A Short Primer on the History and Practice of Gregorian Chant

Part I. A Short History of Gregorian Chant and Several Rubrics Governing Its Use

The Plain Song finds its roots in the Jewish Temple worship established by King David, where he set aside certain individuals to be singers in the Temple, and certain instruments to be used for Temple worship, and certain tunes to be sung in the Temple worship of the Jews. This is shown to us in several places in Holy Scripture:

> "Now these are the men whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark came to rest. They were ministering with music before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of meeting until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they served in their office according to their order." (1 Chron. 6:31-32)

Here King David appoints Heman the singer, a descendant of Kohath, the son of Levi; Asaph, a descendant of Gershon, the son of Levi; and Ethan, a descendant of Merari, the son of Levi. These men, and their descendants, were in charge of the music of the Temple. You might notice that there are several Psalms attributed to Asaph and his descendants.

Also in 1 Chronicles further proof is given of King David's influence on the music for worship where it states, "Then David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy." (1 Chron. 15:16) Here we can see that King David not only has set up the music, but also the instruments and who is to do the singing and playing. Make note that he does not change what Moses laid down, but improves upon it and further organizes it.

And again 1 Chronicles states:

> "And he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD God of Israel: Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, and Obed-Edom: Jeiel with stringed instruments and harps, but Asaph

made music with cymbals; Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests regularly blew the trumpets before the ark of the covenant of God. On that day David first delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the LORD." (1 Chron. 16:4-7)

Here we see the persons employed for the task of music in the Temple. We also further see that King David had strict rules about what instruments are to be used and who was to use them. We can see how he organizes the Temple worship, so that no Levite is idol in his administration, but has specific tasks to be carried out.

A little later 1 Chronicles states:

 "So he left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark regularly, as every day's work required; and Obed-Edom with his sixty-eight brethren, including Obed-Edom the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, to be gatekeepers; and Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD at the high place that was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the Law of the LORD which He commanded Israel; and with them Heman and Jeduthun and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because His mercy endures forever; and with them Heman and Jeduthun, to sound aloud with trumpets and cymbals and the musical instruments of God." (1 Chron. 16:37-42)

Here we hear again the name of Heman, who previously was called "Heman the singer." Notice the phrase that occurs in Psalms 106, 107, 118, and 136, "His mercy endures forever." This music was supposed to accompany the chanting of the psalms both morning and evening in the Temple worship of King David.

We see further influence of King David on the Temple worship in 1 Chronicles 25:

"Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the authority of the king" (1 Chron. 25:1, 6)

Notice here the instruments described: harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals (cymbals should be understood in the sense of our use of bells, not in the sense of a marching band's use of cymbals; i.e., music made by the striking of metal to create a pleasant ringing sound). Also make note that Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, even though they were over the rest of the Levites, they were still under the authority of King David. That is, they could not just do whatever they wanted regarding worship.

Also in 2 Chronicles 5:

> "And it came to pass when the priests came out of the Most Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without keeping to their divisions), and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets—indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: 'For He is good, for His mercy endures forever,' that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud." (2 Chron. 5:11-13)

Here we see King David's structuring of the Temple worship in action. The three leaders of the music, Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun, (who is mentioned in the superscription of Psalms 39, 62, and 77) with their brethren, are clothed in white linen, and have cymbals, stringed instruments, harps, and trumpets, as well as those appointed to be singers. Here we also see the Lord God's approval, for upon their praise of the Lord with the words, "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever," the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, just like during the days of Moses in the wilderness.

In 2 Chronicles we see the Temple worship that King David established being carried out by his son Solomon: "And the priests attended to their services; the Levites also with instruments of the music of the LORD, which King David had made to praise the LORD, saying, 'For His

mercy endures forever,' whenever David offered praise by their ministry. The priests sounded trumpets opposite them, while all Israel stood." (2 Chron. 7:6) Here we see the establishment of what is now known as the "liturgical choir." "The priests sounded the trumpets…while all Israel stood." This was the Early Church's practice regarding the Psalmody, which we know as the *Introit*. The liturgical choir, made up of the clergy, would chant the *Introit* psalm, and the congregation would stand and listen as the bishop and priests would enter in procession.

This Temple worship that King David established is also carried out by King Hezekiah:

> "And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD also began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when they had finished offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped. Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped." (2 Chron. 29:25-30)

Notice here three things, first, that what was established by King David is still being carried out hundreds of years later. Secondly, we also see that King David did not just establish these things because it felt good to him, but that both Gad and Nathan had given King David this commandment from the Lord. Therefore, this music and form of worship is from the Lord. We can see in this what St. Paul the Blessed Apostle talks about when we tells the Church at Corinth to worship "decently and in good order," for this is the form of worship that King David had established (or perhaps more accurately, further developed from the worship of Moses). Thirdly, we see that the praise of the Lord is carried out by use of the words of King David and Asaph, i.e., the psalms that we now possess.

King Hezekiah's grandson, King Josiah, also continues the Temple worship that King David had established as we see in 2 Chronicles 35:

> "And the singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places, according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer. Also the gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not have to leave their position, because their brethren the Levites prepared portions for them." (2 Chron. 35:15)

Therefore, we see that this music that King David had written for the Temple worship, as well as the instruments used, and the families that were to continue to be trained for this special work continued throughout the reigns of the kings of Judah. Next we will see that this music had its use continued during the exile, for after the exile into Babylon, Ezra and Nehemiah continue the musical usage that King David established during his reign.

> Ezra 3:

> "When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: 'For He is good, for His mercy endures forever toward Israel.' Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid." (Ezra 3:10-11)

Here we see the Psalter being chanted antiphonally, the response of "For His mercy endures forever" being chanted in response to the versicle "For He is good."

> And in Nehemiah:

> "Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David and Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God." (Neh. 12:45-46)

The same music is sung from the time of King David all the way to at least when the Temple was rebuilt.

What is shown us by these passages is that not only did King David set up how the music was to be played, that is, by whom it was to be played, upon which instruments it was to be played, and to what tunes the psalms were to be played; but these pericopes also show us that even through all the rebellion of Israel and Judah, these regulations for music endured through to the end of the exile as is seen by the passages from Ezra and Nehemiah. It therefore stands to reason that if these regulations were maintained over the centuries when the sons of David ruled in Judah through the exile and the return from the exile of the Jews, that these regulations were still in place at the time of our Lord Jesus and His disciples. It would further stand to reason that in the beginnings of the Christian Church, the Apostles would continue to use the tunes familiar to them to chant the words of Holy Scripture.

Unfortunately, records of these tunes are no longer in existence. However, it would stand to reason that the Christian Church continued to use the music of its heritage, and that the Plain Song chants that we have today are similar in nature to the Temple music of King David; developing over time into the forms that we have today. Otherwise, we are left to conclude that the Temple music of King David has disappeared entirely, which is surprising considering the reverence the Early Church had for the worship forms and traditions that their ancestors passed on to them. And that this music had endured in the Temple worship of the Jews for so many years, even through their exile. More unusual to explain is how the Church under great persecution from without had the opportunity to develop new forms of sacred music for her use, when it would seem that just preserving the Christian faith would take all of her energy.

Consider too that Hebrew poetry, unlike the poetry of today, (or even the past few centuries) does not contain any rhyme or meter, but is distinguished by parallelism—a repetition of thought in successive clauses. The music of the Plain Chant which fixes the notes of the tone

to the syllables of successive phrases fits this style of poetry perfectly, further suggesting that the music of the Christian Church, which she possesses in her Plain Chant is the music that King David gave to the Old Testament Church by the command of God.

Therefore, we have in our possession a most ancient gift to be treasured. We have in our possession music that has been passed on to us from ancient times, so that we may join our voices with all the faithful over time from King David until now singing the same, or at least similar, music and tones which were chanted of old. Therefore, these ancient tones should continue to be used by the Church today, so that we might join our voices with all those who have gone before us in the faith, and sing the praise of God as our ancient fathers did.

Our fathers preserved the ancient chants, first by passing them down through the centuries through oral tradition until they were eventually written down. The chants of the Early Church were first recorded by St. Ambrose of Milan in the 4th century. These chants of St. Ambrose were very melodic, with much fluctuation in tonal range. They are still in use in Milan today. They were later arranged into more permanent and simple forms by St. Gregory the Great in the 6th century. This of course is why they are referred to as "Gregorian" chant, because he arranged these eight tones into music that became the foundation for all music sung in the Church of the west. St. Gregory the Great simplified the chants of St. Ambrose because he believed that the music of worship had become an occasion for deacons to show off their voice, instead of the music serving to enhance and give glory to the text. This simplification of the chants is why it is sometimes referred to as *Plain* Chant.

St. Gregory's Plain Song, sung at first in Rome, was eventually introduced into the rest of the world. It was introduced into the music life of England by St. Augustine of Canterbury in 596 A.D.; it was introduced into Germany by St. Boniface of Mainz in 716 A.D.; and it was

introduced into the churches of France by Charlemagne during his reign (789 A.D.). These tones are the explicit music of the Church, given to the Church by God through King David, and preserved by His providence through the centuries for our use. Therefore, it is our duty and obligation to preserve this sacred song for our posterity, that future generations may continue to sing the song specially given to us to sing by God in the churches of God. To that end, a few words should be offered about how one goes about singing this churchly music.

Plain Song, or chant, is simply "sung speech." Unlike modern music whose words are set to a certain rhythm, chant takes on the rhythm of one's speech. It is the words that dictate how the music is to be sung, not the notes on the page dictating how the words are to be sung. Therefore, when one chants, they must not so much think of themselves as singing the notes on the page to the words, but rather think of themselves speaking the words to different melodies and pitches. For this reason, Plain Song remains unmetered, not fettered by the constraints and rules of metered music, but takes on the rhythm and tempo of the one who is speaking (chanting) the words.

To assist in this, the words of the psalms are typically pointed in one of two ways: accentually or syllabically. The former way assumes that certain notes of the tone are to be accented, and therefore, an accented syllable must land on these notes. The end result is that the words then become metered to the Plain Song tone. The latter way of pointing allows the words of the psalm to rule the music, and not the music to rule the word, as is the case when pointed accentually. It remains unmetered and unfettered by the rules of music, but allows the words on the page to speak for themselves. It also renders the chanting to be adapted to the individual speech patterns of the one who is chanting. In this form of pointing, the final syllables of the phrase are assigned to individual notes of the mediation and final cadence. The only exception is

that certain syllables in English are too short to have any vocal quality by themselves and are attached to either the preceding or following syllable, depending on whether the next note is greater or lesser than a minor third. These instances are shown below.

But first, a few words about the recently published book, *The Psalter and the Canticles*, upon which the psalm tones that we will be studying at the end of this paper are based, and to prepare you for its use. With the exception of the *Te Deum* and the *Benedicite, Omnia Opera*, it uses the New King James Version (NKJV) of the psalms and Old and New Testament canticles. The reason is that a modern, but conservative and faithful translation of the psalms is desired, since there are certain words and phrases in the Authorized or King James Version (KJV), which no longer make sense to our modern ears, or have lost their original meaning. The NKJV is also used because of its association with the KJV, so that many phrases used in that version are still used in the NKJV, therefore a familiarity with certain words and phrases in certain psalms may be maintained.

The Psalter and the Canticles has also chosen to put the ancient tones into modern notation. There are many advocates who state that one should learn to read the Gregorian chant in its original Gregorian notation. To those who want to undertake such a noble task, there will be no argument given; the tones used in this paper are in fact arranged directly from the Gregorian tones, with all of the alternate endings of those tones. However, since there are those who have neither the inclination, nor the time to learn a whole new form of reading music, the Gregorian tones have been set to modern music. This will allow the easy singing and reading of the music and words of the psalms. No one wants the uncertainty of the ability to learn Gregorian music to deter the parishes of God from actually using these tones in their daily praying of the psalms; it would be better that they would be sung in modern notation, then not at all.

A word should also be said at this point regarding those who claim to be chanting the Gregorian tones, when in fact the music does not resemble this ancient Plain Song at all. Learning the ancient tones of the Plain Song will not necessarily be an easy task for a parish, especially those which have been weaned on simplified forms of chant which are erroneously referred to as "Gregorian" chant. These tones may be chant, but they are not the ancient Plain Song, and cannot rightly be called part of the ancient music of the Church. Because our modern Church has in many areas abandoned the music of her past, when learning the ancient Plain Song tones they will at first sound unfamiliar, and may be difficult for a parish to learn without the assistance of a choir or someone learned in chanting these Plain Song melodies. Modern notation has been used to help facilitate the learning of this valuable and necessary music of the Church so that it may not be lost, and so that the Church may be encouraged to return to her musical roots that her voice might be joined to the voices of her forefathers.

For this reason, the musical keys and the pitches of the reciting notes are similar to the musical keys to which our Lutheran liturgy is set in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. This is done to maintain consistency in the pitch of the liturgy with the pitch of the Psalter, so that there will be some familiarity. The use of *The Psalter and the Canticles* may also satisfy a deficiency in *The Lutheran Hymnal* in that not all 150 Psalms are recorded in that hymnal. Unfortunately, this is a symptom of most, if not all, modern hymnals; that one cannot pray the entire Psalter as one should, because the entire Psalter is not written in the hymnal. It is desired that *The Psalter and the Canticles* will help facilitate the praying of the Psalter in our parishes, until a suitable hymnal which contains all 150 Psalms is produced and published.

The division of the psalm phrases is also according to the division in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, if the psalm is written in that hymnal. If the psalm is not in that hymnal, then the psalm

verse was divided according to the *Psalter and Canticles* of Harry G. Archer and Rev. Luther D. Reed. This work was also used to determine which psalm tone would be appointed to which psalm, and was valuable in assisting with how certain phrases were to be pointed. Also consulted for preparation of this work was *The Psalter* by Rev. Herbert Lindemann, whose suggestions for where the use of a flex would be appropriate was quite helpful. The antiphons chosen for each of the psalms is, for the most part, from the list given by Rev. Paul H. D. Lang in his book *Ceremony and Celebration*. The antiphons for the canticles are from the suggested antiphons for these canticles put forth by the *Church Book for the use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* first published by the General Council in 1872. The daily offices of Matins and Vespers have also been included for those who may wish to use *The Psalter and the Canticles* as a standalone devotional aid. Also included, to assist with the praying of the daily offices, are The Litany and The Suffrages.

Each of the psalms has at least one psalm tone assigned to it. In some cases there are two psalm tones appointed to a certain psalm. The choice between these two psalms is set according to whether the psalm tone is appropriate for a festival, ferial or penitential season. Which psalm tone is appropriate to which season can be found in the footnotes at the beginning of the psalm tone. For the canticles, the *Benedictus*, the *Magnificat*, the *Nunc Dimittis*, and the *Venite, Exsultemus* are appointed to all eight psalm tones, and in the case of the *Magnificat* and the *Venite, Exsultemus* are appointed to the *Peregrinus* (or Pilgrim's) tone. Suggestions for when to sing the psalms can be found in the charts listed after the Canticles. Also, an historic form of praying the Psalter among Lutherans is to pray consecutively Psalms 1-109 at Matins, and Psalms 110-150 at Vespers; chanting from one to three psalms at each Office.

The following paragraphs contain some rubrics governing the chanting of the Plain Chant:

When praying the Psalter it is appropriate to kneel or stand. If, however, several psalms are being prayed consecutively, it is permissible to sit for the Psalter, and to stand at the last half verse before either the *Gloria Patri* at the end of each psalm, or for just the final *Gloria Patri*.

In praying the Psalter in public worship, the antiphon should be intoned by a solo voice, either by a deacon, or in the absence of a deacon, by a male, tenor voice in the choir. If there is no choir, the antiphon may be intoned by the officiant. The repetition of the antiphon after the psalm and *Gloria Patri* may be sung in unison by all. On festival days, a special antiphon may be used. This antiphon would be chanted before the praying of the psalms, before the individual antiphon of each consecutive psalm, and after the final antiphon of the last psalm. The special antiphon replaces the antiphon for the canticles. For a list of these special antiphons divided according to the seasons of the Church Year with appropriate psalm tones, please consult *Invitatories, Antiphons, Responsories, and Versicles for the Church Year* section in the back of *The Psalter and the Canticles*.

In many cases the appointed antiphon is the first verse of the psalm. Historically, when the first verse of the psalm is the antiphon, the first verse is omitted since it has just been sung. Therefore, the chanting of these psalms begins with the second verse (after the antiphon). In *The Psalter and the Canticles* the first verse has been retained instead of omitted, so that one may see that the first verse is the antiphon, and also, if one may so choose, the first verse may be included in the chanting of the psalm. In these instances, the first verse is set apart by brackets "[]" to assist if one wants to omit it as according to tradition. If a special antiphon is used, one may omit the antiphon (which is the first verse of the psalm) and begin chanting the psalm at the first verse.

The psalm itself may be sung in unison, or it may be sung antiphonally by whole verse or half verse. The Psalter is divided by half verse in order to facilitate this form of chant. There are

several options if one desires to chant the psalms antiphonally. It may be chanted antiphonally between officiant and congregation, between choir and congregation, between two sections of the choir, or between two sections of the congregation. The *Gloria Patri* is always to be sung in unison. Also, during Passiontide, from *Judica* to Holy Saturday, the *Gloria Patri* is omitted in the chanting of the psalms and canticles.

Gregorian chant is intended to be chanted *a Capella*, that is, without musical accompaniment. However, to assist those parishes who may need musical accompaniment, all eight tones and the *Peregrinus*, with all of the alternate endings of the psalm tones have been supplied with an organ accompaniment. It is desired that parishes would eventually wean themselves off of the organ accompaniment, so that the full beauty of the Plain Song may be heard by those who pray the Psalter *a Capella*. Also, Plain Song is intended to be chanted in unison, that is, not in four-part harmony. As we heard in 2 Chronicles, that the singers and musicians lifted up their voice as one sound. This serves to give an example of the unity and fellowship of the Church; the Church is one, not many, therefore they join their many voices into one song—one voice. However, if it is desired, on feasts days and other special occasions, the accompaniment to the psalm tones may be sung in four parts by a choir.

When one is chanting the psalms by himself, the words should be chanted in the manner and tempo in which he would speak them. When chanting the psalms in a group, the words should be chanted in a manner and tempo in which the group would normally speak them together. One should avoid chanting too fast or too slow. Just as this is annoying in common speech, it is especially annoying in chant. Also, in order to properly chant the psalms, one must understand the psalm and grasp its meaning, so that just as this is important for proper inflection and accent in common speech, so this is important in the sung speech of chant.

The final "-ed" at the end of a word is only considered to be a separate syllable if the "-ed" is used in regular speech. (For example: creat-ed; bless-ed; or wick-ed). In order to eliminate any question about whether the "-ed" should be pronounced as a separate syllable or not, an "è" is sometimes used as in bless-ed (blessèd). Pauses for breath when chanting on the Recitation Notes should only occur at a colon, semi-colon, period, question mark, and exclamation point, and after the flex, mediation, and termination. They should not occur after a comma, or especially during the middle of a phrase. A slight pause may be used at a comma, but only enough to separate the sentence as you would in normal speech.

The psalm tones are divided up into four basic parts: the Intonation; the Reciting Note, or Dominant Note; the Mediation; and the Termination, or Final Cadence. They are shown below according to Tone V:

The Intonation distinguishes the Festival from the Ferial or daily use. The Intonation is used only on Sundays and Feasts and Festivals. On Ferias the praying of the psalm begins on the Reciting note. The *Psalmi Majores* (the *Magnificat*, *Nunc Dimittis*, and *Benedictus*) and the *Gloria Patri* are the only exceptions. In the case of these, the Intonation is chanted at the beginning of each verse whether or not it is a Festival or Feria. The Intonation is written in *The Psalter and the Canticles* in all capital letters. The Intonation is only sung at the beginning of the opening antiphon (except in the cases listed above), the rest of the psalm verses begin on the Reciting Note. The Intonation is designed to set the tempo of the chanting of the psalm, that is, how fast or slow the Intonation is chanted by the one leading the psalm, will determine the tempo of the rest of the psalm.

The Reciting Note is the tone upon which the majority of the psalm is chanted. It begins after the first double bar line, as can be seen above. All of the psalm verses that begin with the Reciting Note begin with the double bar line in the text; the second half of the verse does not have a double bar line written into the text of the psalms and canticles (except in the case of the *Peregrinus*, which has an Intonation at the beginning of both half verses). The Reciting Note occurs before both the Mediation and the Termination. Any pauses or breaks when the Reciting Note is being chanted is determined by the punctuation, as stated earlier. In some cases, because of the shortness of the psalm or canticle verse, the Reciting Note is omitted. This is indicated by a hyphen followed by a barline (- |). This can be seen in this example based on Tone VII:

YOU - SHALL - || - | keep | them, | O | Lord, *

You shall preserve them from this
genera- | tion | for- | ev- | **er.** -

Notice the words go straight from the Intonation to the Mediation with a hyphen followed by a barline separating them. Also, when there is only one syllable pointed to the Reciting Note, that syllable is held briefly.

The Mediation is the phrase that separates the two half verses of a psalm verse. The end of the Mediation is indicated by a double bar line with an asterisk above it. The same is true of the first half of the psalm verse which ends with an asterisk. In certain tones (II, IV, V, and VIII) the "monosyllabic mediation" is employed. According to ancient usage whenever these four tones are used, if the final syllable of the Mediation is a monosyllable or an accented syllable of a polysyllabic word, the final syllable is chanted according to the second to last note, and the last note is omitted. This is indicated in *The Psalter and the Canticles* by a barline followed by a

hyphen (| -) after the last syllable. For example, following the pointing of Tone V, it would be rendered like so:

|| I will call upon the | Lord | -   Who is worth   - | y | to | be | praised.

Notice that the word "Lord" is sung to the second to last note, that is, the highest note. This is done to give added stress to a significant syllable that ends a phrase.

The Termination completes the second half of the psalm verse. In the case of some of the psalm tones, there are one or more variant endings. These may be used in place of the regular termination.

There are certain half verses of the psalm tones which are too short to have a syllable appointed to each note of the psalm tone. Therefore a syllable or syllables must be sung to two or more notes. This is indicated in *The Psalter and the Canticles* by an emdash between two barlines: (| — |). The following example is based on Tone III:

I   — || lay | — | down | **and** - | slept; *
                                   I awoke, for the Lord | sus- | tained
                                   | **me.** -

In the above example both "I" and "lay" are also sung to the next note. This emdash that is used to indicate the method of chanting the psalm is not to be confused with the emdash that is used as a part of speech. When the emdash is used as a part of speech in *The Psalter and the Canticles* it is connected directly to the front of the word in which the emdash occurs.

Note the following example from Psalm 106 using tone V:
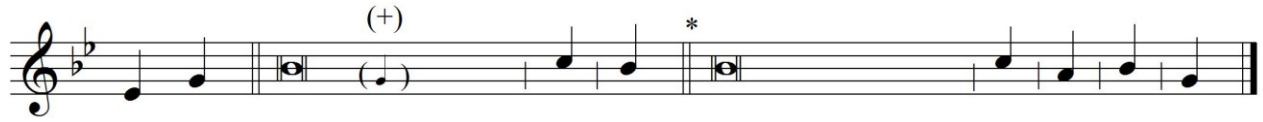
|| Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your won *-ders;* (+)
  They did not remember the multitude of Your | mer- | cies, *
                          But rebelled by the | sea | —the | Red
 | Sea.

Notice in the Termination that an emdash is connected directly to the front of the word "the." This is part of the natural grammar of the sentence, therefore to maintain the natural grammar, this emdash is retained. However, it does not modify the method of chanting the psalm, that is, the word "sea" is sung to only one note and not two.

In some of the psalm tones there are two notes tied together by a slur. This indicates that one syllable is chanted to those two notes. The syllable is written in "bold" typeface and followed by a hyphen (or an extra hyphen if the syllable is in the middle of a word). In the above example from Tone III the "and" (being the second to last syllable) before the Mediation, and the "me" (being the last syllable of the Termination) show this.

In the case where certain syllables are too short to have any vocal weight of their own, (such as in the words "in-i-quity"; "dil-i-gent"; "van-i-ty" or "psalt-er-y") they must be attached to the preceding or following syllable depending on whether the second note is greater or less than a minor third, the two syllables are italicized and separated by a hyphen. The two (or more) syllables are also followed by a dot (·) to distinguish them from the flex. Here is an example based on Tone VIII:


  FOR THE || Lord is righteous,
      He loves | *right-eous-* · | ness; *
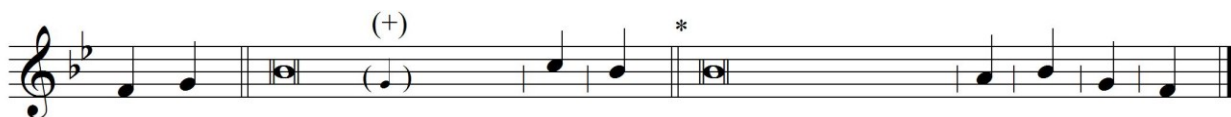
His countenance be- | holds | the | up- | right.

In the above example one can see that the first two syllables of "righteousness" are italicized, separated by a hyphen, and followed by a dot. These two syllables "right" and "eous" are sung to the second to last note of the Mediation.

In a very few instances the two preceding examples are combined so that two syllables are chanted to two notes connected by a slur. One might think that these two syllables would be sung to each of the two notes of the slur; in essence removing the slur. However, one of the syllables does not carry enough vocal weight to exist on its own; therefore it must remain attached to the preceding note (it is always attached to the preceding note because in all instances the second note of the slur is less than a minor third). When this situation arises both syllables remain italicized, are separated by a hyphen, and are followed by a dot (·). But, the first syllable is also in "bold" face type. This indicates that the first syllable is sung to the two slur notes, and the second syllable only to the second note of the slur. The following example based on Tone VI will help illustrate this:
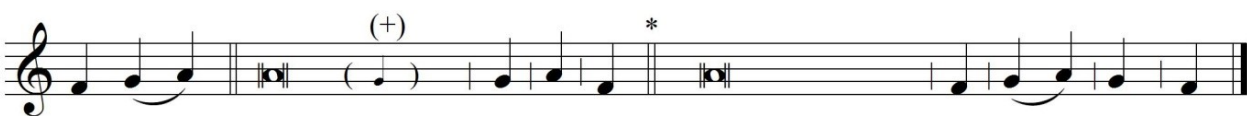
|| So we, Your people
and sheep of your pasture,
will give You thanks | for | ev- | er; *
We will show forth your praise to | all | **gen- - er-** · | a-
| tions.

One can see that in the Termination the word "generation" is broken up into four syllables. The first two syllables are pointed to the two slur notes of G and A natural, and the third syllable is pointed to the G natural. The last syllable is pointed to the F natural. The first

syllable of "generation" (gen) is chanted to the two slur notes, and then the second syllable of "generation" (er) is sung to the second note of the slur. This is a rare occurrence, for a word with a weak syllable has to land on a slurred set of notes. Considering only four of the eight tones contain slurred notes, it only happens a few times in *The Psalter and the Canticles*, but this explanation is provided so that one may see how to chant the words pointed in this instance.

Sometimes the phrase before the Mediation is so long that it needs to be broken up, so that a person may either catch his breath, or further establish the meaning of the phrase. This is done by the use of the "flex." The flex is a drop of the Reciting Note by either a whole step or a drop of a minor third on one syllable. How low it drops depends on whether the Reciting Note is a B flat or an A natural. In both cases, in *The Psalter and the Canticles*, the flex note will always end up being G natural. The flex is indicated in the psalm or canticle by the syllable being separated by a hyphen and is italicized. It is also followed by a plus sign surrounded by parentheses "(+)."

Here is an example based upon Tone I:

In the above example one can see that the "-ning" of the word "beginning" is the flex. In all of the tones, the flex happens at this point during the *Gloria Patri*. One can also see that the Reciting Note is dropped a whole step, since it is an A natural, to G natural. The Flex Note is also indicated in the music by the word "Flex" above the flex symbol "(+)" in all Psalm Tones.

One can also see in the Tone above the arrangement of all the tones. The number of the Tone is written in the upper left corner. If there is an alternate ending or endings, this is indicated by the number of the ending in the upper right corner of the psalm tone.

Two final notes about *The Psalter and the Canticles*, the verse numbers of the psalms have been retained. This is to provide for easy location of a particular part of a psalm if one wants to only chant a particular verse or verses. This is also done so that one may ascertain what the antiphon verse is if there ever was a question, for the verse number to the antiphon has been removed, in order that the word "antiphon" may be placed there, so that the antiphon is easily identified.

Secondly, the words "*Selah*" (סֶלָה) and "Meditation" (*Higgaion* (הִגָּיוֹן) in the Hebrew) have been retained in the text. So that they are easily identifiable, they have been separated by a space from the next verse. There has been much debate as to what these words' use was in the psalms. But in short, they simply indicate a break in the chanting of the psalm. "Meditation" only occurs once within the text of the psalms itself, and it is accompanied by "*Selah*" in the same spot. *Higgaion* (Meditation) in its several uses in Hebrew usually referred to a musical interlude of some sort. Therefore, it would be appropriate when this word is used in the Psalter to play some sort of musical interlude. This can simply be done by repeating the psalm tone on the organ. Or, if the psalm is to be chanted on a Feast day, a musical interlude appropriate to the theme of the psalm or day may be used.

"*Selah*" means "pause" and therefore a pause in the chanting of the psalm should occur. Whether this pause is accompanied by musical interlude or silence is the choice of the one praying the psalms. It is suggested that the use of "*Selah*" follow this manner: The deacon, or the one leading the chanting of the psalms, should *speak* the word "*Selah*" out loud, indicating that

those who are praying the psalm should reflect and meditate upon what has just been prayed in the psalm. After a space of about 30 seconds,[1] the deacon would chant the next half verse solo, and the congregation would join in chanting with him in unison (or however the psalms are to be chanted) the rest of the psalm up to either next "*Selah*" or the end of the psalm. In most cases, the "*Selah*" comes at the end of a verse. However, in a few cases, the "*Selah*" comes after the first half verse of a psalm verse. This is not a typographical error, but is a result of where "*Selah*" falls within the natural division of the verses. The same rubrics listed above would apply in this situation as well. The purpose of the "*Selah*" or pause, within the psalm is to stop and reflect upon what has just been read or chanted. It marks phrases of importance that heed our attention.

Now let us turn our attention to the actual chanting of the Plain Song, so that we might become familiar with these tones, and in turn share these ancient tones with those entrusted to our spiritual care.

Part II: Practical Application of the Plain Song Chant

In order to properly catechize one's parish in the use of the Plain Chant, one must understand it themselves. To that end, it is important to spend a few minutes learning the eight tones, and the *Peregrinus*. We will use The *Nunc Dimittis* for learning the eight tones and the *Venite, Exsultemus* for the *Peregrinus*. The reason is that the words of *The Nunc Dimittis* should be familiar to everyone, since it is used most frequently in the worship of our parishes. The *Nunc Dimittis* is also relatively short so that a run through of the eight tones will not be time-consuming. Also, The *Nunc Dimittis* is one of the canticles that is pointed to all eight tones, so that it will give the participant an understanding how the different tones can change the mood of the canticle. Lastly, The *Nunc Dimittis* contains all of the various pointing elements that were

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[1] The 30 seconds is a reminder of the words of St. John the Evangelist and Apostle in his Revelation of Jesus Christ, where he recounts that there was silence in Heaven for about 30 minutes.

listed in the previous section. The *Venite, Exsultemus* is used for the *Peregrinus*, since that too is a familiar section of Holy Scripture, and The *Nunc Dimittis* is not pointed to that tone.

To teach the Plain Song Chant to those who are unfamiliar with the tones (and to teach chant in general) the first thing to do is forget about the music. Set it aside and just look at the words. The first thing one must do is simply read the text as if he was speaking to someone. Notice the pauses that you make; the speed at which you read it; where you accent the syllables; and the volume of the words. Does your voice get louder or softer naturally when reading certain words or phrases? Do you read certain words or phrases faster or slower? Underlining all of this is the sense of the words. What does the text mean? How would you read the text knowing what the words mean?

What does reading the text have to do with chanting? As was said above, chanting is simply reading the text in a sung voice. Therefore, how one reads the words (or a groups reads the words) indicates how one would chant it. If one understands the sense of the words, the music will take care of itself. This is the problem, in the opinion of the author, with some chanters today; they believe that chanting is some form of musical concert in which they must sing like an opera singer, or that they are auditioning for American Idol. This is the reason that St. Gregory the Great simplified the Ambrosian chant, because he believed it had become a reason for deacons to show off their voices, and was no longer a form of proclamation of the Word of God.

The next step in teaching the Gregorian Chant is to chant the words to the tone that you are teaching; it helps to use familiar words, so that one can concentrate just on the music, and not have to learn words and music at the same time. This is also helpful so that the chant may more

readily be words to which music is attached than music to which words are attached. To this end,

let us chant the eight tones and the *Peregrinus*, so that we may gain a familiarity with them.

The Nunc Dimittis
Luke 2:29-32

Psalm Tone I   Flex   Ending 1
(+)   *

Antiphon: A **LIGHT -** || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | ***Is- - ra-*** · | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

²⁹ LORD, **NOW** - || You are letting Your servant | de- | part | in | peace, *
Accord- | ing | to | **Your** - | word;
³⁰ FOR **MY** - || eyes have seen | Your | sal- | va- | tion *
³¹ Which You have prepared before the face | of | all | **peo**- - | ples,
³² A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | ***Is- - ra-*** · | el.
GLO- **RY -** || be to the Father, | and | to | the | Son: *
And to | the | Ho- | **ly** - | Ghost;
AS **IT** - || was in the begin -*ning*, (+) is now, and | ev- | er | shall | be: *
World with- | out | end. | **A-** - | men.

Antiphon: A **LIGHT -** || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | ***Is- - ra-*** · | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

Psalm Tone II   Flex   *
(+)

Antiphon: A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your people | Is- | ra- | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

²⁹ LORD, NOW || You are letting Your servant depart in | peace, | - *
According | to | Your | word;
³⁰ FOR MY || eyes have seen Your sal- | va- | tion *
³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of | all | peo- | ples,
³² A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your people | Is- | ra- | el.
GLO- RY || be to the Father, and to the | Son: | - *
And to the | Ho- | ly | Ghost;
AS IT || was in the begin -*ning*, (+) is now, and ever | shall | be: *
World without | end. | A- | men.

Antiphon: A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *

And the glory of Your people | Is- | ra- | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

Psalm Tone III   Flex   Ending 1

Antiphon: A **LIGHT -** || to bring revelation | to | the | **Gen- -** | tiles, *

And the glory of Your people | Is- | ra- | **el. -** *(St. Luke 2:32)*

²⁹ LORD, **NOW** - || You are letting Your servant | de- | part | **in -** | peace, *

According | to | Your | **word;** -

³⁰ FOR **MY** - || eyes have seen | Your | sal- | **va- -** | tion *

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of | all | peo- | **ples, -**

³² A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | **Gen- -** | tiles, *

And the glory of Your people | Is- | ra- | **el. -**

GLO- **RY** - || be to the Father, | and | to | **the -** | Son: *

And to the | Ho- | ly | **Ghost;** -

AS **IT** - || was in the begin *-ning*, (+) is now, and | ev- | er | **shall** - | be: *

World without | end. | A- | **men. -**

Antiphon: A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | **Gen- -** | tiles, *

and the glory of Your people | Is- | ra- | **el. -** *(St. Luke 2:32)*

Psalm Tone IV   Flex   Ending 1
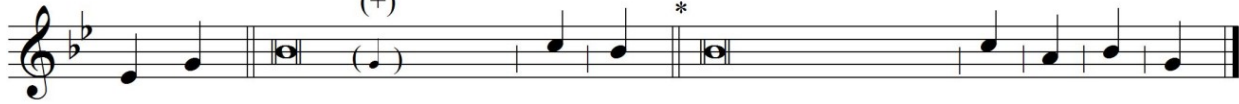

Antiphon: A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *

And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

²⁹ LORD, **NOW** - || You are letting Your servant de- | part | in | peace, | - *

Ac- | cord- | ing | to | Your | word;

³⁰ FOR **MY** - || eyes have seen | Your | sal- | va- | tion *

³¹ Which You have prepared before the | face | of | all | peo- | ples,

³² A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *

And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | el.

GLO- **RY -** || be to the Father, and | to | the | Son: | - *

And | to | the | Ho- | ly | Ghost;

AS **IT** - || was in the begin *-ning*, (+) is now, and | ev- | er | shall | be: *

World | with- | out | end. | A- | men.

Antiphon: A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *

And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

Psalm Tone V   Flex
(+)   *

Antiphon: A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | Is- | *ra-el.* • *(St. Luke 2:32)*

²⁹ LORD, NOW || You are letting Your servant depart in | peace, | - *
Accord- | ing | to | Your | word;
³⁰ FOR MY || eyes have seen Your sal- | va- | tion *
³¹ Which You have prepared before the face | of | all | peo- | ples,
³² A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | Is- | *ra-el.* •
GLO- RY || be to the Father, and to the | Son: | - *
And to | the | Ho- | ly | Ghost;
AS IT || was in the begin *-ning,* (+) is now, and ever | shall | be: *
World with- | out | end. | A- | men.

Antiphon: A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your | peo- | ple | Is- | *ra-el.* • *(St. Luke 2:32)*

Psalm Tone VI   Flex
(+)   *

Antiphon: A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your peo- | ple | **Is- -** | ra- | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

²⁹ LORD, **NOW** - || You are letting Your servant de- | part | in | peace, *
Accord- | ing | **to** - | Your | word;
³⁰ FOR **MY** - || eyes have seen Your | sal- | va- | tion *
³¹ Which You have prepared before the face | of | **all** - | peo- | ples,
³² A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your peo- | ple | **Is- -** | ra- | el.
GLO- **RY** - || be to the Father, and | to | the | Son, *
And to | the | **Ho- -** | ly | Ghost;
AS **IT** - || was in the begin *-ning,* (+) is now, and ev- | er | shall | be *
World with- | out | **end. -** | A- | men.

Antiphon: A **LIGHT** - || to bring revelation to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
And the glory of Your peo- | ple | **Is- -** | ra- | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

Psalm Tone VII   Flex   Ending 1

Antiphon: **A - LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
        And the glory of Your peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | **el.** - *(St. Luke 2:32)*

²⁹ **LORD, - NOW** - || You are letting Your servant | de- | part | in | peace, *
        Accord- | ing | to | Your | **word;** -
³⁰ **FOR - MY -** || eyes have seen | Your | sal- | va- | tion *
        ³¹ Which You have prepared before the face | of | all | peo- | **ples,** -
³² **A - LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
        And the glory of Your peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | **el.** -
GLO- - RY - || be to the Father, | and | to | the | Son: *
        And to | the | Ho- | ly | **Ghost;** -
AS - IT - || was in the begin *-ning*, (+) is now, and | ev- | er | shall | be: *
        World with- | out | end. | A- | **men.** -

Antiphon: **A - LIGHT** - || to bring revelation | to | the | Gen- | tiles, *
        And the glory of Your peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | **el.** - *(St. Luke 2:32)*

Psalm Tone VIII   Flex   Ending 1

Antiphon: A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *
        And the glory of Your peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

²⁹ LORD, NOW || You are letting Your servant depart in | peace, | - *
        Accord- | ing | to | Your | word;
³⁰ FOR MY || eyes have seen Your sal- | va- | tion *
        ³¹ Which You have prepared before the face | of | all | peo- | ples,
³² A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *
        And the glory of Your peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | el.
GLO- RY || be to the Father, and to the | Son: | - *
        And to | the | Ho- | ly | Ghost;
AS IT || was in the begin *-ning*, (+) is now, and ever | shall | be: *
        World with- | out | end. | A- | men.

Antiphon: A LIGHT || to bring revelation to the | Gen- | tiles, *
        And the glory of Your peo- | ple | Is- | ra- | el. *(St. Luke 2:32)*

Venite, Exsultemus

Tonus Peregrinus   Flex

Antiphon: **THE -** || Lord is | glo- | *ri-ous* · | in | His | saints: *
        OH, - || come, let us | wor- | ship | **Him.** -

|| ¹ Oh come, let | us | sing | to | the | Lord! *
      || Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our | sal- | va- | **tion.** -
|| ² Let us come before His pre- | sence | with | thanks- | giv- | ing; *
      || Let us shout joyfully to | Him | with | **psalms.** -
|| ³ For the | Lord | is | the | great | God, *
      || And the great King a- | bove | all | **gods.** -
|| ⁴ In His hand are the deep | pla- | ces | of | the | earth; *
      || The heights of the hills are | His | al- | **so.** -
|| ⁵ The sea is | His, | for | He | made | it; *
      || And His hands formed | the | dry | **land.** -
|| ⁶ Oh come, let us | wor- | ship | and | bow | down; *
      || Let us kneel before the Lord | our | Mak- | **er.** -
|| ⁷ For | — | He | is | our | God, *
      || And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep | of | His | **hand.** -
GLO- - || ry be to the Fa- | ther, | and | to | the | Son: *
      AND - || to the | Ho- | ly | **Ghost;** -
AS - || it was in the begin *-ning*, (+) is now, | and | ev- | er | shall | be: *
      WORLD – || without | end. | A- | **men.** -

Antiphon: **THE -** || Lord is | glo- | *ri-ous* · | in | His | saints: *
        OH, - || come, let us | wor- | ship | **Him.** –

Soli Deo Gloria!

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Conservatorium, Cantor und Organist an der protestant. Kirche zu München für den Gebrauch in Stadt- und Landkirchen herausgegeben von Dr. Ludwig Schoeberlein Consistorialrath, ordentl. Professor der Theologie und Vorstand der liturgischen Abtheilung des praktisch-theologischen Seminars an der Universität Göttingen. Erster Theil: Die allgemeinen Gesangstücke. Bandenhoeck & Ruprecht's Verlag. Göttingen, Germany. 1865.

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