

THE ORIGINS OF DOMINICAN CHANT

THE modern printed editions of the Dominican Chant which, as is well known, differ widely from those of the Roman rite, preserve accurately the text of the *Correctorium* of Fr Humbert de Romans, who undertook the work at the instigation of the General Chapter of the Order held at Buda in 1254. When at the beginning of the twentieth century the reform of Gregorian Chant was introduced attention was drawn also to the origins of the Dominican version of Plainchant. P. Wagner, the first musicologist to investigate the problem, discovered that remarkable similarities existed between the Dominican and Cistercian tradition of Plainchant, as can be seen from his *Neumenkunde* (second edition, 1912, pp. 471 sqq.). But he considered that it was impossible to find out whether Humbert took the Cistercian Chant as a model or whether both versions were derived from a common source; namely the theory of chant used in Paris at that time. No progress has been made in solving this question since the publication of Peter Wagner's book. Now, at last, Père Dominique Delalande has taken up the examination of the question on a wide scale. From the comparison of the melodies of the Dominican Gradual with those of the Cistercian he comes to the conclusion that the Dominican Gradual was derived from that of the Cistercians¹.

This conclusion was arrived at by a minute investigation of all the manuscripts bearing upon the solution of the question, not only those of the Dominican and Cistercian rites but also those of the Roman tradition. The place to carry out such an investigation is Solesmes with its unique collection of photographs of all the important plainchant manuscripts and Père Delalande was fortunate in that he obtained permission from Père Gillet, then Master General of his Order, to specialise in the study of Gregorian Chant and to work for periods between 1942 and 1945 at Solesmes. Here he became acquainted with the method worked out by Dom Mocquereau in *Monographies Grégoriennes* and perfected by his pupils, above all by Dom Hesbert in his masterly study on the Beneventan chant in volume XIV of the *Paléographie Musicale*.

Père Delalande is conscious of the far-reaching consequences of his investigations into the palaeography of Plainchant. He not only confirms the conclusions reached by Peter Wagner that the Cister-

¹ Dominique Delalande, O.P. *Vers la version authentique du Graduel Grégorien. Le Graduel des Prêcheurs. Recherches sur les sources et la valeur de son texte musical.* (Les éditions du Cerf, Paris 1949, and Blackfriars; pp. vii and 287, 27 tables. £4).

cian chant is a corruption of the Roman version, but going a step further he shows that the present *Editio Vaticana* does not express all the nuances which the best manuscripts of the St Gall school contain, and sometimes even diverge from them methodically. This is a well known fact to those who heard the objections raised at the time of the revision of the *Editio Vaticana* by some members of the Vatican commission who were opposed to the introduction of the rhythmical signs propagated by the School of Solesmes and also to the printing of certain types of *neums* which are found in the manuscripts, e.g. the 'strophic neums': *Apostropha*, *Bistropha*, *Tristropha*, *Oriscus*, *Clinis*, *Pes flexus*, *Tristropha praepunctis*, *Pes stratus* and *Franculus*. These members maintained that the introduction of all these signs in the printed books would make it too difficult for the singers to read and interpret the melodic line filled with such a variety of notes of different shape. They also insisted on the printing of an edition without the rhythmical signs in order to satisfy the great number of the clergy who regarded the manuscripts which had rhythmical signs as exceptional. The same objections, incidentally, are made in our days by some scholars against the introduction of the equivalents of the rhythmical signs in our transcriptions of Byzantine Chant in the *Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae*. It is necessary to state emphatically that both Eastern and Western Chants had many more rhythmical and dynamic nuances than those realise who wish to sing these chants with a kind of emotionless rhythm as if they were sixteenth-century harmonised hymn-tunes.

Père Delalande divides his book into two parts. The first deals with the sources of the Dominican Gradual and shows its dependance upon the Cistercian by demonstrating particularly the great similarity in the singing of the *Alleluias*. He then analyses the melodic line of the Cistercian and Dominican chants on the one hand and the Roman on the other and comes to the conclusion that these divergences are due to arbitrary changes in the cadences in order to achieve a simplification of the modal structure, an arbitrary reduction of the compass of the melodic line where it surpasses a decachord, in the unnecessary introduction of B flats, and the 'mutilation' of vocalisers and sustained notes. From the scholarly and artistic point of view these changes and mutilations cannot be defended. But one should not forget that they were made at a time when Plainchant was in a state of decline and polyphonic composition was developing and making free use of phrases of Plainchant for its part writing. This fact explains that the Dominican chant represents an even more simplified version of the Cistercian

tradition as one can learn from the numerous musical examples displayed here by the author who always gives the Roman version of the *Vaticana* followed by those of the Cistercians and Dominicans.

The second part of the book deals with the musical value of the Dominican Gradual. Here we find detailed studies on six Introits and one on the Alleluia: *Ostende*, equally well documented by a great number of musical examples and nine tables. In this part the author goes a step further and corrects the *Vaticana* on the basis of the manuscripts which he has consulted. The alterations are far-reaching as can be seen from one of the many examples which Delalande provides to illustrate his conclusions (p. 134).

It is taken from the Introit *Resurrexi* of the Mass on Easter Day:

Rest.



Vat.



Dominican



po-su- i- sti su- per me ma-num tu-am, al- le- lu- ia:

Père Delalande is convinced—and his opinion seems to be shared by the present members of the school of Solesmes—that the *Vaticana* needs revision. At the time when the work was done, he argues, all the manuscripts necessary for the task were available, but '*il manque la methode*'; the experience which should be made the basis of the new edition was lacking. The author suggests that with the aid of this corrected text the Cistercian Gradual should be revised and used as the prototype for the Dominican Gradual. Thus, Delalande concludes, the idea of the Fathers of the Order who undertook their work with the intention of restoring the authentic version of the Dominican Plainchant would be realised.

This, of course, is an undertaking which must be carefully considered before it is put into practice and I do not feel competent to express a personal view on a subject which needs a perfect knowledge of the liturgical origins of the Order and on the various rites

which might have influenced the liturgy of the Dominicans before the *Correctorium* was compiled and a single liturgy was made obligatory for all the provinces of the Order. One knows for example that the Cistercians went to Metz to revise their Antiphonary, but to Milan to procure the texts and the melodies of the Ambrosian rite. It will be necessary to examine the Dominican hymns, processional chants and, above all, the chant of the Passion in order to find out the sources of some of their formulae which seem to me to be derived from the East. Delalande's suggestion also bears upon the question of whether the Roman chant has completely taken the place of the Gallican chant or whether the latter has survived in some melodies.

There is finally another possibility which certainly has been considered by Père Delalande. We have just mentioned that the Cistercian reform was based in the main on the Plainchant tradition of Metz which still was considered as the place where the Roman tradition was maintained in its purest form. We also know from the acts of the twenty-sixth General Chapter of the Order held at Cologne in 1245 that four fathers were ordered to fix the text and the melodies of the Office. Their work however was not approved and at the thirty-first General Chapter in London in 1250 the same fathers were ordered to go to Metz on the feast of All Souls in order to correct the edition which they had made on the basis of the tradition of Metz (*ad correctionem dicti officii faciendam et in unum volumen redigendam*). This revision too was found unsatisfactory and at the thirty-fourth General Chapter in Buda in 1254 Humbert de Romans was entrusted with the final revision which he completed in the surprisingly short time of two years. Is it not possible to assume, we may ask, that the Dominican Plainchant represents the result of at least three revisions, a fact which would explain the divergences from the Cistercian version? These questions, I think, must first be cleared up before we can assume with certainty that the whole of the Dominican Chant was taken from the Cistercian repertory.

This work, we hope, will soon be done by Père Delalande himself who has proved that he is capable of tackling the most difficult questions of musical palaeography with great perspicacity. We should like to add that his book, which is splendidly produced, is supplemented by five appendices of which the last deals with the question of the bars. Père Delalande rightly demands that these should be omitted in any future edition, because there are no bars in the modern sense but—and this is my own view—simple strokes which were intended to show that a group of notes formed a ligature

and also, as can be seen in many cases, to make it clear to the singer that a group of notes has to be sung to a single syllable of the text. In the printed editions these strokes have no *raison d'être*; they hinder the choir from building up properly the phrases of the melody: they destroy the structure of the music.

I can only repeat what I said at the beginning of this review: This is the first fully documented palaeographical study on Plainchant published outside the school of Solesmes, and for that reason it is particularly valuable. Its publication was made possible through the generous support of the Master General and a number of other subscribers to whom we are very grateful. We can only proceed with the study of Plainchant if more books are produced as fully documented by musical examples and tables as the present one. We also hope for a continuation of the *Paléographie Musicale* whose publication has twice been interrupted by war—because we see from Delalande's study on the Dominican Gradual how much work has still to be done in order to clear the ground and so obtain both an uncompromising *Editio Vaticana* and a revised Dominican Gradual.

E. J. WELLESZ.

THE BIBLE IN PICTURES

PARENTS are often heard to lament the lack of books capable of explaining the Bible to their children. There is a very obvious lack in this matter among Catholic books, but the deficiency is not restricted to Catholics. There are, of course, a certain number of picture books illustrating the life of Christ or episodes in the Bible, but they are generally prepared on the false assumption that the only sense of Scripture a child can grasp is the literal sense. Herein lies a serious fallacy, for the child's mind is instinctively symbolic and metaphorical; the poet exists in the young mind long before the philosopher is born in him, long before he can analyse the meaning of his signs and make-believe. But when an artist tries to give only the literal sense to the child he begins by painting Jews and Arab sheiks as they are said to have been at the time of Christ. He then goes on to apply certain aspects of the universal appeal of Christ to every individual with an almost complete univocity in which our Lord appears not only as a baby but also as a sailor boy and fighter pilot. And since Christ in this respect has to appear as the lowest common denominator among all these types of humanity he has to be robbed pictorially of any definite character. The 'baby-Jesus' style of art turns the Word Incarnate into a simpering doll, meant to represent the neighbours' little Sally aged