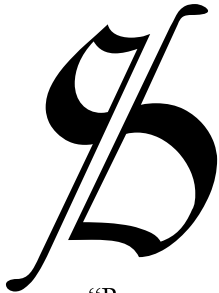


The Gradual and the Responsorial Psalm

by William Mahrt



ould we sing the gradual or the responsorial psalm? In the history of the liturgy this could not have been the question, for these are the names of the same genre at different points in time. Indeed, even the current lectionary speaks of “the responsorial psalm, which is called the gradual.”¹ “Gradual” is usually applied to discrete pieces of Gregorian chant, first written down in the ninth century, but having an oral tradition dating back a century or more, even as far back as fourth-century Jerusalem in at least one instance.²

“Responsorial psalm” usually refers to an earlier practice, mentioned in sermons of the fathers of the church, especially St. Augustine, in which a psalmist sang verses, to which the congregation sang a refrain. There is no music extant for such a practice, not even a description of such music, and although the assumption of many liturgists is that this would have been very simple singing, that is an unprovable and highly hypothetical assumption. It is, nevertheless, the basis of the innovation of such a practice in the current liturgy after the council. Moreover, scholars are skeptical that there is much historical continuity between the responsorial psalm and the gradual. For the gradual, though, we have specific melodies from the ninth century onward, which have been sung ever since, a good precedent for the continuation of their singing. There is, nevertheless, a conceptual continuity from the responsorial psalm to the gradual, and the notion of that continuity can inform the answer to what is to be sung now and how to achieve it.

“Gregorian chant is the ideal setting of its text,” it is sometimes said with the best of intentions. This statement very substantially misses the mark, though, for each Gregorian genre—whether antiphon, responsory, litany, hymn, etc—sets its text in a uniquely different way from the others and in a way beautifully suited to its particular function in the liturgy. Thus, Pope Pius X, in defining the characteristics of sacred music, included “bontà delle forme,” goodness of forms in the plural; this is often translated simply as “beauty,” and not without reason, for the panoply of Gregorian forms corresponds to the variety of functions of the various liturgical actions and in fact expresses that variety; thus it shows forth the very nature of the liturgy, its *spendor formae* as the scholastics put it, its beauty.³

Beauty is an essential quality of the liturgy: it makes the good and the true compelling; it contributes a sense of elevation to the sacredness and transcendence of the rites; and it leads to God, who is Beauty himself.⁴ Among the most beautiful chants of the Mass are the melismatic chants which complement the lessons—the gradual, the alleluia, and the tract; they are the ultimate in

William Mahrt is president of the Church Music Association of America. Mahrt@stanford.edu. This was delivered as a lecture to the Colloquium at Washington, D.C. in 2007.

¹*Lectionary for Mass*, 4 vols. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), p. xvii.

²See Peter Jeffery, “The Earliest Christian Chant Repertory Recovered: The Georgian Witnesses to Jerusalem Chant,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 47 (1994), 1–38.

³See William Mahrt, “Gregorian Chant As a Paradigm of Sacred Music,” *Sacred Music*, 133, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 5–14.

⁴Mahrt, “Paradigm,” 6.

expression of Gregorian beauty. Moreover, of all Gregorian chants, the beauty of these chants is the most intrinsic to their purpose in the liturgy.

What is that purpose? I sometimes ask that question of practitioners of the liturgy, and often the answer regarding the responsorial psalm is something like “to give the people something to do.” *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* in its original edition, gives no explicit sense of this purpose,⁵ but the recent revision of that document gives an amplification: “it fosters meditation on the word of God.”⁶ This is a long tradition concerning the function of these chants, and they have often been called meditation chants. They are to provide a meditative complement to the reading of the lesson. The ninth-century bishop, Amalarius, describes the effect of melismatic chants as “ploughing furrows in the soul,” making a deep impression.⁷

A Gregorian gradual sung beautifully can elicit meditation.

A Gregorian gradual sung beautifully can elicit meditation: this may be observed. My own choir sings the gradual every Sunday, and when it is sung beautifully, a quiet can be sensed in the congregation, a pin-dropping silence heard nowhere else in the liturgy except at the consecration. In any substantial gathering of people, there is a background white noise that is not observed

until it stops—turning of pages, clearing of throats, and general slight motion all create this background noise. But when the gradual is sung, all of a sudden it is no longer there, indicating that everyone’s attention has been captured. There is no longer any distracted motion; intense listening puts to rest extraneous motion of the body and makes possible a kind of attentive repose. That attentive repose is the result of meditation.

What is the object of this meditation at the gradual? It can actually be several things: the chant can be the medium of meditation upon the specific text which it sets. It can also be the occasion for letting the words of the previous lesson sink in and resonate, or even for anticipating the lesson to come. The lessons are sung to very simple tones, many words, much to think about, set to few pitches; the opposite is true of the gradual, few words, set to many notes—space to reflect upon the lesson. But there is a further object of the meditation in the gradual—the inherent beauty of the chant itself. The gradual (and the alleluia and the tract to a slightly lesser degree) has a characteristic way of setting the text. It is a melismatic chant; some of its syllables carry a melisma, a series of several notes to that syllable; but it also has a characteristic placement of those melismas: several of the longest of them come upon final, unaccented syllables of words. This suggests a partial departure from the specifics of the text for a more purely musical expression. That musical expression, however, is not a distraction from the liturgy, but rather an inherent part of it—the beauty with which

⁵*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 2nd ed. (1975), ¶36; <<http://www.ourladywarriors.org/liturgy/girm1975.htm>>

⁶*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 3rd typ. ed. (2002), ¶61; given in Latin and English in Edward Foley, Nathan D. Mitchell, and Joanne M. Pierce, eds. *A Commentary on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), p. 152.

⁷Anders Ekenberg, *Cur cantatur? Die Funktionen des liturgischen Gesanges nach Autoren der Karolingerzeit* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), p. 65.

the gradual decorates the liturgy of the word is one which creates for the listener a receptivity for the Word of God, makes the listener eagerly open to hearing the next lesson.

The meditative character of these chants is thus intrinsically linked to their melismatic style. The alleluia following the next lesson is even more melismatic, and there is a climax of attention and action that leads to the singing of the gospel, the high point of the liturgy of the word. Is it not more pastoral to give people a gradual which incorporates them intimately in listening to the lessons—their proper function in the liturgy of the word—than to give them a responsorial psalm which merely gives them something to do?

But an objection could be raised: the *General Instruction* and the lectionary say that the responsorial psalm is preferred, with the gradual as an alternative, so why choose the gradual instead? The gradual is given as a legitimate option, so this is a pastoral judgment. When the congregation is capable of hearing the gradual in a sophisticated and intimate way, it may be better to provide that for them.

The gradual is an essential part of the repertory of Gregorian chant with an ancient tradition and represents the proper musical form which is a constituent of the liturgical action, the responsorial psalm does not.

But there is a greater issue: while the gradual is an essential part of the repertory of Gregorian chant with an ancient tradition and represents the proper musical form which is a constituent of the liturgical action, the responsorial psalm does not. In fact, as it is usually sung, the responsorial psalm is a mismatch of musico-liturgical forms. Either it is sung to a psalm tone, with the congregation singing an antiphon, or, as in the *Graduale Simplex*, it is sung to the melody of a short respond of the office. In either case, a musical form that suits a very different liturgical situation is being employed. The musical form of psalm tone with antiphon suits the chanting of whole psalms by a whole community, which must complete the chanting of the entire psalter in the course of a week. Its melodic style functions to order the chanting of the group together, providing an elevated tone of voice and a melodic articulation of the verse structure of the psalms. The neutrality of the psalm tone itself is very delicately compensated by the more melodic style of the antiphon sung before and after the psalm. It is a completely participatory genre, suited to those chanting more than to those listening. To transplant that musical style to a solo cantor singing a few verses of a psalm, while the congregation repeats the antiphon after each verse is a substantial change of function without any change in musical style.

The short respond of the office is only slightly better suited to the function of the responsorial psalm of the Mass. In the tradition of the office, it is a complement to the chanting of the little chapter, a single verse of scripture, usually from an epistle. It usually involves two repeats of the respond, with a third partial repeat. Its length is proportioned to the brief scope of the little chapter. To use it at Mass in relation to a much more substantial reading from the scripture either does not match the scripture with a chant proportioned to its length, or requires quite a bit more repetition, but the form itself does not tolerate so much repetition; again, there is a mismatch of form and function.

Sacrosanctum Concilium called for giving Gregorian chant first place in the Roman Rite.⁸ Should not the singing of the meditation chants, the summit of Gregorian beauty, be included in giving the chant first place? Should not the reception of these chants be a goal in the long-term planning for liturgical music? My purpose here is to suggest ways in which this can be achieved on the long term for the gradual.

I thus contend that musical style is linked to liturgical function, something implied by “*bontà delle forme*” of Pope St. Pius X, and that the Gregorian gradual fulfills that criterion over the responsorial psalm; it is the ideal for which to work, and this is a part of a greater ideal, a Gregorian Mass, in which the priest sings his part in the appointed chant melodies, a choir sings all the Propers of the Mass in Gregorian chant, and the congregation sings the Gregorian Ordinary of the Mass.

However, this cannot simply be imposed upon an unsuspecting congregation without preparation. They must become acquainted with chant and with Latin over a period of time, and this process needs to take place with some checking of the reception by keeping one’s ear to the ground and frankly asking members of the congregation how it is going. Still, this caution could become an excuse not to use any Latin or chant. The answer, of course, is to prepare them, not to denigrate them or their abilities. After all, our general population operates sophisticated computers and drives advanced automobiles at high speeds on the highways; why should they not be able to approach their participation in the liturgy with some sophistication as well?

There is a certain mismatch in the music of the responsorial psalm as it is sung in our churches.

I would propose two complementary ways in which Gregorian chant can be incorporated into the liturgy: 1) the paradigm—a completely sung Latin Mass which exemplifies the best of the tradition, and 2) a process of

gradually upgrading a parish Mass and educating the congregation. The first could be at one of the Sunday Mass times, with various forms of the second at other times. Or the first could be on occasions, on a special day, or in a special location—in a city, a Latin Mass regularly celebrated at a noteworthy church, whether in the ordinary or extraordinary form, which individuals could attend on occasion or regularly. The second could be the occasion for introducing chant and gradually developing a program of liturgical music which is received by the congregation and is the occasion of enthusiastic participation. This kind of gradual introduction of chant and Latin is taking place in many churches throughout the country; I have witnessed the great success of two such programs; St. Mary’s Church in Greenville, South Carolina and St. Edward’s Church in Newark, California; there are certainly many more.

Although there is a certain mismatch in the music of the responsorial psalm as it is sung in our churches, that does not mean that these forms of music do not have value. But those values are relative: there are greater goods and lesser goods. It is sometimes the function of a lesser good to point out the greater good. To illustrate my proposal, I will take the responsorial psalm for the Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and show how it can be gradually upgraded and lead to the singing of the Gregorian gradual.

⁸See William Mahrt, “Editorial: ‘Pride of Place,’” *Sacred Music*, 135, no. 3 (Fall 2008), 3–4.

This feast is only one of three in the year which celebrate a nativity; other saints' days observe the day of death, the heavenly birthday of the saint; but the three days which celebrate an earthly birth are Christmas, the birth of the Blessed Virgin, and this one; all three celebrate the birth of one who is already in grace. The story is told in St. Luke's Gospel (1:39–56): When Mary visited Elizabeth, the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt in recognition of the Lord, and this has always been taken to have been the time of John's cleansing from original sin, and so he was born in grace. This event is observed in the gradual by the prophetic application of a text from Jeremiah (1:5, 9), which recounts there the sanctification of the prophet in the womb:

Example 1: Gradual, *Priusquam te formarem*

The musical score is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It begins with a 'v' (voice) and a 'P' (piano) marking. The lyrics are: *Ri- úsqvam te formá-rem * in ú- te-ro, no- vi te : et án-tequám ex-í- res de ven- tre, san- cti- fi-cá-vi te. V. Mi- sit Dó- mi-nus ma- num su- am, et té- ti-git os me- um, et di-xit mi-hi.* The music features a series of melismas (long, flowing passages) on the final syllables of words, particularly on 'te', 'san-cti-fi-cá-vi', 'Dó-mi-nus', 'ma-num', 'su-am', 'os', and 'me-um'. The score is divided into two systems by a double bar line.

Before I formed thee inside thy mother, I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee. V. The Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth: and said to me: Before I formed thee . . .

Here is one gradual in the year for which the respond (the first part through “sanctified thee”) must be repeated after the verse, since the verse concludes with “said to me,” requiring the reiteration of what was said. There is no question of who is speaking, for the verse indicates that it is the Lord speaking, the verse itself being in the voice of John. The respond contains two parallel statements: the second is a heightening of the sense of the first (“I knew thee,” “I sanctified thee,”) the heightening is expressed by the difference of pitch focus: the first statement centers around F, while the second rises to c, and in its return to F, still keeps c as a reference point. Thus the form and sense of the text is represented by the music.

The piece is moderately melismatic, there are five melismas of four notes, five of five notes and one each of six, nine, ten, eleven, nineteen and twenty-nine notes. Notably, those of eleven, nineteen, and twenty-nine are on unaccented final syllables of words, end-melismas.

Compare this to the refrain of the responsorial psalm.⁹

Example 2: Refrain of the Responsorial Psalm



The text is more general than that of the gradual. It is not clear who is speaking, and the rest of the psalm which is sung to it does not clarify that. It could be the voice of John the Baptist, or it could be the voice of the worshipper. The lesson from Isaiah which precedes it (49:1–6), including “The Lord called me before I was born,” suggests application to John the Baptist, but the relation to the psalm is tenuous; worshippers might simply take the path of least resistance and apply it to themselves.

The melody is overly simple, rising a fifth and immediately descending to the second degree, creating an expectation that eventually it should progress to the tonic again; this happens immediately, leaving the last measure nowhere further to go. Of four measures, the first half-note duration of measures one and three are the tonic. This leaves the melody with practically no leeway to create a beautiful or interesting shape. Its two halves each begin with a leap upward, with a prevalence of descending motion following. The melody is quite metric, which creates a sing-song effect.

Ex. 3: Chant-like Antiphon:

a. I praise you, for I am wonderfully made.

b. I praise you, for I am won-der-fully made.

c. O Lord, you have probed me and you know me;;

You know when I sit and when I stand You understand my thoughts from a- far.
With all my ways you are fa- mi- liar. My journeys and my rest you scruti-nize,

This could be the subject of considerable improvement (See Ex. 3a). To use a chanted rhythm instead of a metric rhythm would reduce the sing-song, repetitious character. Likewise, the two halves should show contrasting melodic motion. So, in chant rhythm, the first half rises to the reciting tone, and the second gradually descends to the final. If the second half seems a bit too simple, the key word “wonderfully” could be emphasized by the addition of a four-note neume that allows a turning upon the reciting note before descending to the final (Ex. 3b). The psalm could be sung to a psalm tone in relation to repetition of one of these chant-like antiphons (Ex. 3c).

⁹By Owen Alstott, *Respond and Acclaim* (Portland: Oregon Catholic Press, 2007).

Example 4: Short responsory

V 1 In you, O LORD, I take — ref - uge; *

R Let me nev - er — come to shame. —

V 2 In your right - eous-ness de - liv - er me and res -

cue me; * in - cline your ear to me and save — me.

R Let me nev - er — come to shame. —

V 3 Be to me a rock of ref - uge, a strong for - tress, to

save — me, * for you are my rock and my for - tress.

R Let me nev - er — come to shame. —

The *Graduale Simplex* gives a different text and sets it to the formulas of the short responsory; it is given in English translation by Paul Ford in *By Flowing Waters* (Ex. 4).¹⁰ It is not immediately clear why this text was chosen, until the cantor reaches verse six, where “it was you who took me from my mother’s womb,” makes a faint recall of the text from the gradual which speaks of Jeremiah’s

¹⁰Paul F. Ford, *By Flowing Waters: Chant for the Liturgy: A Collection of Unaccompanied Song for Assemblies, Cantors, and Choirs* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 204.

sanctification in the womb before birth, applied prophetically to St. John the Baptist. The melody is very simple, and may not bear quite as many repetitions as are given (ten). There is perhaps something a little more organic about the musical form, since the response for the congregation is musically an integral consequence of the verse, but the congregation's response is quite short.

Example 5: Elaborated Mass Psalm Tone in Mode Five

O Lord, you have probed me and you know me;;

You know when I sit and when I stand You understand my thoughts from a- far.
With all my ways you are fa- mi- liar. My journeys and my rest you scruti-nize,

If the function of these chants is to bring an element of beauty to the liturgy, then the simple psalm tone and the verses of the responsory are certainly not all that a cantor could do. A beginning could be made by modeling the psalm verses upon the psalmody for the introit of the Mass,¹¹ rather than upon office psalmody. For this particular mode, there is not much difference, but for many modes, there is considerably more melodic content to the formulae. Even for mode five, a similar elaboration could easily be made (Ex. 5). This begins to approach something a cantor should sing. Further such elaboration could be made for the Mass psalm tones of other modes.

Example 6: Invitatory Tone for Mode Five

O Lord, you have probed me and you know me; You know when I sit and when I stand;

You understand my thoughts from a--far. My journeys and my rest you scruti-nize,

a. b.

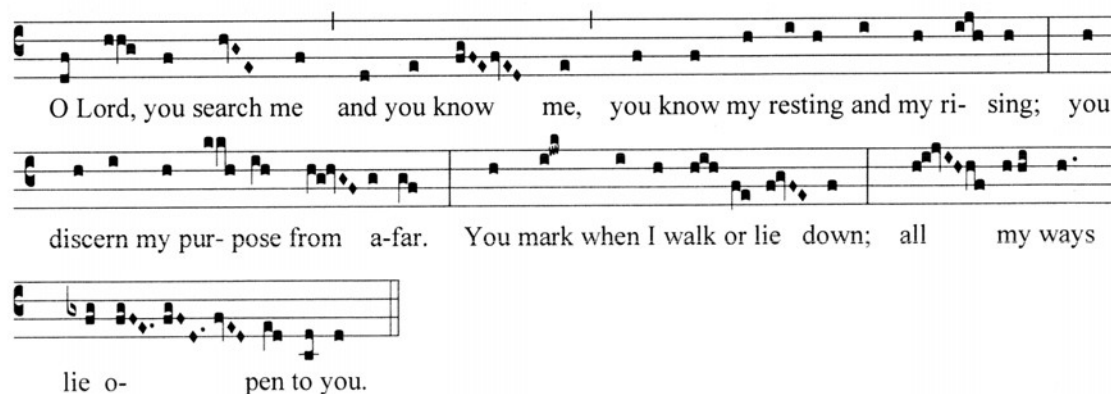
With all my ways you are fa- mi- liar. With all my ways you are fa- mi- liar.

¹¹Given in a table for the Gloria Patri in the *Liber Usualis* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), pp. 14–16, and in *Graduale Romanum* (Sablé sur Sarthe: Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Solesmes, 1974), pp. 822–24.

There is another Gregorian genre that more closely approaches the singing of psalmody by a cantor: the verses of the invitatory psalm at Matins (Ex. 6a).¹²

This formula groups two verses of the psalm together and has a somewhat melismatic conclusion; it could easily be alternated with the congregation's singing one of the antiphons. In English, the end-melisma is problematic; the final unaccented syllable of the text does not easily bear a long melisma. One might well adjust that end melisma to allow the final unaccented syllable to fall on the last note of the formula (Ex. 6b). This expresses the pattern of English accentuation more naturally, but sacrifices the end-melisma, so important to the function of the genre in Latin.

Ex. 7. Lectionary Respond Set to Gradual-Verse Melody



This more melismatic verse raises the question, how melismatic should the cantor's verse be? Should the melismatic style of the gradual itself be a model for the cantor's singing? After all, the Gregorian graduals were originally sung by solo cantors. The verse prescribed by the lectionary can well be set to the melody of the mode five gradual verse (Ex. 7). Mode-five graduals are numerous, and their verses give ample examples of how various texts can be set. If in the setting, the neumatic groups, three or more notes, are allowed to fall on accented syllables, a fairly satisfactory setting of the text is achieved. This verse can then be alternated with antiphons sung by the congregation; it becomes clear that the music is not just there to provide a means of delivering the prescribed text, but also to enhance the beauty of its pronunciation. In fact, these verses can be fully as melismatic as those of the proper gradual. I have sung such verses in alternation with a congregational antiphon, and they were very well received.

An objection could be raised: would this not give the cantor even greater prominence, which, according to some, is already too great? There is a historical answer to this question: Gregorian usage from at least the twelfth century calls for two cantors to sing the verses of the gradual.¹³ The use of two cantors removes the possible impression that the verses are done casually and brings a sense of objectivity to the singing. It also requires some rehearsal, a benefit for all concerned. The cantors need not face the congregation. If the congregation needs some direction, another person might do that more effectively, so as not to confuse the function.

¹²Given for Pentecost in the *Liber*, pp. 864–66.

¹³*Liber Usualis*, p. xv.

The liturgy does not require the congregation to participate in the actual singing of the gradual. Indeed, if the Gregorian gradual is sung, it is beyond their capability to do so, and, as I have said above, it is not essential to their participation, which is principally to hear the Word of God. The situation, however, may require that it be sung in English. A number of collections of adaptation of Gregorian proper chants have appeared, several of them are available on the web site of the CMAA. In general, they attempt to simplify the style of the pieces, so that the result is somewhere between that of a gradual and an office antiphon. These are well worth considering, for they contribute a chant style and a certain sense of solemnity. Their very simplicity, however, is their limitation. In comparison with the genuine Gregorian gradu- als, they do not achieve the same degree of elaboration and solemnity that the Gregorian chants do.

Example 8: Gregorian Gradual Translated in the *Plainchant Gradual*.

The image shows a musical score for a Gregorian gradual translated into English. The score is written on five staves. The first staff begins with a 'v.' (versicle) and a large 'O'. The lyrics are: 'O Re-ver* I for-med thee in the bel-ly I'. The second staff continues: 'knew thee: and be-fore thou ca-mest forth from the womb,'. The third staff continues: 'I sanc-ti-fi-ed thee. ¶. The Lord'. The fourth staff continues: 'put forth his hand, and tou-ched my'. The fifth staff continues: 'mouth,* and said un- to me:'. The music is written in a simple, clear style, using a single melodic line on a five-line staff. The lyrics are written below the staff, with some words on a second line. The score is enclosed in a rectangular box.

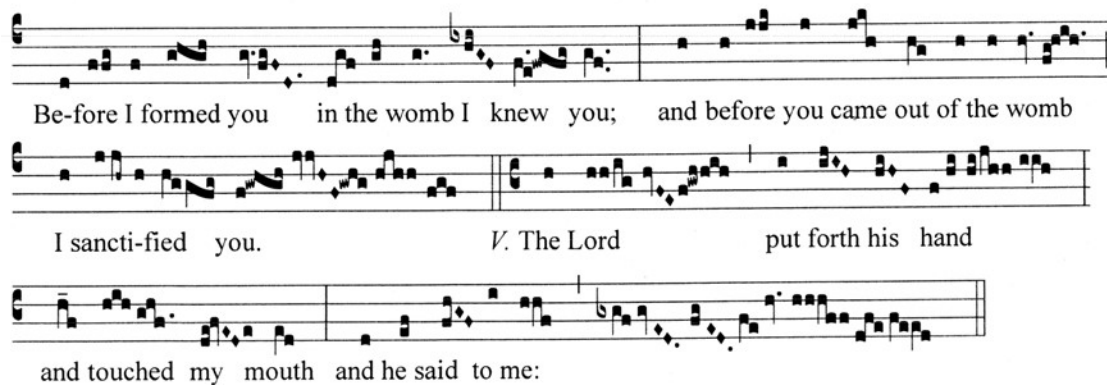
So then, the question comes up: Can the gradu- als themselves be translated into English? An initial place to look is the traditional high-church adaptations from the first half of the twentieth century, particularly those done by Burgess and Palmer and published under the name *Plainchant Gradual*.¹⁴ These keep the Gregorian melodies rather strictly, setting “traditional” English texts to them (Ex. 8). These versions allow a full Gregorian gradual to be sung in English, and there is an advantage to that. Still, the fit of text to music is not perfect, the process being essentially one of *contrafactum*—fitting a text to a fixed, pre-existing piece of music. Likewise, the very traditional texts, complete with separate syllables for the ending of past participles (as in “touch-ed”), will not be to the liking of those most ardently advocating the use of the vernacular. These have been used by high-church Anglicans by tradition, but there is another Anglican tradition which may have been more

¹⁴Rev. G. H. Palmer and Francis Burgess, *The Plainchant Gradual*, 4 parts in 2 vols., 1st ed. (Wantage: St. Mary’s Press, 1946–53), 2nd ed. (ibid.: 1962–65), 2nd ed. available for download at musicasacra.com.

prevalent: each choirmaster made a setting of the chants anew, allowing for considerable variance in the conception of the rhythm of the chant in English.

I used the *Plainchant Gradual* for Holy Week for three years beginning in 1965. We were required to use English; while our Mass with Latin chant was one out of four on Sundays, the Holy Week liturgies were for members from all the Masses. After the first year, I said that at least we were able to save all the chant for Holy Week; the second year I said that the settings were not all together satisfactory; the third year I said these melodies do not fit these texts; and the fourth year we quietly put the chants back into Latin, and no one noticed.¹⁵

Example 9: Gregorian Gradual Newly Translated

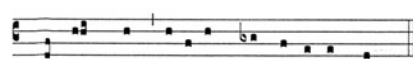


Still, it is possible to make a nearly satisfactory setting in English of the authentic Gregorian gradu-als, but the process must involve working with both text and melody. English is a more accen-tual language than Latin, and so greater care must be taken in setting accented syllables. Since the gradu-als are formulaic, that is, the same set of melodic figures is used for several texts, there is some flexibility. Since the texts do not have even the same number of syllables, let alone the same posi-tion of accented syllables, the melodic formulae need to be fitted to the pattern of accent in the English text. I have used the table of melodic formulae for mode-five gradu-als in Willi Apel's *Gregorian Chant*¹⁶ as a resource for finding the best way to shape a melody to the pattern of accent and phrase inherent in the text (Ex. 9). My essay in setting the gradual for St. John the Baptist is an exper-iment; with more experience considerable revision could be made. Still, this is a viable way to sing this gradual. It is as melismatic as the Latin gradual. It happens that both the respond and the verse end with a strong syllable, so there is no problem in maintaining an end-melisma in both places. The internal melismas all fall upon accented syllables. This is a slight compromise, and further experi-ence would certainly discover more subtle ways to maintain the musical and liturgical value of the end melisma.

¹⁵An exception to the fitting of text to music was the set of antiphons for the Maundy on Holy Thursday, which we kept in English until two years ago. These melodies are essentially those of office antiphons, each of which sets a large number of texts. Their melodies are quite flexible for adaptation to other texts, and this carried over to their setting into English.

¹⁶Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1958), pp. 346–50.

Ex. 10. Falsobordone



I praise you, for I am wonderfully made.



1. O Lord you search me and you know me

You know my resting and — my ri- sing You discern my purpose from a- far.

3. For it was you who created

my be- ing, knit me together in my mo- ther's womb.

5. Already you knew

my soul,— my body held no se-cret from you.

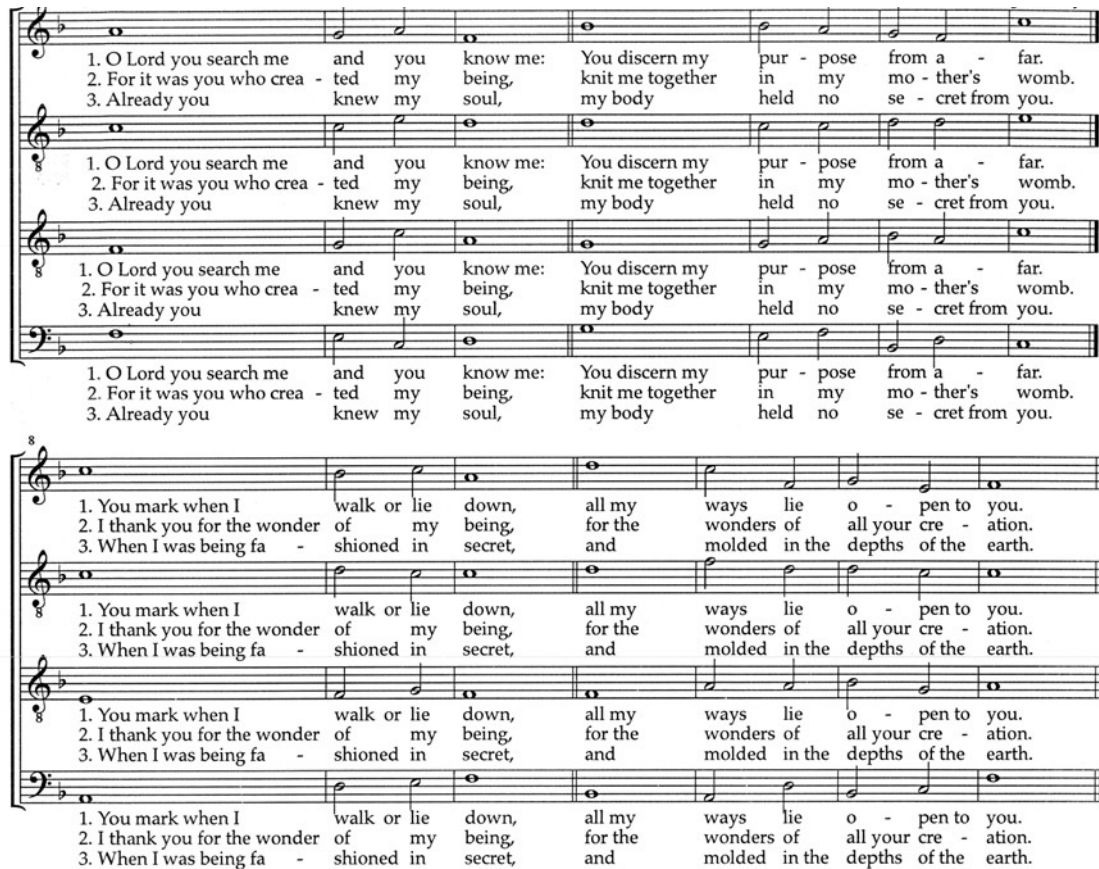
Walther

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 2. You mark when I walk or | lie down,* | all my ways lie | o - pen to you. |
| 4. I thank you for the wonder of my | be - ing,* | for the wonders of | all your crea - tion. |
| 6. When I was being fashioned in | se - cret,* | and molded in the | depths of the earth. |
| 2. You mark when I walk or | lie down,* | all my ways lie | o - pen to you. |
| 4. I thank you for the wonder of my | be - ing,* | for the wonders of | all your crea - tion. |
| 6. When I was being fashioned in | se - cret,* | and molded in the | depths of the earth. |
| 2. You mark when I walk or | lie down,* | all my ways lie | o - pen to you. |
| 4. I thank you for the wonder of my | be - ing,* | for the wonders of | all your crea - tion. |
| 6. When I was being fashioned in | se - cret,* | and molded in the | depths of the earth. |
| 2. You mark when I walk or | lie down,* | all my ways lie | o - pen to you. |
| 4. I thank you for the wonder of my | be - ing,* | for the wonders of | all your crea - tion. |
| 6. When I was being fashioned in | se - cret,* | and molded in the | depths of the earth. |

Another way to perform the responsorial psalm is to use four-part settings of the psalm verses. The oldest way of doing that is falsobordone, a harmonization of the psalm tone. This can be interpolated into the alternation with the congregation, and can itself alternate with chant verses (Ex. 10). The psalm-tone melody is in the tenor, and that establishes both the pitch and the rhythm; the rhythm is a chanted rhythm, following speech rhythm, not measured or metric. The alternation between chant and falsobordone sets each medium off in comparison with the other in a very complementary way. After a performance of psalms in this fashion, a member of the congregation remarked, “the falsobordone makes the chant sound so pure; the chant makes the falsobordone sound so luxurious.”

In England, the falsobordone was developed considerably and the result was “Anglican chant” (Ex. 11). This is generally how the choirs of the Anglican cathedrals of England sing the psalms in their Evensong, and their singing of this genre is exquisite. This form generally groups two verses together, set to a four-section formula. The psalm tone is rarely used; rather there is a sensitive harmonic and melodic contour. As with the falsobordone, it is sung in a speech-like rhythm. This form could easily be alternated with the same antiphon sung by the congregation, the psalm verses being sung completely in the Anglican chant.

Example 11. Anglican chant



1. O Lord you search me and you know me: You discern my pur - pose from a - far.
 2. For it was you who crea - ted my being, knit me together in my mo - ther's womb.
 3. Already you knew my soul, my body held no se - cret from you.

1. O Lord you search me and you know me: You discern my pur - pose from a - far.
 2. For it was you who crea - ted my being, knit me together in my mo - ther's womb.
 3. Already you knew my soul, my body held no se - cret from you.

1. O Lord you search me and you know me: You discern my pur - pose from a - far.
 2. For it was you who crea - ted my being, knit me together in my mo - ther's womb.
 3. Already you knew my soul, my body held no se - cret from you.

1. You mark when I walk or lie down, all my ways lie o - pen to you.
 2. I thank you for the wonder of my being, for the wonders of all your cre - ation.
 3. When I was being fa - shioned in secret, and molded in the depths of the earth.

1. You mark when I walk or lie down, all my ways lie o - pen to you.
 2. I thank you for the wonder of my being, for the wonders of all your cre - ation.
 3. When I was being fa - shioned in secret, and molded in the depths of the earth.

1. You mark when I walk or lie down, all my ways lie o - pen to you.
 2. I thank you for the wonder of my being, for the wonders of all your cre - ation.
 3. When I was being fa - shioned in secret, and molded in the depths of the earth.

I have argued that the Gregorian gradual sung in Latin is, other things being equal, the ideal. Perhaps some can implement this immediately, but most will have to work up to it step by step. Each stage represents an improvement: using a chant rhythm naturally conveys a sacred tone; greater elaboration conveys the importance of the accompanied lessons and contributes an element of beauty that is essential to the meditative function; the ultimate Gregorian style of the gradual elicits an attentive repose by which the listener receives the lessons both inwardly and outwardly. ♪

