

in the fourth of the five "psalms." The other four are really psalms, but the fourth is always one of the minor, or Old Testament, canticles. The fourteen such canticles are distributed throughout the week in two sets of seven. One set is used for most of the year, while the other is reserved for the period between Septuagesima and Palm Sunday.⁴

THE LESSER HOURS

The four Lesser Hours—Prime, Terce, Sext, and None—are the shortest Offices and the least important from a musical point of view. They all follow the same structural plan (although Prime has several additional items not found in the other three Hours) and may therefore be discussed together. Between the standard beginning with *Deus in adjutorium* and ending with *Benedicamus Domino*, these Offices have a hymn, three psalms with only one antiphon, a Chapter with a Short Responsory, and a versicle. Much of even this small amount of music either is not the exclusive property of the Lesser Hours or remains unchanged throughout the year. For example, the four antiphons—one for each Hour—are often borrowed from Lauds, and the hymns are normally part of the Ordinary. As a rule, only the Short Responsories are Proper to a particular Hour of a given feast.

Before we turn to the structural pattern of Matins, it may be helpful to present in tabular form the essential musical elements of the Day Hours. The arrangement of these Hours in Table 6 ignores chronological succession in an attempt to show more clearly various differences from the form of Vespers and Lauds.

Table 6: *Musical Elements of the Day Hours*

| Vespers | Lauds | Compline | Little Hours |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Deus in adjutorium</i> | | | |
| 5 Psalms | 5 Psalms (1 a canticle) | 3 Psalms | Hymn 3 Psalms |
| 5 Antiphons | 5 Antiphons | 1 Antiphon Hymn | 1 Antiphon |
| Chapter | Chapter | Chapter | Chapter |
| Hymn | Hymn | Short Responsory | Short Responsory |
| Versicle | Versicle | Versicle | Versicle |
| <i>Magnificat</i> with Antiphon | <i>Benedictus</i> with Antiphon | <i>Nunc dimittis</i> with Antiphon | |
| <i>Benedicamus Domino</i> | | | |
| (Antiphon of the B.M.V.) | | | |

4. See LU, p. 221, for Lauds of Feasts. Apel, GC, p. 21, lists the fourteen canticles as they are distributed throughout the days of the week.

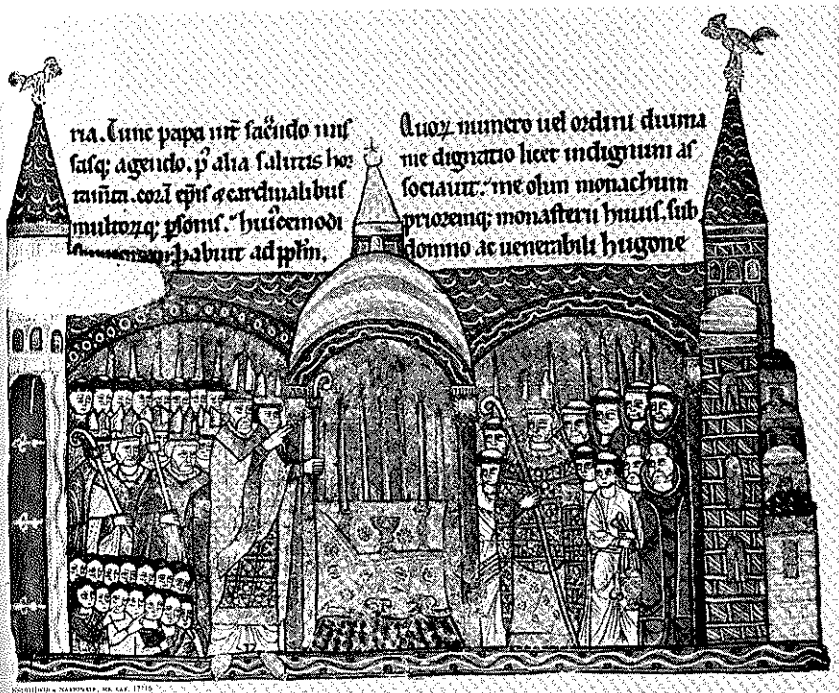
MATINS

A discussion of Matins has been deferred until now, not only because it is the longest and most elaborate of the Offices, but also because it introduces totally different structural principles. Its form cannot be compared with the forms of the other Offices, although they all have at least the singing of psalms with antiphons in common.

Matins subdivides into four distinct sections that are performed without interruption. After the opening section, which has no specific name, come three Nocturns, each built on the same structural pattern. The whole is framed by the normal introduction to all Offices (*Pater noster*, *Ave Maria*, Credo, versicle, and *Deus in adjutorium*) and by the usual close with *Benedicamus Domino*.

After *Deus in adjutorium*, the characteristic chants of Matins begin with an antiphon and Psalm 94 (95), *Venite, exsultemus Domino* (Oh come, let us sing unto the Lord). From these words come the designations Invitatory Psalm and, for the antiphon, simply Invitatory. It is because of its appropriate text that Psalm 94 (95) invariably begins the

Pope Urban II depicted consecrating the high altar of the Abbey Church at Cluny in 1095 (from a manuscript at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris).



Office of Matins. No other psalm is so honored by a fixed position in the Ordinary of the Offices. Following the Invitatory Psalm, the concluding item in the first section of Matins is a hymn.

The Office continues immediately with the three Nocturns, each of which follows the same pattern. Each Nocturn begins with three psalms, each with its own antiphon, and concludes with three Lessons, each followed by a Great Responsory. The psalms and Lessons are separated by a versicle, the *Pater noster*, an absolution, and a blessing. As the important musical items in the Nocturns, then, we have the nine psalms with their antiphons, and the nine responsories following the Lessons. In the *Liber Usualis*, for no apparent reason, the antiphons are numbered from one to three in each Nocturn, but the Lessons and responsories are numbered consecutively from one to nine.

After the antiphons and responsories of the Nocturns, which are Proper to particular feasts, the so-called Hymn of Thanksgiving, *Te Deum laudamus* (We praise thee, God; LU, p. 1832) completes the chants peculiar to Matins on Sundays and feasts. The entire form of Matins as performed in the Middle Ages is shown in Table 7. It should be noted, however, that modern practice has shortened the Office slightly by dropping the ninth responsory and letting the *Te Deum* take its place. On the other hand, during Holy Week and in the Office of the Dead, it is the *Te Deum* that is omitted.

Table 7: Outline of Matins

| | |
|--|-------|
| <i>Pater noster, Ave Maria, Credo</i> | |
| Versicle | |
| <i>Deus in adjutorium</i> | |
| Invitatory with Psalm 94 (95) | |
| Hymn | |
| First Nocturn | |
| Three psalms with their antiphons | (1-3) |
| Three Lessons, each followed by a Great Responsory | (1-3) |
| Second Nocturn | |
| Three psalms and three antiphons | (1-3) |
| Three Lessons and three Great Responsories | (4-6) |
| Third Nocturn | |
| Three psalms and three antiphons | (1-3) |
| Three Lessons and three Great Responsories | (7-9) |
| <i>Te Deum laudamus</i> (on Sundays and feasts) | |
| Versicle | |
| Prayer | |
| <i>Benedicamus Domino</i> | |

As a final comment on the form of Matins, note that it might be considerably shortened for feasts of lesser importance. Such feasts, instead of the nine Lessons of greater feasts, often had only three, or what

amounted to a single Nocturn. The rank of a feast, indeed, was sometimes indicated in church calendars by the number of Lessons in its Office of Matins. In this respect, Matins was more flexible in structure than the other Offices, none of which admits of such variation.

Because the music for Matins is richer and more varied than for any other Office, it is particularly regrettable that so few examples are readily available for study. The Office is not represented at all in the *Antiphonary* for the Day Hours, and the *Liber Usualis* contains the Matins of only eight feasts.⁵

Even these few examples demonstrate the remarkable flexibility of form that is characteristic of Matins. Only the services for the Nativity and Corpus Christi exactly follow the structural outline given in Table 7, with the *Te Deum* substituted for the ninth responsory. The three services of Holy Week omit the Invitatory Psalm and hymn and begin directly with the first antiphon of Nocturn I. The *Te Deum* is not sung on these days. On Easter Sunday, both the Invitatory Psalm and the *Te Deum* reappear, but there is still no hymn and only one Nocturn. Pentecost also has only one Nocturn, which closes with the *Te Deum* in place of the third responsory, but the opening section of Matins is complete. Thus we may regard this Office as the normal form of Matins with one Nocturn. Matins in the Office of the Dead lacks only a hymn and the *Te Deum*. On some occasions, however, there is a choice as to whether it is performed with one or three Nocturns (see LU, p. 1779). It would be difficult to find clearer illustrations of the way services may be varied to meet different liturgical situations.

From the foregoing discussion of the Offices, it must be obvious that the Book of Psalms provides the major portion of their texts. The Offices, in fact, were designed so that all 150 psalms would be sung once each week. In each service, the psalms were originally performed in numerical order; but, for many feasts, psalms deemed more appropriate to the occasion are substituted. However, performance in ascending numerical order is always strictly maintained.

Psalms and canticles, as we saw in Chapter III, are sung to recitation formulas, or tones, that correspond to the eight Church modes. The choice of a tone for use with a particular psalm, however, has nothing to

5. For convenience in observing the form of Matins and examining its music, page references for the eight examples in LU are listed here. (Page numbers in parentheses are those in later editions of LU with the "restored Ordo of Holy Week.")

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Nativity | 368-92 |
| Maundy Thursday | 621-46 (626-51) |
| Good Friday | 665-88 (688-712) |
| Holy Saturday | 713-33 (752-73) |
| Easter | 765-77 (omitted) |
| Pentecost | 863-76 |
| Corpus Christi | 917-39 |
| Office for the Dead | 1779-99 |

do with its text or its liturgical position. Instead, the choice depends entirely on the mode of the antiphon with which the psalm or canticle is to be sung. We must turn our attention, therefore, to the free melodies that regulate and ornament the psalmody of the Offices.

TYPES OF FREE MELODIES IN THE OFFICES: THE ANTIPHONS

If we grant that St. Ambrose introduced antiphonal psalmody to the West (see Chapter II), we still do not know how the psalms were actually performed by alternating groups or choirs. The verses or half-verses could have been alternated without any additional material. Fairly early in the history of antiphonal psalmody, however, it apparently became the custom to alternate a text set to a free melody with the verses of the psalm. This free melody with its text was then known as an *antiphon*. It seems likely that the antiphon, in addition to appearing at the beginning and end of the psalm, was also sung after each verse or pair of verses. The resulting forms would then be:

A V₁ A V₂ A etc.; or A V₁₋₂ A V₃₋₄ A etc.

One example of this procedure is still used for the unusually long verses of the Invitatory Psalm. After each of these verses, all or part of the Invitatory Antiphon is repeated. In addition, there are further repetitions of the antiphon at the beginning and end. As an example of the complete form, we may cite the Invitatory for Christmas (LU, p. 368). In the diagram that follows, A₁ and A₂ represent the two sections of the Invitatory Antiphon; D is the Lesser Doxology, normally appended to all psalms and canticles.

A₁A₂ :|| V₁ A₁A₂ V₂ A₂ V₃ A₁A₂ V₄ A₂ V₅ A₁A₂ D A₂ A₁A₂

Obviously, performance of all the psalms in this way required a great deal of time, much more than even monastic establishments were willing to allow. As a result, it became customary to sing the regular psalms and canticles of the Offices with the antiphon only at the beginning and end. In a further curtailment now frequently encountered, only the intonation of the antiphon (the first word or phrase up to the *) is sung at the beginning, with a complete performance only at the close. This practice, abhorred by liturgical and musical scholars alike, makes neither grammatical nor musical sense. Although this barbarism was purged by a decree of July 25, 1960 (see LU, 1961 ed., p. lxi), it is still indicated at various places in the body of the *Liber Usualis*.

As might be expected from their frequent appearance in the Offices, antiphons far outnumber any other type of chant. Medieval books con-

tain thousands of antiphons, and well over a thousand are still in use. With such a large number to consider, it is difficult to make generalizations as to stylistic characteristics, but on the whole, antiphons are the shortest and simplest of the free melodic types. Many are almost completely syllabic, with here and there an occasional two-note neume, as in the setting of *Justus ut palma* (Example IV-1). Even on the most solemn feasts, the style rarely changes in antiphons for the psalms. This is less characteristic of antiphons for the *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*, which tend to be somewhat longer and more elaborate at all times and to approach a fully developed neumatic style on some feasts.⁶ As a group, however, the antiphons may reasonably be said to present the principles of plainchant composition in their most elementary form.

Example IV-1: *The Antiphon Justus ut palma*⁷



The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.—Psalm 91 (92):12.

One of the most interesting aspects of the antiphons is their melodic relationship to the tones of the psalms for which they provide a frame. When antiphons and other chants began to be arranged in tonaries according to mode, further subdivisions grouped the antiphons according to the psalm-tone terminations with which they were to be used. As these terminations were designed to lead smoothly into the repetition of the antiphon, it is not surprising that many antiphons calling for the same termination begin with the same melodic figure. Even for tones with only one termination, different groups of antiphons may be established on the basis of their opening melodic progressions. Medieval theorists were well aware of these relationships, and modern scholars have shown that the thousands of antiphons can be reduced to approximately fifty "themes." In general, we may say that the number of antiphons and of different themes in a given mode is in direct proportion to the number of different terminations for the corresponding psalm tone.⁸

Before leaving the antiphons of the Offices, we should mention a few

6. Degrees of elaboration may be observed in the series of antiphons for the *Magnificat* for Saturdays after Pentecost. These are conveniently assembled in LU, pp. 986-97.
7. After Wagner, *Einführung*, 3, p. 11.
8. See also Apel, GC, pp. 394-404. An explanation of the ways in which modern chant-books indicate the termination to be used with each antiphon can be found in Appendix A, Part 2.

instances in which they lost their original liturgical function. This occurs most commonly after the canticles of Lauds and Vespers. At these points, feasts that have been replaced by more solemn feasts falling on the same day are "commemorated" by the performance of an antiphon, versicle, and prayer. The antiphons were not originally independent, however. Usually they are the antiphons to the *Benedictus* or *Magnificat* that would have been sung had the more important feast not intervened.⁹ For example, *Iste sanctus* (This saint) appears as both a commemorative antiphon for one martyr (LU, p. 262) and the antiphon for the *Magnificat* in the Common of One Martyr (LU, p. 1123). In themselves, therefore, these antiphons present nothing new. Their use as independent chants is interesting, however, because it represents the final stage in the dissolution of antiphonal psalmody, a stage we shall meet again in the chants of the Mass.

A somewhat different situation exists with regard to the four Antiphons to the Blessed Virgin Mary: *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Fostering Mother of the Redeemer); *Ave Regina caelorum* (Hail, Queen of the heavens); *Regina caeli laetare* (Rejoice, Queen of Heaven); and *Salve, Regina* (Hail, Queen).¹⁰ They date from the eleventh century and later and are among the few chants from that tremendously productive period that remain in the liturgy of the Offices. Originally these chants functioned as normal antiphons, but they quickly lost their connection with psalmody. By the thirteenth century, they were used, as they are today, to close the Offices whenever the choir disperses.

It should be clear from the example of *Alma Redemptoris Mater* cited in Chapter III that the Marian antiphons differ considerably from the style of the older Office antiphons. Not only are their texts much longer, but they are given more elaborate settings, with wider ranges, greater emphasis on tonal organization, and even occasional melismas, which are particularly extended in *Regina caeli*. Undoubtedly, it was this "modernity" that earned the Marian antiphons their prominent liturgical position and their place in the affections of composers throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The texts with their melodies were frequently given polyphonic settings, and the melodies alone served as the basis for many polyphonic Masses.

Renaissance composers apparently preferred *Ave Regina* and *Salve, Regina*, although they did not completely ignore the other two antiphons. In the later Middle Ages, however, *Alma Redemptoris Mater* seems to have enjoyed the greatest popularity. Written by Hermannus Contractus (1013–54), it is perhaps the oldest of the Marian antiphons and may therefore have been the most widely known in medieval times.

9. Examples of such antiphons may be seen in LU, pp. 262–62¹¹ (The Common Commemorations of Saints), and pp. 1080–1110 (Commemorations of the Sunday or of the Feria on Feasts of the First Class).

10. See LU, pp. 273–76.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of the medieval regard for *Alma Redemptoris Mater* is the crucial role Chaucer assigned to it in *The Prioress's Tale*, which brings up an interesting musical sidelight. Usually, Chaucer calls the chant an antiphon, but once he uses the term *anthem* (antym). It may come as a surprise to find that the word *anthem* is merely an English corruption of *antiphon*. Before the Reformation, it was chiefly used to designate independent chants such as the Marian antiphons, both in their monophonic versions and polyphonic settings. It is probably for this reason that the *Liber Usualis* with English rubrics calls the Marian antiphons "Anthems to the Blessed Virgin Mary." In any case, we here catch a glimpse of one stage in the development of the Protestant anthem from the humble Gregorian antiphons.

GREAT RESPONSORIES

From the simplest type of free melody, the antiphons of the Offices, we now turn to the most complex—the Great Responsories. It is the soloistic aspect of responsorial psalmody that accounts for its sharp stylistic contrast with the simplicity of the choral antiphons. As performance of the responses passed from the congregation to the choir, and as choirs became more skillful, the responses too became much more elaborate. Finally, in many responsories as we know them now, there is almost no discernible difference in style between the choral responds and the solo verses. The verses, as we have seen, were originally sung to responsorial tones, but the intonations and cadential formulas of these tones were so ornate that only the longest verses made any extended use of the reciting notes. Moreover, some of the same formulas reappear in the choral responds. Eventually, the verses themselves began to be freely composed melodies.

The solo elaboration of responsorial psalmody seems to have been responsible for a method of bringing it down to manageable length that differs from the one we observed in antiphonal psalmody. Instead of reducing the number of repetitions of the antiphon, the psalm itself is normally reduced to a single verse in the responsories. The Lesser Doxology apparently was not an original part of the responsories but was added later, perhaps in imitation of antiphonal psalmody. Even then, only the first half of the doxology was used—*Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto* (Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost)—and only for the last responsory of each Nocturn and the now suppressed Vesper responsory.

We thus find two forms of responsories, one with a respond and verse, and one with respond, verse, and half of the Lesser Doxology. The arrangement of these parts into a formal pattern is not an entirely simple matter, however. Because the responds generally have longer



The opening page of a thirteenth-century *Antiphonary*, which begins with the Office chants for Advent and includes the Great Responsory *Aspiciens a longe* (Badische Landsbibliothek, Karlsruhe).

texts than the antiphons, they usually tend to divide into three clearly defined musical periods, although some responds have four periods, while others have only two. The entire respond is sung before the verse, but as a rule only the last period is repeated after the verse and doxology when present. If we indicate the respond with its subdivisions as R_{abc} , and the verse and doxology as V and D , we may represent with reasonable accuracy the basic formal patterns of the responsories. In the following list, one example of each form is cited from the responsories in the *Liber Usualis*.

1. Forms with respond and verse

A. $R_{abc} V R_c$

O magnum mysterium (O great mystery), p. 382

B. $R_{abc} V R_c R_{abc}$

Unus ex discipulis meis (One of my disciples), p. 640 (645 in new editions)

2. Forms with respond, verse, and doxology

A. $R_{ab} V R_b D R_b$

Quem vidistis (Whom did you see?), p. 377

B. $R_{abc} V R_c D R_{abc}$

Hodie nobis (Today to us), p. 375

3. Form with three verses

$R_{abc} V_1 R_b V_2 R_c V_3 R_{abc}$

Libera me, Domine (Deliver me, Lord), p. 1767

The distribution of these forms in the liturgy of Matins depends largely on the position of the responsories. Form 1.A is usual for the first two responsories of each Nocturn, and Form 2.A, with doxology, for the third. With the replacement of the ninth responsory by the *Te Deum*, however, Form 2.A now appears in the eighth. The first responsories for the Nativity and Easter also take on greater importance by the addition of the doxology and the unusual repeat of the entire respond at the close (Form 2.B). Neither the *Gloria Patri* nor the *Te Deum* appears in Matins during Holy Week (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday), but Form 1.B gives distinction to the third, sixth, and ninth responsories on all three days. For responsories in the Office of the Dead, the *Gloria Patri* is again inappropriate, but a different procedure stresses the importance of the last responsory in each Nocturn.¹¹ In place of the doxology, there is a complete second verse, always with the same text: *Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis* (Give them eternal rest, O Lord, and may light everlasting shine upon them). Formally, these responsories differ in no way from the pattern for responsories with doxology (Form 2.A).

Finally, we come to the special case of the responsory *Libera me* (Form 3 above). Here, even more than in responsories with the doxology, we find a remnant of the older method of responsorial psalmody in which several verses or an entire psalm alternated with choral responds. The formal details of *Libera me* as we know it now may not correspond exactly with earlier practice, but the essential structural principle is clearly evident. *Libera me* is not a responsory for Matins but is sung at the Absolution following the Mass for the Dead. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that its third verse is again the text *Requiem aeternam*. Polyphonic settings of this responsory were appended to a number of sixteenth-century Masses for the Dead, including two by Victoria; and in the nineteenth century Verdi continued the practice in his *Requiem*.

THE FREE MELODIES OF THE RESPONDS

To call the responds of the Great Responsories "free melodies" is in some respects misleading, for many of them are clear examples of cantonization technique. This technique is much more clearly demonstrable here than in the antiphons, primarily because the longer texts and generally neumatic style make melodic formulas much easier to identify. Adjustments to accommodate text lines of different length may be made before or after the standard formulas, which are introduced with little or no modification from one responsory to another. In addition, standard formulas sometimes made their way into freely composed verses, just as the cadential formulas of responsorial tones sometimes

11. LU, pp. 1787, 1792-93, 1798-99.

appeared in the choral responds. The originally contrasting styles of the two sections may thus become nearly indistinguishable.

A detailed study of centonization in the responsories, or any other type of chant, is obviously impossible here. We should have to consider the responsories of each mode as a separate family, with some very close relationships and some much more distant. That such a study would be long and complicated may be seen in Apel's analyses of standard phrases in the responsories of Modes 2 and 8.¹² For the moment, let us examine the characteristic melodic style of responsories as a whole.

In large part, the Great Responsories are written in a neumatic style that here and there expands to include relatively short melismas. The total range of a melody may be a ninth or even more, but standard phrases generally move within the narrower limits of a fifth or sixth and in predominantly stepwise motion. Original melodies, on the other hand, or those that show only slight traces of centonization, are bolder in every way. Individual phrases tend to be wider in range and somewhat more melismatic, with larger and more frequent skips and melodic figures that sweep rapidly throughout the entire range.

The evolution of responsorial style has yet to be described to everyone's satisfaction, and we cannot safely assert that an original melody is necessarily more recent than one constructed from standard phrases. Nevertheless, there seems to have been a general trend toward the abandonment of responsorial tones for the verses and a greater use of free material in the responds. In what is perhaps a related development, longer melismas appear near the close of the respond in some responsories. Not many such melismas are available for study in the *Liber Usualis*, but a few may be seen in the responsories for Corpus Christi.¹³ By way of illustration, we may cite the final phrase of the respond in *Coenantibus illis* (As they were eating; LU, p. 931). Particularly striking is the boldness with which the motive on "hoc est corpus" covers the interval of a ninth in a few notes (Example IV-2). Also remarkable is the use of repetition to create a purely musical form (*aab*). We shall encounter other examples of this procedure in the Offertories and Alleluias of the Mass.

Example IV-2: *End of Respond from Fourth Responsory for Matins of Corpus Christi* (LU, p. 932)



This is my body.

12. Apel, GC, p. 332 ff. A supplemental essay will discuss and illustrate the use of such phrases in three responsories in Mode 2, as well as their appearance in a supposedly "free" responsory.
13. LU, pp. 926-39. See especially Nos. 2, 4, 6, and 7.

The melisma in Example IV-2 is relatively short, but in some responsories these melismatic extensions reached fantastic lengths. Most of the longer melismas, called responsorial *neumata* (sing. *neuma*), have been either drastically pruned or completely deleted from modern chantbooks. Many of them, apparently, were inserted in preexisting responsories to increase the solemnity of the chant for important feasts. The responsorial *neumata*, therefore, are a kind of trope, and further discussion of them must be delayed until we can devote an entire chapter to tropes and related forms.

SHORT RESPONSORIES

For the sake of completeness, we must not ignore the Short Responsories that are sung after the Chapter in the Little Hours and Compline. As found in the *Liber Usualis*, these chants do not possess great musical interest, but neither do they adequately represent the medieval repertory of Short Responsories. Three main melodies are given, one for use "during the year," one for Advent, and one for Paschal Time (LU, pp. 229-30). By the process of adaptation, different texts may be sung to these melodies as required by the Propers of the Time and of the Saints. In essence, all three melodies are nothing more than ornamented recitation formulas, and thus they confirm the derivation of the Short Responsories from the practice of psalmody. Perhaps their greatest importance lies in their having preserved irregular, and probably very ancient, recitation formulas that would otherwise have fallen into disuse.

A few special melodies, according to Apel, "seem to be limited to a single text."¹⁴ This may be true of *Inclina cor meum* (Incline my heart), the Short Responsory for Sunday at Terce during the year (LU, p. 237). At any rate, this is not one of the three main melodies, although it too is an elaborated recitation formula. Contrary to what Apel says, however, *Erue a framea* (Deliver from the sword; LU, p. 239) does not have a special melody. It is set, rather, to an adaptation of the main melody for use during the year. The relationship between the two melodies may be seen in AMM, No. 3, which also serves to illustrate the forms of the Short Responsories.

Christe Fili Dei is in the form commonly used for responsories with the doxology:

R_{ab} R_{ab} V R_b D R_{ab}

Clearly, both the Great and Short Responsories follow the same structural pattern, even to using only the first half of the doxology. The more repetitive nature of the Short Responsories undoubtedly results

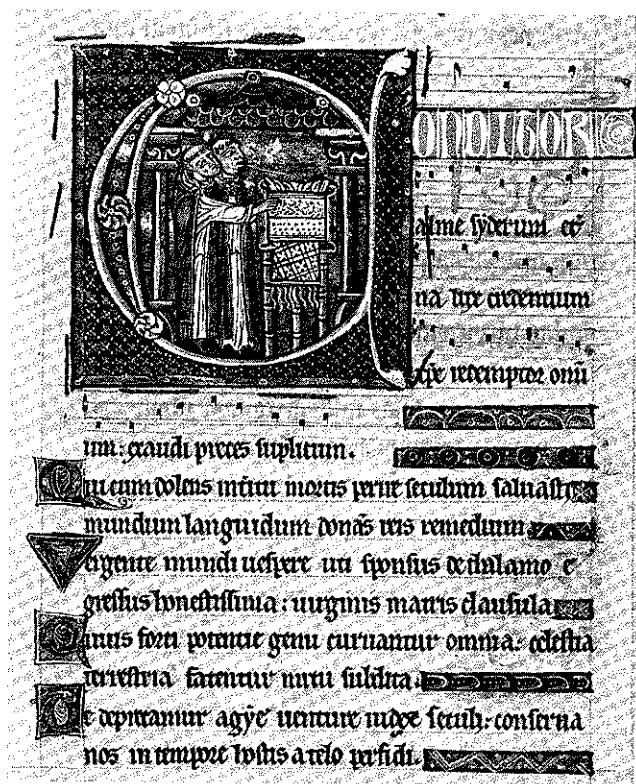
14. Apel, GC, p. 245.

from their extreme brevity. All repetition is dispensed with, however, in the least of the Little Hours, Sext and None, and sometimes also in Terce. The form of a Short Responsory with verse and doxology then becomes simply R V D (see, for example, LU, p. 243). In *Erue a framea* and all Short Responsories for Passiontide, the doxology is omitted. The resulting form— $R_{ab} V R_b R_{ab}$ —is identical with Form 1.B that we found in the Great Responsories for Holy Week (see page 106), the distinction between the two deriving only from their lengths and contrasting musical styles.

HYMNS

Great religions normally inspire an ecstatic faith that expresses itself in songs of adoration and praise. Christianity was, and still is, no exception to this rule. Almost from the beginning, both in the East and in the West, its adherents have poured forth a veritable flood of religious poetry. The Middle Ages alone produced thousands of Latin sacred poems that we may classify somewhat loosely as hymns. In view of this tremendous output, the relatively insignificant role of hymns in the official liturgy of the Western Church is nothing less than astounding. As we have seen, a hymn is sung in each of the daily Offices, but this in no way indicates the number of hymns currently in use. One text may serve a number of different occasions or may appear in the same Office throughout most of the year. Thus the *Liber Usualis* contains about eighty hymns, and the complete *Antiphonary* of the daytime Hours has only some forty more. That the Church should have so abandoned one of its richest treasures remains almost inexplicable.

From the start, however, the Church has wavered between approval and disapproval of hymns. This instability seems to have been the result of two conflicting attitudes. On the one hand, the use of hymns by the Gnostics and other heretical sects strengthened the conservative belief that only the Bible could provide suitable texts for liturgical use. At the same time, many churchmen recognized the popular appeal of hymns and their effectiveness in spreading orthodox doctrines. Consequently, Church Councils alternately forbade the singing of hymns and censured bishops for not allowing them to be sung. These controversies had little effect on the Eastern branches of the Church, where hymns soon won a prominent and permanent place in the liturgy. A different situation obtained in the West. Just when Ambrose was introducing Latin hymns, the Council of Laodicea (c. 360–381) prohibited their use. This edict did not stop the composition or performance of hymns, but for many centuries it effectively denied them official status in the liturgy of Rome. It should be noted, however that Rome was often slow to accept practices that were common throughout the rest of Western Christendom. No



The Office hymn *Conditor alme siderum* from a thirteenth-century manuscript (Laon).

doubt the popular appeal of hymns as expressions of individual religious fervor also contributed to their late acceptance into the severe and somewhat impersonal solemnity of the Rome rite. Except for a few special ceremonies, notably in Holy Week, hymns never gained an official place in the liturgy of the Mass, and their position in the Offices always remained subordinate to psalmody. It will come as a surprise, therefore, to discover in later chapters that hymns and related forms of religious poetry were of great importance in the history of medieval music. For the present, however, we need concern ourselves only with hymns as they appear in the liturgy of the Offices.

Any discussion of hymnody in the Latin West must begin with Ambrose, because the poetic and musical procedures that he established are still the guiding principles of hymn writing. From the time of Ambrose until now, hymn texts have been divided into short stanzas, or strophes, all of which have the same poetic structure. This structure may vary from one hymn to another, but all the stanzas of one hymn will have the same number of lines, the same metrical pattern, and the same rhyme scheme, if rhyme is present. It follows, therefore, that when the melody of the first stanza is repeated for each succeeding stanza, strophic form results. It also follows that all hymns with stanzas of the same poetic structure may be sung to the same melody, and the use of one melody

for two or more different hymns was as common in the Middle Ages as it is in present-day hymnals.

Much more unexpected is the use of different melodies for a single text, a practice that distinguishes hymns from all types of plainchant based on psalmody. We have seen that a Biblical text such as *Justus ut palma* might receive a number of different musical settings. The forms and styles of these settings, however, were determined by the differing liturgical positions in which the text appeared. Within one liturgical type, as antiphons, for example, the same text rarely appears with more than one melody. Many hymns, on the other hand, seem never to have been associated with any single melody. Perhaps the most striking example in the *Liber Usualis* is the hymn for Sunday at Compline, *Te lucis ante terminum* ([We beg] thee before the close of day). The *Liber* provides no fewer than twelve melodies for the chant of this hymn, which "varies according to the Season and Feasts."¹⁵ Other hymns may not have such an ample supply of melodies, but few texts always appear in medieval sources with the same musical setting. For somewhat different reasons, the texts of the Ordinary of the Mass also receive a variety of musical settings (see Chapter V). Here, however, the same melody cannot serve for a number of different texts. Hymns prove to be the only type of plainchant in which independent texts and melodies are freely interchanged.

The loose connection between words and music that characterizes hymns probably results from their subordinate position in the liturgy and even more from their semipopular origin. Unfortunately, we know next to nothing about the earliest hymn melodies. With very few exceptions, the melodies as we know them now do not appear in a precise musical notation until the eleventh century or later. Attempts to reconstruct hymns as Ambrose might have sung them must therefore remain conjectural and must be based primarily on the metrical structure of the texts.

For his poetic form Ambrose used iambic tetrameters—that is, lines made up of four groups or feet consisting of short and long syllables in the pattern $\cup - \cup - \cup - \cup -$. The complete text normally included eight stanzas of four lines each. On the testimony of St. Augustine, four such texts may be definitely attributed to Ambrose: *Aeterne rerum Conditor*; *Deus Creator omnium*; *Iam surgit hora tertia*; and *Veni Redemptor gentium*.¹⁶ Only the first of these was retained in the Roman liturgy (for Sunday at Lauds), but we may use it to illustrate various problems that arise in connection with hymn melodies.

The first melody in *Aeterne rerum Conditor* (AMM, No. 4) is the one

15. LU, p. 266. Four of these melodies appear on pp. 266–69.

16. Eternal Maker of All Things; God, Creator of All; Now Came the Third Hour; and Come, Redeemer of the People.

now given in the Roman Antiphony. (The hymn does not appear in the *Liber Usualis*.) It is a simple and syllabic tune that, according to the Solesmes theory, would be sung in even notes. The second melody is equally simple, but it has been given a setting in triple meter, with note values that correspond to the long and short syllables of the text. The authenticity of this metrical version cannot be proved, of course, but there are good reasons for believing that Ambrose intended his hymns to be sung in a regular meter. After all, they were introduced for congregational singing and must therefore have been easy to remember and to sing. Correspondence between musical and poetic meters, especially when combined with syllabic style and strophic form, would obviously contribute much toward the achievement of these goals.

We know almost nothing about folk and popular music during the first millennium of the Christian era except that it must have existed. We may also assume that folk music must have been simple and rhythmic in style. It is not at all unlikely that early hymns were sung to well-known secular tunes. Certainly this procedure was common enough in later periods of music history. The use of secular or secular-sounding tunes, indeed, might well account for much of the animosity toward hymn singing in the early Middle Ages. In any case, the simple hymn tunes preserved by the Church probably constitute the nearest approach we shall ever have to the secular melodies of the time.

Ambrose maintained the long and short syllables of classical Latin poetry with considerable fidelity, and thus his hymns naturally fall into triple meter. Even in Ambrose's time, however, the basis of Latin accentuation was beginning to shift from long and short to strong and weak syllables, and the two systems did not always coincide. This may be seen in the second line of *Aeterne rerum*, where the strong accents indicated in the text fall on short notes. Whether this conflict between the two systems of accentuation confused later poets, or whether they were merely less careful and consistent than Ambrose, their hymns often fail to maintain one poetic meter with strict regularity. These metrical deviations may have been introduced to avoid monotony, but they also suggest that the poets were primarily concerned with maintaining the correct number of syllables in each line. It is entirely possible that early medieval hymn writers knew the principle of construction known as *isosyllabism* (same number of syllables in each line). The Syrian hymns of St. Ephraim (306–373) had abandoned versification by long and short syllables in favor of isosyllabic construction; later, as we shall see, the same principle rules the formation of poetry in French.

As a result of the developments just outlined, it became increasingly difficult to adopt a regular musical meter for later hymn texts. Metrical variants in the poetry would upset the musical scheme, and the placement of accents might shift from one stanza to another. Moreover, as qualitative accents (strong and weak) became established in common

usage, medieval singers may well have disregarded versification by long and short syllables, just as the *Liber Usualis* often does today. We are getting back, of course, to the problem of rhythm in Gregorian Chant, where the ground is dangerous and the footing uncertain. It seems probable, however, that hymn melodies experienced the same fate as the rest of plainchant: the abandonment of long and short values in favor of an undifferentiated succession of even notes. This solution of the problem—easy but not particularly interesting—removes the difficulties of using one melody for different stanzas of one hymn or for entirely different hymns. Systems of versification and deviations from the normal metrical pattern become unimportant. Only the correct number of syllables in each line must be maintained, and slight adaptations of the melody can accommodate occasional departures from even this requirement.

The musical style of many later hymn melodies also suggests that performance in even note values had now prevailed. In place of the syllabic settings of *Aeterne rerum Conditor* (AMM, No. 4), we now find melodies in which many syllables are sung to neumes of two, three, or even more notes. This type of elaboration, which we shall meet again in the chants of the Mass, characteristically results when performance is transferred from the congregation to a trained choir or to the assembled clergy. As an example of this more elaborate style, we may cite the melody to which the processional hymn *Vexilla Regis* is now sung (Example IV-3). Two aspects of this hymn should be noted: the strong syllables in the second line ("Fúlget Crúcis") depart from the iambic

Example IV-3: *Ornamented Hymn Melody* (LU, p. 575)

Ve-xíl - la Ré - gis pród - e - unt: Fúl - get Crú - cis my - sté - ri - um

Qua ví - ta mór - tem pér - tu - lit, Et mór - te vi - tam pro - tu - lit.

The banners of the King go forth;
The mystery of the Cross shines out,
By which life suffered death
And by death brought forth life.

versification of the other lines; and accented (or long) syllables have from one to five notes. Quite obviously, the difficulties of metrical performance arising from textual problems are greatly increased by the ornamental figures in the melody. Triple meter can still be applied, and it is perhaps significant that short syllables rarely have more than one note except at the ends of lines. This is not true of all ornamented hymn melodies, however, and many of them approach the neumatic style that appears with some prose texts. It may even be that, by disguising the poetic structure of the texts, performance in even note values removed one of the chief objections to singing hymns and led to their eventual adoption by the Church of Rome. All this is mere conjecture, however. As with all types of plainchant, the rhythmic performance of hymns must forever remain a matter for controversy.

A final word should be said about the forms of hymn melodies. As four-line stanzas are most commonly used for hymn texts, so the melodies normally consist of four distinct phrases. In the great majority of melodies, these four phrases are different, producing the form *abcd*. This form, so common that it is sometimes called *hymn form*, is illustrated by the first melody for *Aeterne rerum* in AMM, No. 4. The metrical tune is also in *abcd* form, but its first, second, and fourth phrases are related by the use of musical rhyme. Indeed, the repetition of characteristic cadential patterns to produce musical rhyme is one of the most common structural devices in medieval music.

At first sight, the melody of *Vexilla Regis* (Example IV-3) also appears to have an *abcd* form. Closer examination reveals, however, that phrases two and four are identical for the last six out of eight syllables. Complete or partial repetition of phrases also occurs in a number of other hymn melodies. The most common repetitive pattern is *abca*, but such patterns as *aabc*, *abab*, *abcb*, and *abba* can also be found.¹⁷

Although they are rare in hymns, repetitive forms such as these are of great importance. We shall meet them again both in nonliturgical and secular Latin songs and in the vernacular songs of the troubadours and trouvères. It is not always possible to determine where these forms originated or to trace the lines of development from one class of monophonic song to another. Each class may, in fact, have influenced the other two. At any rate, the presence of repetitive forms in hymn melodies suggests once again that they cannot be far removed from traditions of popular music that are otherwise lost to us forever.

17. For examples of hymns in these and other forms, see Apel, GC, p. 427.