

can be put on at other times with useful effect: at Whitsun, on the occasion of First Communion, Confirmation, etc., just to remind us of where it all began. But this is leading to other matters for which there is no space. The Mass and the Altar have been the main theme. The Sacraments, too, must be 'revealed' to the faithful and, as priests, we shall take to heart the instruction of our Holy Father in *Mediator Dei*:

*That the Christian people may continue to acquire more and more supernatural riches, see that they are instructed concerning the treasures of the liturgy by sermons, dissertations, periodical courses and weeks devoted to the study of the liturgy.*



## CONGREGATIONAL MUSIC

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**I**T is most important that when the faithful assist at the sacred ceremonies . . . they should not be merely detached and silent spectators, but, filled with a deep sense of the beauty of the liturgy, they should sing alternately with the clergy or the choir, as it is prescribed.'

(Pius XI. *Divini Cultus*, §9.)

Music, to be suitable for congregational use, must clearly possess certain distinguishing qualities, which it will be wise to try and define at the outset. Firstly it must be simple. Even in parishes where no prejudice against congregational singing exists to be overcome, it is necessary both to avoid the discouragement caused by attempting music too elaborate melodically, too complex rhythmically, or of too great vocal compass; and to avoid, even worse, complacency in the unworthy performance of too difficult works. Secondly, it should be sufficiently appreciable in terms of current musical idioms to embody the virtues of popularity. The difficulties which this entails in a disintegrated assortment of musical cultures such as we know today, as well as the problem of profane association, will be discussed later in the article. Suffice to describe popularity here as a certain spontaneous

'pickupability'. Thirdly, along with the need for simplicity must be observed the equal need for variety. Obviously most of the music learned will have to bear considerable use, so the danger of monotony must be carefully avoided. To take a familiar example, Dom Gregory Murray's straightforward attempt to provide what we so urgently need—*A People's Mass*—though admirably simple and unmistakably popular, seems nevertheless to make too much of too few ideas to be considered wholly satisfactory.

Congregational music may be classified under the following headings, according to its function:

- (a) *Liturgical*
  - (i) The Ordinary of the Mass;
  - (ii) Psalms for Offertory and Communion processions, etc;
  - (iii) The Divine Office, especially Vespers and Compline;
- (b) *Non-liturgical* for use in the services of the Church: mainly hymns;
- (c) *Less formal music* for processions, pilgrimages, youth clubs, etc.

Firstly, then, to deal with the Ordinary of the Mass. The Kyries may be sung either alternately with the choir, or, more effectively, grouped in threes: cantors, choir, congregation. Gloria and Credo are sung in alternation with the choir. In the Agnus Dei, either the choir starts each section, the people entering at 'qui tollis', or the cantors give out the opening, the choir entering at 'qui tollis', and the people concluding each line ('miserere nobis', 'dona nobis pacem').

The Sanctus, being of such central importance, demands special consideration. To quote Father Jungmann: 'At the Sanctus the entire community joined in. Even well on into the Middle Ages the Sanctus was not regarded as an item on its own, to be entrusted to trained singers; for it was a more simple, and thereby more impressive, song of all the people; the community just joined in the easy melody of the preface and sang together with the priest "and all the heavenly army" the triple Sanctus.' The Sacred Congregation of Rites has recently confirmed that the Sanctus and Benedictus may be sung without a break before the consecration. The liturgical desirability (and, where short, simple chants are used, the artistic advantages) of this practice

cannot be over-emphasized. The whole section should be sung by everyone.

When a congregation has learned to sing the Sanctus, and to conclude the eucharistic prayer of the Canon with a convincing 'Amen', a great work has been well begun.

What music should the people be taught to sing? All the recent papal pronouncements on music insist upon the prime importance of Gregorian chant in this respect, e.g. St Pius X: 'Special efforts are to be made to restore the use of the Gregorian chant by the people, so that the faithful may once again take a more active part in the ecclesiastical offices, as was the case in ancient times'; or Pius XI: 'In order that the faithful may more actively participate in divine worship, let them be made once more to sing the Gregorian chant, so far as it belongs to them to take part in it.'

But at the outset we are faced with a major problem of interpretation which is at last beginning to be more openly discussed—the question of rhythm. For this is no longer so simple a matter as it may have appeared when the newly issued chant books prepared by the monks of Solesmes seemed to provide an irrefutably authentic text. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Solesmian researches have produced a version which is melodically definitive. What has long been open to suspicion is their interpretation of the rhythm; and, as a result of the recently published work of Father Vollaerts, S.J., something more than suspicion is in the air. Dom Gregory Murray's recent pamphlets, especially the excellent 'Gregorian Rhythm in the Gregorian Centuries', make the issues quite clear.

It is important to realize that this is not simply a matter of scholarly disputes in academic circles, but one most relevant to congregational needs; since, quite apart from the desirability of singing the chant according to the methods current at its most vigorous period, it cannot surely be denied that, if metrical texts should be sung to metrical music, a good number of tunes are likely to prove much easier to learn. In which case such nineteenth-century complications as the position of the ictus, and the exact rhythmical significance of the quilisma and episema, can be cheerfully disregarded.

But it would be foolish to imagine that, even if general agreement were accorded to any one mensural system, the fruits of

research could then be quickly gathered in. Nevertheless, if someone competent were to produce a selection of simpler chants for congregational use, restoring their true rhythms as accurately as the present state of scholarship permits, and printing them on the modern five-line stave (the mystique of the four-line stave vanishing with the ictus), he would be doing a valuable service to the singing Church.

Meanwhile the simplest chants—perhaps the only ones certainly designed for congregational use—being mainly syllabic, can be easily learned; the naturally strong accent of the Latin words should be allowed to shape the phrases. Let it be said at once that Mass VIII (de Angelis) is, except for the Gloria, easy to sing badly. The uninhibited major feeling of the tunes cannot conceal the difficulty of the melismata or the uncomfortably high tessitura of the final Kyries and much of the Sanctus and Benedictus.

The least ornate, and in some ways the most beautiful, of the Gregorian Masses is No. XVIII; an alternative Kyrie of equal simplicity being found in Mass XVI. The Gloria of Mass VIII is a straightforward setting which can go with a fine swing. Even plainer is that in Mass XV, though the constant repetition of its cadential formula can become intolerably monotonous unless it is sung with intelligent variety, and a skilful avoidance of tub-thumping on the falling thirds. Less perilous, and truly splendid in its sombre simplicity, is the Ambrosian Gloria, easily obtainable in 'Plainsong for Schools'. Credo I is musically stronger than the better-known Credo III, but neither is difficult to learn.

Apart from plainchant, good liturgical music for congregational participation is not easy to find. An interesting experiment is the setting of the Mass for choir and congregation by Père Gelineau. The first Kyrie is sung unaccompanied by the cantors. In the second, sung by the choir, this melody is in the treble, harmonized by the lower voices. Lastly the people sing the tune, while the choir adds fresh harmonies. The same pattern is repeated for the Christes and final Kyries. Simplicity is achieved by the people learning each tune twice before they sing it, and variety by the changing texture and harmonies. Other patterns of repetition are adopted elsewhere in the Mass. But it must be admitted that, considering the work as a whole, structural interest outweighs the significance of the musical content.

However, it ought not to be beyond the competence of one of our Catholic composers, given suitable encouragement, to produce a musically satisfying setting on these or similar lines, perhaps using rhythmic and melodic figures suggested by English folk-song. Existing folk-songs should not be adopted for the purpose, owing to the possibility of association with profane words. Having banished the once-popular 'O Westron Wynde' with all its overtones, we need not hasten to introduce 'The Foggy, Foggy Dew'.

Sometimes, for a change, it is well to have some alternative to the Sung Mass. Indeed, Father Jungmann has suggested that, for the ordinary Sunday parish Mass, 'a suitable form of celebration would be the Dialogue Mass with some carefully chosen hymns incorporated at certain points'. A considerable argument in favour of regarding this as the normal parish use is that it allows for the participation both of those who sing, and also of the by no means negligible body of people who, for one reason or another, are unable to sing. The present Pope has spoken eloquently in praise of this type of Mass: 'At Masses that are not sung solemnly these hymns can be a powerful aid in keeping the faithful from attending the Holy Sacrifice like dumb and idle spectators. They can help to make the faithful accompany the sacred services both mentally and vocally, and to join their own piety to the prayers of the priest. This happens when these hymns are properly adapted to the individual parts of the Mass, as we rejoice to know is being done in many parts of the Catholic world.'

This practice is frequent in Germany where, it seems, the fine traditional Lutheran chorale tunes have been adapted for the purpose. These tunes, enriched by the exceptional wealth and variety of harmonizations through which J. S. Bach expressed his profound love of our Blessed Lord, are among the greatest treasures of European music, and it is greatly to be desired that something of the kind should be developed here. Almost certainly, new words would have to be provided, with the particular end of incorporation in the Mass in view.

One of the most serious defects in our liturgical life must surely be the almost total neglect of the Psalter—that backbone of the Divine Office, and key to the understanding of so much of the Proper of the Mass. To remedy this, congregations need not start learning long stretches of Latin. Even a Latin Compline

seems, generally speaking, to be neither practicable nor particularly desirable. For there is already in the vernacular field a choice. Apart from Father Clifford Howell's *Compline* (*Grail*), in which an English version is fitted to the plainchant tunes, Messrs Novello have recently published Anthony Milner's admirable simple setting of Father Sebastian Bullough's new translation of *Compline*. It is hoped that the *English Vespers* by the same team will be published within the next twelve months. In these settings psalms, set to easily learned folk-tunes, are designed to be sung alternately by choir (or cantors) and congregation.

Though rather less musically stimulating, the psalm tones of Père Gelineau are even simpler. Most, if not all, of the *Psalter* (together with the *Canticles*) has already been issued in French, and English translations are being published by the *Grail*. In his preface, Père Gelineau clearly describes the three traditional methods of congregational participation in singing the psalms. In alternate psalmody the verses of the psalm are sung alternately by two groups, say choir and congregation. In responsorial psalmody a short response is sung before the psalm, and then repeated by the congregation, who repeat it after each verse (or group of verses) has been sung by a soloist (or choir?). Antiphonal psalmody combines these two methods. (There is also direct psalmody, in which the psalm is sung by a soloist while the congregation listens, but this is obviously the very thing we are trying to avoid.) The economical advantages of the responsorial method in the number of copies required is evident. Suitable antiphons for different occasions, which can easily be learned by heart, are printed with each psalm.

Père Gelineau's settings have been widely used in France, where they are often sung during the Offertory and Communion processions and elsewhere in the Mass. It is to be hoped that this excellent custom will be established here. How much better it would be, for example, if the faithful could all sing in English the Communion psalms on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, instead of leaving it to a small group to sing a Latin unintelligible to the vast majority who do not understand the language, and (all too often) unbearable to those who do.

The psalms, of course, lead directly to music for non-liturgical use, since the divinely inspired hymn-book of the *Old Dispensation* may also be regarded as the official hymnal of the *New Israel*.

Père Gelineau's psalms have been used in France in all kinds of para-liturgical functions, and in at least one parish in England some of Mr Milner's settings have proved an effective alternative to an evening hymn.

The qualities required of good vernacular hymns and their importance have been succinctly defined by Pope Pius XII: 'They must use plain language and simple melody and must be free from violent excess of words'. And again: 'The tunes of these hymns . . . are memorized with almost no effort or labour. The mind grasps the words and the music. They are frequently repeated and completely understood. . . . Therefore they also serve as a sort of catechism.'

The hymn-book in most general use in England and Wales is, presumably, the *New Westminster Hymnal*. It is too late now to join in the debate whether the new collection is an improvement on the old or not. It must be considered entirely on its own merits. Now unfortunately it has certain frequently recurring defects. It is not just that too many of the tunes lack the quality of spontaneous memorability. This could be true of any collection of similar scale. Nor is it that a few of the tunes are thoroughly bad. Would any hymn-book designed for Catholic use dare to omit such atrocities as 'Sweet Sacrament Divine' or 'Faith of our Fathers'? Short of founding an energetic 'Society for the Profanation of Bad Hymn Tunes', it is difficult to see what can be done. The musical editor has boldly relegated one of the above tunes to the appendix, while making it clear why that section of the book exists at all. The effect on popular taste has been nil.

The real defects of the collection lie elsewhere. Too many of the good tunes are presented in reworkings which, though technically unexceptionable, are weaker in effect than older and plainer harmonizations. The causes of this are usually an overfondness for inverted chords, suspensions and secondary sevenths, and the failure of the bass line to act as a firm foundation to the total structure. Sometimes, as in the fine Advent hymn No. 4, the effect of these harmonic predilections is one of sombre grandeur, but all too often it is just dreary. At Christmas time in particular the idiosyncrasies become quite exasperating. However, it is usually a simple matter to find the same tunes in stronger versions in such collections as *The English Hymnal*, or *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, so that this drawback is not irremediable.

An easy remedy for the other principal drawback is not, unfortunately, so easy to suggest. All too often the words show little indication that the writer understood the limitations of his medium. The fact that the verses are to be sung imposes certain definite restrictions on strophic organization, failure to recognize which results in unimportant words falling the stresses of the melody, or an overflow of meaning from one line to the next being arrested by the end pauses, sometimes with ludicrous effect. Nor are the limits of comprehension of a singing congregation any more respected. An argument which is not completed until the end of the third stanza is unlikely to be generally appreciated.

Nevertheless, by judicious selection, and by supplementing the musical resources as suggested, a sufficient variety of good hymns can be found for most occasions. Needless to say, a supply of admirable tunes for Benediction may be found by referring to the metrical index.

Hymns naturally provide the greater part of the music for processions—that is to say, when singing has any share in this activity. It is greatly to be desired that it should, since music can be a powerful stimulus to gaiety, and too often the procession is one of the more depressing forms of Catholic practice. Who does not know the type which consists of a straggling line of dejected shufflers, ushered by sundry clergy trying to organize the reciting of the rosary, the irreverent haste of which, combined with the obvious gossiping along the column, must surely be a motive of incredibility to many bewildered bystanders? Is it absurd to suggest that a pilgrimage, say to the tomb of one of our martyrs, should be, not so much a gloomy penitential exercise, but rather a joyful demonstration of thanksgiving?

The restored Holy Week liturgy provides, in the procession of palms, an excellent opportunity for recovering sounder traditions. The rousing acclamations 'Christus vincit' should certainly be learned and sung, as they can hardly fail to inspire the right disposition for celebrating the triumph of Christ the King. Moreover, they can be used most appropriately at other times throughout the year, unlike the 'Gloria, laus'. Nevertheless, this splendid hymn should also be learned, if possible. Vernacular hymns, e.g. 'To Christ the Prince of Peace', are also permitted. So far this procession has proved the least successful part of the revised Holy



Week, because very few people have realized its true significance. Let us hope that much more will be made of this important ceremony in the next few years, and that a more general understanding will be brought about by intelligent instruction from the parish clergy.

Finally, some consideration must be given to the possibility of a more frankly popular form of communal music to provide musical recreation on longer pilgrimages (e.g. to Lourdes or Rome), congresses, youth clubs, and similar occasions. In attempting to decide how far compositions in certain popular idioms of today would fulfil St Pius X's three requirements of sacred music (holiness, formal excellence, and universality), it is useful to bear in mind that the most vigorous influence upon such music today comes, directly or indirectly, from American Negro folk-music. Being already a synthesis of such apparently irreconcilable modes as African rhythm with European melody and harmony, this music seems to possess remarkable powers of assimilation. Geographically speaking it is as nearly universal as any music has ever been. The more one penetrates behind the debasement of cheap imitation and commercial exploitation, the more frequently one discovers work of enduring musical value. What then of holiness? There is sufficient recorded evidence to show how the same idiom is used for sacred as well as secular expression. Even though that fine gospel singer, Mahalia Jackson, may denounce the secular music of her people as 'sinful', she deploys her magnificent voice in a manner evidently learned from the Empress of the Blues herself. However strange, even repellent, the highly charged emotionalism of the more genuinely Negro spirituals may be to the English Catholic taste, the more restrained examples—and not necessarily the most Europeanized—can provide a profound, and genuinely religious, musical experience from which we have much to learn.

The best-known attempt in this country to bring these idioms into the service of religion is the Anglican '20th-Century Folk Mass' by the Rev. Geoffrey Beaumont. It is a great pity that this work reflects (logically enough, from the composer's standpoint) the most commercial manifestations—a more apt description of the style would be 'A 20th-Century Fox Mass'. Even so, the vocal lines of the Introit Psalm seem, to the present writer at least, quite admirable. Simple without banality, gay yet not flippant,

irresistibly singable (the people repeating exactly the words and music of the cantor): what a pity the rest of the work does not live up to this promise! The recurring 'theme tune of some grandeur' is really too trite, and fits none of the texts without violence, excepting 'Alleluia' and 'Amen'.

Likewise familiar are the two songs recorded by Père Duval during his recent visit. Charming, if rather anaemic, they do yet represent a first step towards a type of song which is both truly popular and not too transiently contemporary. For we must beware of aiming at a sort of ecclesiastical 'Top Ten'—an ever-changing succession of commercial hits whose popularity wanes as soon as it is proclaimed. But to recognize this danger is not to deny the desirability of forming a virile body of popular religious songs, whose vigour may delight the young without shocking the old, and whose good taste, while not being so refined as to preclude the affection of the public, may yet not be so wanting as to disgust the sensitive.

We need not consider too much the queasiness of the kinsfolk of Michol who, seeing David the King leaping and dancing before the Lord, despised him in her heart. Rather should we aim at bringing all that is good in the art of music under the yoke of Christ, so that as many as possible may sing with joy and conviction the praises of the Most High.

For 'he who sings well prays twice'.



## THE SENSE OF MYSTERY

P.M.

**T**HERE are many people today who condemn the efforts that are being made to make the liturgy more intelligible. The Mass and the Sacraments, they say, are mysteries; it is only right that they should be unintelligible. All this concentration on the instructive power of the liturgy is a false emphasis; the ceremonies of the liturgy are not meant to teach, they are meant to convey a feeling of reverential awe for the great mysteries of our salvation which are beyond the power of our