity in the universal Church, the use of the genuine (and

originally, sole) Ordinary, the so-called “Missa Mundi” or “Missa Primitiva” should be made obligatory for all churches (whilst allowing, of course, the use of other compositions as well). Since the style of this Ordinary harmonizes with the characteristics of music found amongst all peoples, its simple inflexions could be adjusted to the vernacular languages, too, which mean that use of the “Missa Mundi” includes both Latin and vernacular rendition. This “universal” Ordinary should, like the tone for the *Pater noster*, be included in the Missale Romanum—and the local churches ought to prefer these melodies in practice.

- c. Some suggestions may be offered for new settings of the Ordinary, primarily for those created in the vernacular for congregational use. These should avoid, if at all possible, forcing free prose texts into the rhythmical patterns and measures of recent European musical styles, and strive rather to preserve the pneumatic inspiration of those texts. Furthermore, the age and prayerful character of the Ordinary is somewhat contrary to the style of triadic music, which creates fewer problems in polyphonic works but is frequently vexing in unison congregational settings, where modally inspired tunes composed within moderate ranges can accommodate much more readily the textual and liturgico-functional peculiarities.

B. Earlier, we distinguished the functional notion of *cantus populi* from the historical notion of *cantus popularis* (unison hymn or *cantio*, *continual*). As we have seen, a broad field is open to the *cantus populi*, even within the parameters of liturgical chant in the strict sense of that term. Both pastors and musicians should tirelessly promote and encourage the development of such *cantus populi*.

The text of the conciliar Liturgy Constitution is not entirely unambiguous. SC 118 seems to speak of *cantus popularis*, but then the argument is taken from the *cantus populi*: “Religious singing by the people (*cantus popularis religiosus*) is to be skillfully fostered, so that in devotions and sacred exercises, as also during liturgical services (*in piis sacrisque exercitiis et in ipsis liturgicis actionibus*) the voices of the faithful may ring out according to the norms and requirements of the rubrics.” In any case, this provision clearly indicates the chief function of the *cantus popularis*, namely at popular devotions. And then the Constitution gives permission for congregational hymns to enter the liturgical celebrations—but without defining either the place or the extent of their use. I can recall only one other liturgical regulation which suggests an awareness of the qualitative differences within the sphere of *cantus popularis*: the Liturgia Horarum permits local authorities to substitute at the sung Office, other hymns in place of those published in the Breviary, on condition that they are not some “canciunculae,” or profane ditties. Beyond this, the experts at Rome apparently fail to take into account both the great and significant religious, theological, literary, and artistic differences within the *cantus popularis*, and the consequences of those differences. Paragraph 4 of the 1967 Instruction “*Musicam sacram*” distinguishes between the liturgical and “simple pious” types of congregational hymns. And the same document lists congregational chants in this order; first, the acclamations and responses, then the antiphons and psalms, responsorial refrains, and finally, the (liturgical) hymns and canticles. I have discussed this important topic in another study, and at present we are dealing with only one aspect of this complex question, namely: in the “ideal” system of Mass chants outlined above, is there a place for the non-Biblical strophic folk hymn, the *cantio*? I believe that if the framework of the Mass chants is maintained in the strictly liturgical pieces, which are essentially the same throughout the universal Church, then the non-liturgical hymns, which differ from country to country, may figure as insertions or additions to the celebration, just as was the case with the conductus, carols, etc. in the Middle Ages.

At which points in the Mass could one insert such hymns without disturbing the liturgical equilibrium? In many countries, it is a pious tradition to have the people gather before Mass begins and to sing hymns in preparation for the sacred action. It is also customary in many lands that a brief but meaningful hymn be sung between the Gospel and the sermon. (I note in passing that this custom also preserves the original and pri-

mary function of the medieval congregational hymn, which was to frame the sermon.) Where the Offertory is carried out with appropriate solemnity (procession, incensation) there is sufficient time to add a congregational hymn to the sung or recited Offertory chant. Furthermore, the hymn at the Elevation also goes back to the Middle Ages: the people express their faith in the Real Presence and adore Christ present on the altar whilst the celebrant interrupts the Canon Missae. (Today, this hymn functions as a type, so to speak, to the acclamation *Mortem tuam*. . .) The distribution of Holy Communion and subsequent thanksgiving again allows time for hymns after the Communion chant. And a good congregational hymn is practically indispensable at the end of Mass.

These opportunities would allow for at least two or three, or as many as five or six congregational hymns. In addition, they could be sung under certain conditions in the Proper chants of “little Masses” at the parish level, as well, which I believe would be quite satisfactory. But if even more opportunities were allotted to congregational hymns (most of which were created in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries) they would be counterproductive, as failing to assert the right of liturgical singing and ultimately frustrating musical realization of the liturgical reform.

Our goal can be formulated in a paraphrase of the famous dictum of St. Pius X: “Do not merely sing during Mass, but rather sing the Mass.” (Notitiae 5 [1969] 406).

PROFESSOR LASZLO DOBSZAY

NOTES

- ¹ In this chapter, the terms *Graduale Romanum* or *Antiphonarium Missae* refer not to the melodies, but to the liturgical texts arranged according to the annual cycle of the liturgical year, the *anni circulus*.
- ² It is quite remarkable, however, that this connection between a Proper chant and a given part of the liturgy does not involve explicit mention of the start of Mass in the Introit, for example, or explicit reference to the act of offering in the Offertory chant, or to the reception of the Sacrament in the Communio. The reality is rather that certain thoughts and emotions are evoked in the mind of the participant through these chants connected with the given liturgical event.
- ³ As I see it, the only reason for some of the changes was, unfortunately: change for its own sake, change itself. For example, the new Missal gives on one day the chanted Proper piece from the *Graduale*, and on another day, a different text (without tune) which is neither better nor worse than the one from the *Graduale*. I cannot recall that anyone has demonstrated the spiritual benefit (cf. SC 23!) of this device. But it was quite sufficient to loosen the link with the sung Proper, thus diminishing the inner coherence of the liturgy and consequently also its external discipline.
- ⁴ The Old-Roman Gradual also retains elements of this system when it presents a modest number of Allelujas which are used several times. The composition of the *Graduale Simplex* was not motivated by liturgical considerations, but by musical ones. According to SC 117, *Expedit quoque ut paretur editio simpliciores modos continens, in usum minorum ecclesiarum*. The book aided the ritual practice of such “smaller churches” in two ways. First, it offered a chant repertory selected from the syllabic Office antiphons based largely on recurring (and hence easily mastered) model-melodies with multiple texts, in place of the ornate individual melodies created for the use of the Roman scholar. Secondly, the book contains sets of chants for free distribution within a given season, in place of the chants which changed each week.
- ⁵ In the new Hungarian Catholic church hymnal (Enekle Egyház=The Church in Her Chants) there are 46 Introits for the whole year (28 for the Temporale, 18 for the Sanctorale, Commune and Votive Masses). The texts are taken from the *Graduale Romanum*, with some abbreviation in a few exceptional cases (e.g. *Exsurge, quare obdormis, Domine? Exsurge, et ne repellas in finem: quare faciem tuam avertis? Adjuva nos, et libera nos*). The majority of these texts are sung to one of a “set” of 12 antiphon melodies. The collection is supplemented by the “Book of Introits,” which contains all the Introits of the Temporale, in typical cases set to the same tunes.
- ⁶ To take but one example: the text of the Mass Introit could be chanted in the tone of the *capitulum*’s or Little Chapter in the Divine Office, followed by the psalm in mode 2 psalm tone intoned by a cantor, a minister, or a server with a good voice, or as a last resort by the celebrant.