INTRODUCTION TO THE CHANTS

Antiphonal Psalmody

The Psalmody and the Canticles are sung antiphonally, i.e. responsively by whole verse on the part of two groups (half-choirs: Choir I and Choir II). The Psalm-Tones, according to their musical structure, are set up for this kind of antiphonal responsive singing. It is inadvisable to sing the Psalmody responsorially, i.e. responsively between liturgist and congregation, liturgist and choir, or cantor and choir. The Psalm, always being preceded by the Antiphon, is intoned by the cantor, i.e. he sings the first few notes in order to establish the tonality and tempo. If need be, it could be intoned by a few voices of the choir--perhaps three boys or men. The cantor intones in such a way that the *tuba* (the repeated reciting tone) does not lie under F nor above C.

Antiphonal Psalmody is, furthermore, to be divided by whole verse: each half-choir sings one whole Psalm-verse, in the middle of which (at the star *) a breathing pause is made. It contradicts the musical structure of the Psalmody to sing responsively by half-verse, so that the one choir would always begin a verse, increasing musical tension, and the other would end the verse, releasing musical tension.

The Antiphon belongs to the Psalmody. As a theme-verse, it improves the understanding of the Psalm and often links it to the Church Year. The choice of a Psalm-tone is based on the tonality of the Antiphon.

The Psalmody consists of:

Antiphon

Psalm

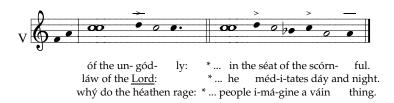
Gloria Patri (Glory be to the Father...)

Antiphon repeated

The Psalm is sung according to one of the eight Psalm-tones, whose structure (demonstrated on the model of the 8th Psalm-tone) is as follows:



The *initium/incipit* (entry form) connects the final tone of the Antiphon with the *tuba* (reciting tone) of the Psalm. Therefore it is always and only sung after the Antiphon, not at the *Gloria Patri*. The *tuba* is the tone, repeated according to the number of syllables of the half-verse, on which the main part of the text is sung. The *mediatio* is the middle cadence at the end of the first half-verse. The *finalis* is the final cadence at the end of the second half-verse. According to the number of syllables in the cadence, extra tones (printed as hollow notes in the music) are inserted. At the middle cadence of the 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 8th Psalm tones, if the last syllable is accented, the note following the accented note must sometimes be abruptly omitted (*mediatio correpta*). There is no *finalis correptum*. Example:



For the recitation of the Psalms, grammatical punctuation (comma, semicolon) in the Psalmverse never means a breath mark and must never interrupt the flow of speech. For some long halfverses, the *flexa* (†) is used as a breath mark; the last one or two syllables before the *flexa* are sung on a lower note. (If more than one syllable is to be sung on the lower tones, the accented syllable is marked

with a circumflex ^.) In Psalm-tones 2, 3, 5, and 8, the tone is dropped a minor 3rd from the *tuba*; in Psalm-tones 1, 4, 6, and 7, the tone is dropped a Major 2nd. The *flexa* occurs only in the first half-verse. Example:



redemption unto his people, † he hath commanded... maketh glad the hêart of man, † and oil to make...

The execution of the Psalmody and Canticles is as follows:

Antiphon: Cantor intones until the star *. Whole choir continues and sings the Antiphon to the end.

Psalm: Cantor intones the first half of the first verse with the *initium*, in order to set the tempo of recitation. Choir I sings the second half of the first verse. Choir II sings the second verse without the *initium*. Choir I sings the third verse without *initium*. Choir II sings the fourth verse, etc. Each half-choir begins singing its verse when the other half-choir has finished, with no intervening pause. This means that the one choir must take a breath before the other has finished singing. Verses are divided musically, not canonically. For example, Psalm 69:2, and 4 are divided into two liturgical verses.

Gloria Patri: Choir I or II sings "Glory be to the Father..." on the same Psalm-tone. Choir II or I (the other choir, as the case may be) sings "As it was in the beginning...Amen." Note: Missouri Synod custom is that the whole choir sings the *Gloria Patri* in unison.

Antiphon repeated: The whole choir repeats the Antiphon without intonation of the cantor.

The cantor leads the choir and the choir leads the congregation. The **organ**, especially if not located in the choir area, is less suited to the role of leading the gregorian prayer offices. If there is a choir organ present, it can, beyond prelude and postlude, take over the functions of a figural choir, can intone and accompany congregational hymns and chants, and with a large congregation, can support the singing in a restrained manner.

A **figural choir** can execute the Psalms, Responsory, and Canticle with polyphony. The figural choir can also take over individual stanzas of the Office Hymn, or alternate stanzas in other hymns and chants. In the Psalmody, the opportunity to perform several Psalms should especially be observed. In the Canticle, a figural execution together with the unison singing of the congregation is not recommended. Here an alternation by whole verse of the figural choir and congregation may be appropriate.

Source: Vereinigte Evangelische-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands. *Kleines Kantionale II.* Hannover: Schlütersche Buchdruckerei, 1969. pp. 8-16.