TEXT BOOK
OF
GREGORIAN CHANT
ACCORDING TO THE SOLESMES METHOD
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TRANSLATED FROM THE SIXTH FRENCH EDITION
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
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OBLATE OF SOLESMES.

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CHAPTER II.
The Singing of the Psalms. (1)


To complete what has been said regarding Gregorian tonality, and avoid the necessity of recurring to the subject later on, the needful chapter on psalmody will be inserted here.

The chanting of the psalms was always closely connected with that of the antiphons repeated at the end of each one, and formerly intercalated even between the verses. As these antiphons were written in any of the eight modes which we have just examined, according to the meaning of the text or the choice of the composer, it was necessary for the harmony of the whole to compose as many musical formulas for chanting the psalms as there are modes.

Psalmody is the singing of the psalms and canticles of the Church. The psalms are divided into verses and each verse into two parts or hemistiches, separated by an asterisk * in the liturgical books.

1. Dixit Dominus Domino meo : *
2. Sede a dextris meis.

Some verses have a supplementary subdivision indicated by a †. In every complete psalm-formula we must distinguish: a) the intonation (initium, inchoatio); b) the tenor, dominant or reciting-note; and c) the cadences, to the number of two: the first divides the verse in the middle, and is therefore called the mediant (mediatio); the second ends the verse and is known as the termination or final cadence. In the course of the tenor and before the mediant comes the little cadence called the flex. This is only used when the extra length of the verse and the meaning of the text

(1) For a complete study of this important and difficult subject, consult "Petit Traité de la Psalmodie traditionnelle d’après l’Édition Vaticane," par les Bénédictins de Solesmes. (Descât, Tournai).
demand it. The following are the complete formulas for chanting the psalms, according to the Vatican Edition.

**First Mode.**

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<th>Tenor</th>
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**Primus Tó-nus sic incipit tur,**

**Flex**

**Mediant**

_sic flectit tur, † et sic mediant tur._

---

_Atque sic finitur._
Second Mode.

Int.  Tenor

Secundus Tonus sic incipitur,
Flex
Mediant

Tenor  Final

Atque sic finitur.

sic flectitur, † et sic mediant:

Third Mode.

Int.  Tenor

Tertius Tonus sic incipitur,
Flex
Mediant

Tenor  Final

Atque sic finitur.

sic flectitur, † et sic mediant:

Atque sic finitur.
Chapter II. — The Singing of the Psalms.

Fourth Mode.

Quártus Tó-nus sic incl- pi- tur,

Flex Mediant

sic flécti-tur, † et sic me-di- á-tur:

Fifth Mode.

Quintus Tó-nus sic incl- pi- tur,

Flex Mediant

sic flécti-tur, † et sic me-di- á-tur:

(1) When the antiphon is marked "Fourth Mode A*" this means that the cadence A* can be used ad libitum instead of cadence A. But, on closer examination it becomes clear that this formula A* can never be employed, on any hypothesis, except for the last half of the verse sicut erat and for leading on to the resumption of the antiphon. In every other half verse A must be used.
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Sixth Mode.

\[
\text{Int.} \quad \text{Tenor}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Séxtus Tó-nus sic inci-pi-tur} \\
\text{Flex} \quad \text{Mediant}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{sic flécti-tur, \dagger et sic me-di-á-tur.} \quad *
\]

\[
\text{or et sic me-di-á-tur:} \quad *
\]

Seventh Mode.

\[
\text{Int.} \quad \text{Tenor}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Séptimus Tó-nus sic inci-pi-tur,} \\
\text{Flex} \quad \text{Mediant}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\text{sic flécti-tur, \dagger et sic me-di-á-tur:} \quad *
\]

\[
\text{Atque sic fi-ni-tur.}
\]
Chapter II. — The Singing of the Psalms.

Eighth Mode.

The dominant of the psalm is the same as that of the tone to which it belongs.

The psalm formulas of the first, third, fourth, seventh and eighth tones possess more than one final cadence. They were composed not so much for the sake of variety as in order to maintain such a close connection between the psalm and the antiphon that they should form but one thing. The singer is not therefore free to take the first cadence that comes, he must adopt the one which best fits in, musically, with the resumption of the antiphon. In actual practice this rule presents no difficulty, as the chant books always supply the end cadence of the psalm required by the antiphon and corresponding to it.

The whole secret of psalmody is to know how to adapt the various psalm formulas to the different verses of each psalm. A uniform method of adaptation is needed, and it should be simple and unmistakeable, seeing that the whole Christian race is called upon to take part in the singing of psalms.

Such a method exists. It is the legacy of the purest Gregorian tradition and has been restored and given back to us by the Solesmes school. Besides being easy and practical, it is also the most reasonable and the most in keeping with the principles which govern the interrelation of words and music in the chant. It comprises one single very simple rule which serves not only for the chanting of the psalms, but also for the liturgical recitatives such as Collects, Epistles, Gospels, Prophecies, Lessons, etc.

(1) Apply here what was said above in the note to p. 49. When the antiphon is marked "Eighth Mode G*" this formula may be used, but only for sic ut sicut: elsewhere it must always be G.
Before stating this rule, we may first set aside those musical forms which admit of no modification, whatever the nature of the syllables corresponding to them; as for example, the intonation or \textit{initium} (beginning) of the psalms with which we shall deal shortly. There are two sorts of psalm cadences for the mediant as well as for the termination:

\begin{itemize}
\item the cadence of one accent:
\end{itemize}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Dom\text{-}i\text{-}nu\text{-}s D\text{-}e\text{-}us m\text{-}e\text{-}us .}
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
\item and the cadence of two accents:
\end{itemize}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Dom\text{-}i\text{-}nu\text{-}s D\text{-}e\text{-}us m\text{-}e\text{-}us}
\end{center}

the first being made up of two notes, the second of four. Both are based on a syllabic formula called the \textit{tonic spondee}, i.e. a word of two syllables with the accent on the first. The cadence of one accent is simply known as spondaic, while that of two accents, comprising two spondees, is called dis padaic. These two species of cadences were reckoned on the spondee because this kind of word, though it only has two syllables, forms a complete rhythm; and perhaps also in part because the spondaic type is that which most often occurs in the middle and at the end of the psalm verses.

As long as the text consists only of spondees accented on the penultimate, whether in a word of two syllables or more than two, the adaptation of syllables to notes will take place of itself. By simply singing the notes as they come, the accented note is bound to correspond with the accent of the text. When, however, a dactyl (proparoxyton) occurs instead of a spondee (paroxyton) it is quite a different matter. It is here that the difficulty begins, and here that the sole rule of which we spoke may be so usefully applied. There is a dactyl for the mediant or the termination each time that the last accent is followed by two atonic syllables. Exs. \textit{Dom\text{-}i\text{-}nus, s\text{-}uper nos, Jer\text{-}us\text{-}alem}.

\begin{itemize}
\item The sole rule. This consists in changing the musical spondee into a musical dactyl by making the accented note coincide with the tonic accent of the dactyl and singing the following note twice instead of once to the two post-tonic syllables of the dactyl.
\end{itemize}
Chapter II. — The Singing of the Psalms.

The first of these two notes, often called the "additional" or "supplementary" note and corresponding to the penultimate of the dactyl, is marked white or hollow in the examples given below to show how this operation is carried out. Thus the original musical mould is only stretched, not broken, whilst the rhythm of the cadence is preserved. According to this rule all psalm cadences will be spondees or dactyls; no others can exist.

Spondee and dactyl cadences of one accent:

\[ \text{Dé-us} \]
\[ \text{Dó-mi-nus es tu super nos vivificá-vit me vivífica me Sí-on Jerú-salem} \]

Spondee cadences of two accents:

\[ \text{in-i-mí-cos tú-os Dó-mi-nus ex Sí-on Dé-us mé-us vi-ví-fi-ca me pá-cem de te} \]

Spondee or dactyl cadences of two accents:

\[ \text{Dó-mi-no mé-o implé-bit ru-fnas pú-e-ri Dó-mi-num vivi-fi-cá-bit me} \]

As the cadences can only be spondees or dactyls, whenever more than two syllables occur after the accented one, there should
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be no attempt to make this accented syllable coincide with the accented note,

\[ \text{sté-ri-lem in dómo} \]

but the musical cadence will preserve its original spondee form as follows:

\[ \text{sté-ri- lem in dómo} \]

To seek to make the note coincide with the accented syllable at any price, and when they are too far apart, is to break the musical mould which cannot contain so many syllables, thereby destroying the rhythm. The musical spondee, on the other hand, preserves both accent and rhythm. The accent of stérilem which the singer should observe in passing, as it does not occur immediately before the flat but is separated from the latter by an intermediate syllable, remains uninjured, and the musical cadence keeps its rhythm by keeping its form.

The method of psalmody which we have just demonstrated at somewhat greater length than our Spanish author, completely ignores what are called "broken" mediants. The Spanish textbook does not even so much as mention them. These mediants, unknown in the old Roman psalmody, cannot properly be called cadences at all, since they lack the essential cadential rest-note. They remain as it were suspended on the higher note, and one must await the continuation of the psalm verse before the sense of surprise which they engender is dispelled, and the wavering psalmody made to return to its ordinary course, from whence it seemed to have momentarily strayed. It may be added that from a practical point of view broken mediants make the psalms more difficult to sing, especially when, for the sake of consistency, they are introduced with every tone. This is all we shall say of a species of mediants foreign to our plan and only mentioned to be passed over. We hasten to end this section on psalm cadences by reverting to the one simple aesthetic rule for Roman psalmody and applying it to the Hebrew monosyllabic words.
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Hebrew words are accented exactly like Latin in reading, as the breviary and chant books indicate; monosyllables always coincide with the last note of the cadence:

\[ \text{\textipa{Dó-mi-nus ex Sí-...}} \]

In singing \textit{propitiatio est}, one should bring out the tonic accent \textipa{a} prominently and avoid forcing the voice on the high note corresponding to the syllable \textipa{a}.

We have now to speak of each section of the psalm verse in particular.

\textit{Intonation.}

This is a melodic formula which serves as the bond or transition between the end of the antiphon and the dominant of the psalm. It comprises two or three notes or groups of notes adapted to as many syllables. The following is the formula of intonation proper to each tone:

\begin{align*}
\text{Mode:} & \quad \text{I and VI} \quad \text{Mode:} \quad \text{II} \\
\text{III} & \quad \text{IV} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{VIII} \\
\text{VII} & \quad \text{Dí-xit Dó-mi-nus} \\
\text{Dí-xit} & \quad \text{Cré-dí-di} \quad \text{Be-átus} \quad \text{Con-fi-té-bor} \quad \text{In con-ver-} \\
\text{Dó-mi-nus} & \quad \text{pro-pter} \quad \text{vir qui} \quad \text{ti-bi} \quad \text{tén-do} \\
\text{Cré} & \quad \text{Be} \quad \text{Con-fi} \\
\text{di} & \quad \text{á} \quad \text{té} \\
\text{pro-pter} & \quad \text{tus} \quad \text{bor} \\
\text{vir qui} & \quad \text{qui} \quad \text{ti-bi} \\
\text{Con-fi-té-bor} & \quad \text{Con-fi-té-bor} \\
\text{ti-bi} & \quad \text{ti-bi}
\end{align*}

The first two syllables of the verse are here seen to be adapted to the intonations of two notes or groups of notes; the first three syllables are adapted to those of three notes.
There is no exception to this rule, but in order avoid all misunderstanding it may be remarked that the melody only influences the material arrangement of the notes without having any effect on the accent of the word. One must therefore sing:

\[ \text{Cré- di- di} \]

and not *credidi.* To avoid this fault it is necessary to pass gently over the notes of the unaccented syllable, but without taking anything away from their duration.

The formulas of intonation above given are common both to the psalms and gospel canticles, *Benedictus, Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis,* except the *Magnificat* of the second and eighth modes, in which the intonation is as follows:

\[ \text{Magni- fi- cat} * \]

The intonation is made at the beginning of the first psalm at all the Hours, even in the Ferial Office and the Office for the Dead. It is repeated at the beginning of each psalm when several are sung under one antiphon, provided that each ends with the *Gloria Patri.*

All the other verses begin *recto tono,* i.e. on the reciting-note: But in the three Gospel Canticles: *Benedictus, Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* the intonation is made at every verse for the sake of solemnity.

**Tenor.**

The tenor, dominant, or reciting-note is made up of all the notes sung at the same pitch from the intonation to the mediant and from the mediant to the termination. The dominant on which the psalm is sung is none other than that of the tone to which it belongs. This constitutes a further proof of the important part played by this note. To render the tenor properly it is only necessary to observe the laws of good reading and particularly the law of accentuation; for it is upon the text that the notes depend for their value and strength; the text it is which gives them life and energy and well-balanced phrasing. It is important that the tempo of the tenor should be sufficiently
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animated to carry the singers as far as the mediant at one vocal impulse, and from the mediant to the end of the verse, without taking breath; although the psalms should never be chanted so fast as to lose the tranquil prayerful character which properly belongs to them. One should slow down slightly in approaching the cadences, as if they were marked cantando, and sing during the tenor as if recitando were indicated. When introduced with discretion this delicate shade of difference between the tempo of the tenor and that of the cadences endows the psalmody with a peculiar charm and variety very apt to kindle fervour and devotion in the soul. The chanting of the psalms is a thing at once so simple and so engrossing that it raises us up in spite of ourselves and becomes at last nothing else but a peaceful meditation on the word of God. (†)

Flex.

The flex (†), when it occurs, allows of a slight interruption in the course of the recitation. It belongs to cadences of one accent and is marked by the melodic inflexion of a major second or a minor third, according to the modes:

Modes I, IV, VI

\[ \text{Modes II, III, V, VIII} \]

Mode VII

Breath may be taken after the flex if necessary, but only under condition that this is done off the value of the last note which must then be somewhat less sustained.

(†) As regards phrasing, good recitation and the rhythm of the pauses in chanting the psalms, the introductory chapter of “L'Accompagnement des Psaumes” par le R. P. Dom Jean Hébert Desroquettes, moine de Solesmes (Descle, Tournai), may profitably be consulted.
The Mediant.

In order to sing this well one must put into practice what was said on the subject of the tenor and the slight change of tempo made in approaching the cadence. Mediants may have either one or two accents, as will be seen in the table of tones. The manner of adapting the syllables to the notes of the cadences has been sufficiently explained. If, before the accent of a cadence, there are notes or groups of notes called «preparatory», these notes or groups never change their position, but receive the syllables indiscriminately as they occur. (†) Example:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Fourth Mode</th>
<th>Tenor</th>
<th>Prep. notes</th>
<th>Mediant</th>
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<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do-nec pó-nam in-i-mí-cos tú-os</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pá-tri et Fl-li-o</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ut pér-de-rent me</td>
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When speaking of the formation of dactylic cadences it was remarked that the weak syllable of the dactyl, e. g. Dóminus, immediately following the accented syllable, introduces another note into the melody, often called the “additional” note, and placed as a rule on the same degree as the note following it. We have here to point out an exception regarding the cadence of the last accent of the mediant of the third tone. In this cadence, instead of singing:

\[
\text{pú- e-ri Dó-mi-num } *
\text{ su- per te } *
\]

the accent should be made to correspond with the do which precedes the clivis, leaving the latter to the atonic syllable mi:

\[
\text{pú- e-ri Dó-mi-num } *
\text{ su- per te } *
\]

(†) A very simple and practical rule may here be given for recognising psalm cadences at the mediant as well as at the end of the verse. If the melody leaves the reciting-note going down this means there is a cadence of one accent, with one, two or three preparatory syllables to follow. If, on the other hand, the melody leaves the reciting note going up then a cadence of one or two accents with no preparatory syllables is to be expected.
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This adaptation, peculiar to the third mode, is actuated by the fixed place which the clivis occupies on the penultimate syllable, whether accented or not, of the mediant. In fact we are here in the presence of an invariable spondaic cadence in the melody. It can undergo no change without thereby losing its rhythm. Practically the clivis is strong or weak according to the nature of the syllable which it encounters.

After the last note of the mediant, whose value is doubled, there comes the pause marked with an asterisk *. It is difficult to indicate precisely in a text-book the duration of this pause. It ought to come naturally and cannot be measured with mathematical exactitude. Approximately it equals the value of four ordinary syllables or two slow beats.

**Termination.**

All that has been said of cadences of the mediant applies to those of the termination. Notice that on the last cadences, a and b of the third tone and on all those of the seventh, the second note of the last dactyl (additional note) is not sung on the degree of the following but on that of the preceding or accented note:

\[\text{\textit{nomen Dómi- ni}}\]

In two tones two cases may occur of a final cadence with the accented note anticipated (as above in the cadence of the mediant of the third tone): these are:

\[\text{\textit{saé- cu- lum saé-cu- li}}\]
\[\text{dormítet qui cu- stó- dit te}\]

Instead of:

\[\text{\textit{saé- cu- lum saé-cu- li}}\]
\[\text{dormítet qui cu- stó- dit te}\]
The pause which should be made after the termination, i. e., between two verses and before the resumption of the antiphon, is equal in length to the last note or syllable.

For the psalm *In exitu Israel* whenever it is sung at Vespers, and for the *Laudate pueri* at Vespers and the *Benedictus* at Lauds in certain cases, a special tone is employed, called *Peregrinus*.

First verse

In *éx-i-tu* Isra- el de Aegypto, *dómus Já-cob de pó-


The Solœsmes editions are authorised to suggest the following authentic mediant:

Isra- el de Aegypto. Má-re ví- dit et fú-git.

Whichever is used the mediant is of one accent, but with three preparatory notes in the case of the Solœsmes version.

(*) Notice here a final instance of the exceptions regarding the additional note to which reference has already been made.
Solemn Mediants.

On feast days the following formula may be used for every verse of the Magnificat (*):

I and VI

\[ \text{Et exsultá-vit spí-rí-tus mé-us} \]
\[ \text{mí-hi má-gna qui pó-t-ens est}: \]

II and VIII

\[ \text{Et exsultá-vit spí-rí-tus mé-us} \]
\[ \text{má-gna qui pó-t-ens est}: \]

III

\[ \text{Et exsultá-vit spí-rí-tus mé-us} \]
\[ \text{má-gna qui pó-t-ens est}: \]

IV

\[ \text{Et exsultá-vit spí-rí-tus mé-us} \]
\[ \text{má-gna qui pó-t-ens est}: \]

V

\[ \text{Et exsultá-vit spí-rí-tus mé-us} \]
\[ \text{má-gna qui pó-t-ens est}: \]

VII

\[ \text{Ma-gní-fi-cat} \]
\[ \text{Et exsultá-vit spí-rí-tus mé-us} \]
\[ \text{má-gna qui pó-t-ens est}: \]

(*) Anticipated accents.
For the psalms which are sung without an antiphon, as in the Prayers for the Dead or after the Litany of the Saints, the following special tone, called in directum is employed:

\[
\text{Sic incl-pi- es et sic fá-ci- es fléxam,} \quad \text{sic ve-ro métrum.}
\]

sic autem púncatum.

Remark:

If the text, either of the mediant or the termination, be too short to be adapted to all the notes of the formula, the following rule is applied:

Mediant.

Begin with the dominant and bring together all the notes of the formula on the first syllable as far as the tonic accent which must always correspond with the musical accent:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{I} & \text{VI} \\
\text{Qui fá-cit haec.} & \text{Qui fá-cit haec.}
\end{array}
\]

Termination.

Begin with whatever note corresponds logically with the first syllable of the text, counting from the last tonic accent which must always correspond with the melodic accent. As for the notes or groups of notes which have no text to correspond to them, they are simply suppressed:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{I} & \text{VI} \\
\text{et tímui- i} & \text{fi- at, fi- at} \\
& \text{et tímui- i}
\end{array}
\]

Choice of Pitch.

The choice of a pitch to be used in the chant depends on the middle range of the voices composing the choir. La, si♭, si♭, and even do can be adopted for a dominant upon occasion. In singing
the Hours of the Divine Office it is well to keep to one dominant for the psalms and antiphons, so that the reciting note may be the same in all the tones:

```
la fa re do
```

The transition from one antiphon to another without a change of dominant can be made in one of two ways:

1) The antiphon having been sung, place the dominant of the following passage immediately on the same diapason; then, paying no further attention to the mode in which the first was written, one can go up or down to meet the note with which the second begins.

2) We know that besides the reciting-note or tenor, the notes which are a fourth or a fifth below the dominant, thus established on the same pitch, sound in unison:

```
la mi ré fa do si re la sol do sol fa, etc...
```

Most of these notes play the part of dominants or tonics according to the modes. If the new antiphon begins with one of them, the transition presents no difficulty, the first note being sung as if this second antiphon were continued in the same tone as the preceding one:
As for the second and third notes below the dominant they meet on the same pitch in the first, fourth and sixth modes (see ex. A), as well as in the second, third, fifth and eighth (see ex. B):

![Diagram of musical notes]

The fourth mode transposed (so-called), as also the seventh, belong to those of the first group (A) as regards their second note (a whole tone) below the dominant; in their third note (minor third) they rank with those of the second (B). The same procedure as was adopted for the fourth, fifth and dominant, can be applied to all these three notes when passing from one antiphon to another.

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**CHAPTER III.**

**Rhythm.**


Before entering upon the study of rhythm in plainsong, it is well to remember that Gregorian chant possesses a life of its own which by its very nature sets it quite apart from figured music, and also that the Latin language which accompanies it and whose rhythm it has espoused, differs from modern languages in very many distinct features. Having made this first observation, a second immediately suggests itself. We cannot proceed to apply general laws of rhythm directly to the chant without first studying rhythm by itself “bare of all adornment of melody or