

The heated and multifaceted debate on Gregorian chant in France, ca. 1800 – ca. 1900.

Dear colleagues,

In 1904, Pope Pius X chose the medieval chant as restored by the monks of Solesmes for the entire Roman Catholic church. Solesmes started its work from about 1860, however a fascinating debate on Gregorian chant, or plainchant, had already started much earlier, especially in France. A book on the subject already appeared in 1811. And from then on, music periodicals contain many articles on Gregorian chant. During a second phase, starting about 1840, a number of important books and editions appeared. So, in fact, the work of Solesmes from about 1860 can be considered a third phase. Today we will be considering this whole process in a nutshell. Unfortunately we can only deal with a few central aspects, which however in my view are interesting enough.

To understand why ideas about restoring Gregorian chant came into being in the first place, we have to start in the 17th and 18th centuries. In this period, many new chant books were published. In these books, the traditional Gregorian melodies were heavily shortened and adapted according to the taste of the time (for instance by respecting the accentuated syllables and avoiding tritones), and all these new chant books were allowed for liturgical practice. In France, this development was reinforced by a strong anti-Pope (or anti-Vatican) sentiment, which led to major changes in the liturgical texts. And these new texts often led to new chants with new melodies in contemporary taste, often meant to be performed in a measured and ornamented style. As a result of all this, in the words of Grove Music Online, “.... a bewildering variety of chant melodies continued to flourish for another 300 years.”¹ Here are two examples:

¹ Kenneth Levy et al., “Plainchant. 10/1 Tridentine reforms,” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

GRADUALE
BISUNTINUM,
SECUNDUM
MISSALE RECENS
DISPOSITUM



VESUNTIONE,

Apud FRATRES & SORES CHARMET,
Eminentissimi D. D. Cardinalis Archiepiscopi
Typographum & Bibliopolas.

M. DCC. LXXIII
CUM PRIVILEGIO REGIS

In die sancto Paschæ. 139

IN DIE SANCTO
PASCHÆ.

DUPL. I. CL. ET PER TOT. OCT.

Introitus
de 1. **S**U-re-xit Do-minus
ve-rè; Alle-lu-ia: & appa-
ruit. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia. *pf.* Domi-
nus regnavit, decorem indutus est: * Indu-
tus est Dominus fortitudinem, & præcinxit
se. *ψ.* Glori a. S. A.

Graduale
de 2. A. **H**Æc est di-es, quam
fecit Dominus: exul-te-

GRADVALE
ROMANO-MONASTICVM,
Iuxta Missale Pij V. Pontificis maximi
authoritate editum,
Et ab Urbano Papa VIII. recognitum.

Cuius modulatio concinnata, iustâ ex iustis Intervallis
Notarum quantitate & extensione moderata,
in usum & gratiam Monialium
Ordinis

S. P. N. AUGUSTINI.

(163)

Accessere sanctorum Ordinis (quæ desiderabantur antehac)
omnium propriæ Missæ: Item modulationes variz Kyriales,
Hymni Angelici, Symboli Apostolorum, &c. pro diuersa
dierum ac festorum solemnitate.

*Opera & studio GUILIELMI GABRIELIS NIVERN, Parisiæ,
in signis Ecclesiæ S. Sulpicii Modulatoris Organici.*



PARISIIS,
Typis ROBERTI BALLARD, vnicui Regiæ
Musicæ Typographi.

M. DC. LVIII

Cum Approbatione Ordinarij, & Privilegio Regis

DOMINICA
RESURRECTIONIS.

Introitus.

Resur-re-xi, & ad-huc re-cum-
sum, al-lelu-ya: posui. si su-
per me ma-num tu-am, al-lelu-ya: mira-bilis fa-
cta est scien-tia tu-a, allelu-ya, al-lelu-ya.

ψ. Do-mine probasti me, & co-gnovi-si me: tu co-

[Graduale for the diocese of Besançon, 1773; Graduale for the Augustine sisters, 1658.]

From the beginning of the 19th century, especially the melodies were felt by many to be of poor quality. The debate about this was part of a debate on liturgy as a whole, which took place especially in France because its church had to create itself a new identity: the very proud and very anti-papal French church of the Ancien Régime had lost all its glory through the French revolution. Obviously, liturgy and liturgical chant could play an important role in creating this new identity. Perhaps there would have been no Gregorian chant restoration without the French church's identity crisis.

Discussions were started off by the concordat between the French government and Pope Pius VII (1801). This concordat contained provisions desired by the French government and provisions desired by the Vatican. Bishops would from now on be appointed by the government and were only to be confirmed by the pope, which would ensure a significant state influence. But it was also agreed that there would be only one liturgy and one catechism for the whole of France. And that would enable the Vatican to keep doctrinal and liturgical matters firmly under control.

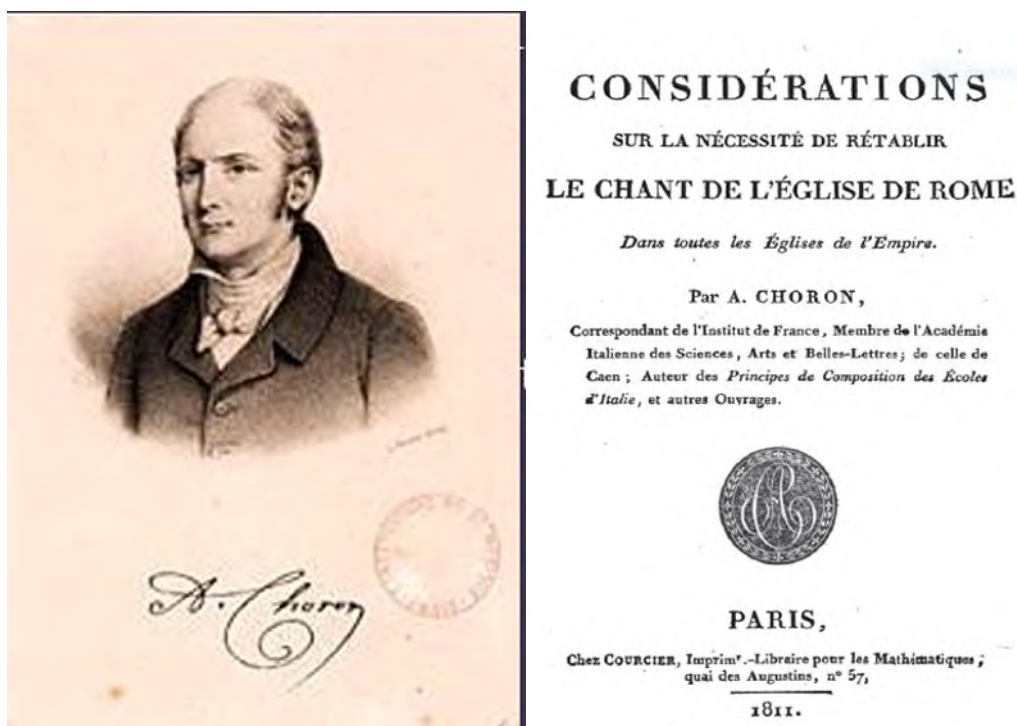
However, implementing the liturgy regulations was complicated because it was not stated which liturgy should be introduced for the whole of France. Should it be the traditional, largely medieval liturgy approved by the Vatican? Or should or could a unified liturgy be created on the basis of recent French adaptations? The French bishops were heavily divided on the issue but in the end the traditional more or less medieval liturgy was accepted by all because the French church desperately wanted (and needed) to turn to the pope for guidance and support. The so-called Ultramontanism, that is, a conception that places strong emphasis on the prerogatives and powers of the pope, became stronger and stronger. This outcome was of course also in line with Romanticism, which idealized everything medieval. And here, Solesmes and its first abbot Prosper Guéranger certainly played a major role from the beginning: they were ardent Ultramontranists and lovers of the Middle Ages.

The debate about liturgical chant

Of course, as a consequence, a unity had to be created for liturgical chant as well. But, as could be expected, this was a process as difficult as for the liturgy itself. And, as could be expected also, discussions about the best way to create a unity got intertwined with the debate about improving the chant. The debate on chant was remarkably broad and it centered on the following aspects:

1. What should be the sources of the new unified chant? Is it desirable, or is it at all possible, to return to the Middle Ages, as is being done for the liturgy? Or could, or should 17th and 18th century French liturgical chant be maintained in some form?
2. Should the new unified chant be aimed at the musical abilities of the average churchgoer? Or is liturgical chant a matter for virtuoso specialists?
3. And, in relation to this last question: Shouldn't the first priority be: improving the quality of actual chant practice, regardless whether it is the 17th and 18th century chant or the medieval chant?

A clear position was already taken in 1811 by Alexandre Etienne Choron (1771-1834).



Choron was already a promotor of early music around 1800, and he was an influential man: the government had appointed him Director of music for religious feasts (*Directeur de la musique des fêtes religieuses*). In his little book *Considérations sur la nécessité de rétablir le chant de l'église de Rome dans toutes les Eglises de l'Empire* (1811) he advocates the introduction of the chant as sung in Rome for the whole of France. Firstly, he says, medieval Roman chant has more or less survived in France until the beginning of the 18th century, so its venerable age is beyond doubt. Secondly, the medieval chants are of much higher quality than the recent French creations, and they are universal, that is to say: they are used by a large part of Christianity. And thirdly, the medieval chants are of enormous value for musical

education, especially for studying counterpoint, which is essential for all musicians. What Choron does not do, is: asking in what way the chants as presently sung in Rome are related to the medieval chants. He assumes that these chants ARE the medieval chants. Which they of course were not. Nevertheless, this was an early plea for a return to the Middle Ages.

And now, the debate took a completely other turn. Discussions about the actual chant practice, regardless whether it was the 17th and 18th century chant or the medieval chant, came to the fore. So, we will first look into them now.

Actual chant practice: positive and negative aspects. And: how to improve the quality of Gregorian chant?

French authors from about 1820 on often do not appreciate Gregorian chant very highly but nevertheless consider it an essential part of the liturgy. And therefore they discuss attempts to improve its performance.

In 1828, the (not French, but Belgian) music scholar François-Joseph Fétis writes that² in Italy, Germany, the Low Countries and the north of France, the organ accompanies the singers with soft stops and simple and pure harmonies, while the chant is played with the right hand. But in Paris and in several provinces of France the choir sings the chant on its own, in a rough and repugnant way, and that unpleasant effect is still reinforced by the serpent, an instrument worthy of the barbarian ages. Choir and organ execute the verses in turn; the organist places the chant in the base and accompanies it with reed stops, whose only quality is their force. The overall result is detestable.



mens dans l'église. En Italie, dans l'Allemagne catholique, dans les Pays-Bas et dans le nord de la France, l'orgue accompagne les chantres, et le plain-chant s'exécute par la main droite de l'organiste, avec les jeux doux qu'on appelle *jeux de fonds*, et avec une harmonie simple et pure. Mais à Paris, et dans plusieurs provinces de France, le chœur chante seul le plain-chant d'une manière dure et repoussante, dont l'effet désagréable est encore augmenté par le serpent, instrument digne des siècles de barbarie. Le chœur et l'orgue exécutent alternativement les versets; l'organiste place le chant à la base, et l'accompagne d'une manière plus ou moins incorrecte, en se servant seulement des jeux d'anches, dont le seul mérite est la force; ce qui complète l'ensemble d'une musique détestable, qui n'a pas peu contribué à retarder les progrès de la véritable musique parmi nous.

² François-Joseph Fétis, "Sur la musique d'église," *Revue musicale*, 1re série, tome IV, volume 4, [numéro 21] (19 December 1828): 481-88; id., "Sur la musique d'église (deuxième article)," *Revue musicale*, 1re série, tome IV, volume 4, [numéro 22] (December 1828): 505-12.

There are many more authors writing in this sense. The most famous one is Hector Berlioz, who characterizes the usual chant performance as a bellowing of bull's voices. This is a contemporary illustration:



So, apparently, during this phase improving the quality of chant performance was deemed crucial. And already in 1838, the music critic Joseph d'Ortigue praises the church musician Félix Danjou for achieving it. D'Ortigue writes: "The organist of St. Eustache [i.e. Danjou]..... however much the ecclesiastical chant has undergone mutilations in several periods, has understood that one should begin with a reform, not of the chant itself, but of its use and practice. This reform aims directly at rendering to Gregorian chant... its popular character..... And to bring the chant within reach of the multitude, it should not be notated for bass voices, but for tenor voices. And the use of the serpent, an instrument too low and also hoarse and irregular, should be abandoned; for the accompaniment one should stick to

the organ, the only temple instrument.” All this Danjou has done, and furthermore he has provided fauxbourdon (multipart) settings, which add attractiveness and charm.³

⁴ So, clear priorities which even include praise for fauxbourdon (multipart) settings. This line of argument continued for a long time. There are similar reports from Paris and Rouen in 1846, 1847 and 1849. And it makes one think of the Solesmes scholar Joseph Pothier’s much later saying/remark: “...”. our current books, defective as they are,will always be preferable to the most perfect edition,, delivered to incompetent singers.”⁵

Growing fascination for the Middle Ages: François-Joseph Fétis starts researching medieval manuscripts

At the same time, it is also clear that the fascination for the Middle Ages is growing. François-Joseph Fétis, whom we met before, already researched medieval chant manuscripts in 1806. Thirty-one years later, in 1837, Fétis tells his readers that in 1806 he was hired by the music printer Ballard for “an immense project”. Ballard wanted to produce new chant books, as Napoleon had restored Catholicism in France, and asked Fétis to take care of these new editions. Fétis agreed and wanted⁶ to accomplish a “revision of all the chants of the Roman church, according to the most authentic and oldest manuscripts, compared with the best editions.” And now, in 1837, after thirty years of labor, he has completed the project and chant books (a gradual and an antiphony) are ready to be printed. These editions never materialized and it is not likely that Fétis had access to a great number of sources. However, this episode clearly shows the growing interest for the Middle Ages, especially as the initiative came from a commercially interested party, although we cannot exclude that Fétis himself was the real initiator. This is not improbable as, in his 1828 article cited above, Fétis clearly states his preference for the Roman chant: “Of all the ecclesiastical chants, the Roman is the best, because of its simplicity and its nobility.”⁷ Of course, “Roman chant” is, in the

³ Joseph d’Ortigue, “Revue critique. Chants sacrés de l’office divin, ou collection de plain-chants pour les fêtes et dimanches, à quatre parties, par l’organiste de Saint-Eustache,” *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 5, no. 34 (26 August 1838): 343.

⁴ Jean Louis Félix Danjou, “De l’état actuel du Chant ecclésiastique et de la musique religieuse en France (Suite),” *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 6, no. 20 (19 May 1839): 155-56.

⁵ Joseph Pothier, *Les melodies grégoriennes d’après la tradition* (Tournay: Desclée Lefèbvre et Cie., 1880), 15.

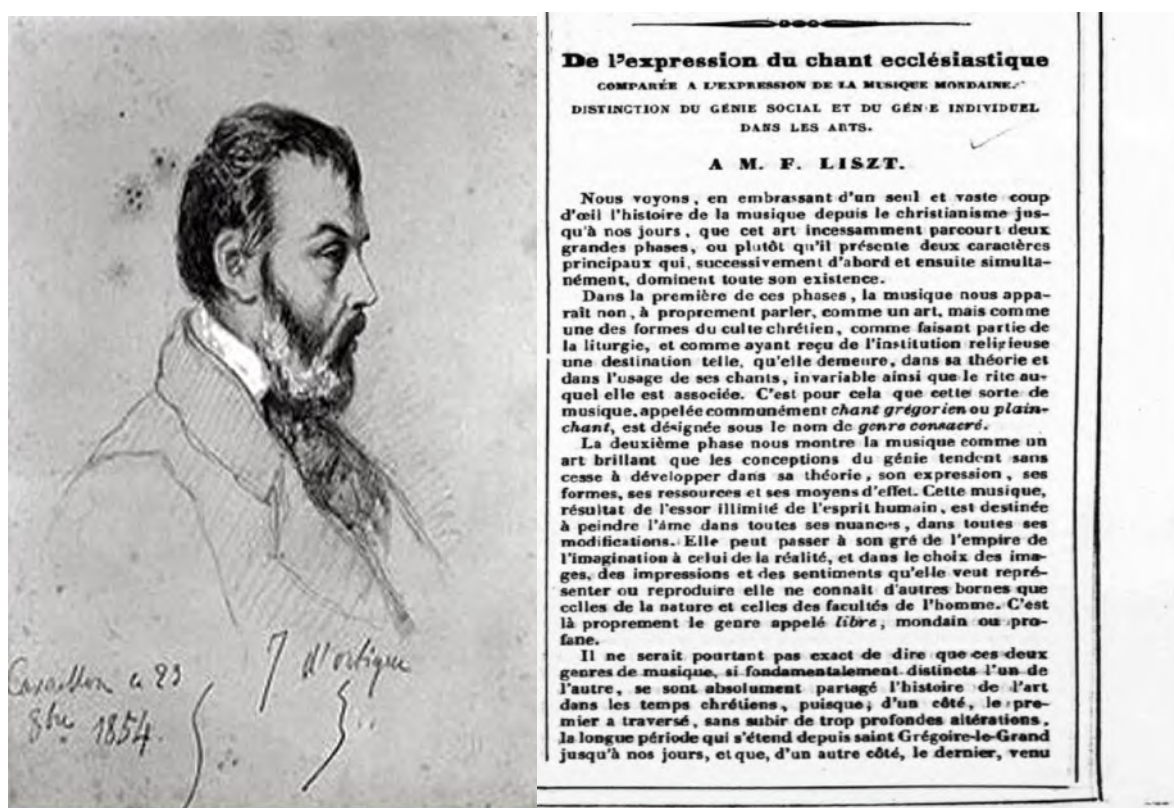
⁶ François-Joseph Fétis, “Fétis (François-Joseph),” in *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique, Tome quatrième* (Bruxelles: Méline, Cans et Compagnie, 1837), 103-15.

⁷ François-Joseph Fétis, “Sur la musique d’église,” *Revue musicale*, 1re série, tome IV, volume 4, [numéro 21] (19 December 1828): 484-85.

beginning of the 19th century, a very vague term but it does in any case indicate his loathing for the recently composed chants.

Is a return to the medieval chants desirable and/or possible? Fétis and D'Ortigue: a scholarly discussion

And, through this action of Fétis, we arrive at the second big issue, namely: Is a return to the medieval chant desirable, or at all possible? The answer of Fétis was positive, as he was preparing editions for liturgical use. For other admirers of the medieval chant (or, what they thought was the medieval chant), this was not so evident. Joseph d'Ortigue (whom we already met) is a great admirer of the medieval chant but makes a remarkable switch in his views on singing it in modern times. In 1839, he publishes his article *De l'expression du chant ecclésiastique comparée à l'expression de la musique mondaine. Distinction du génie social et du génie individuel dans les arts*, with a dedication "A M. F. Liszt".⁸



In it, he distinguishes two “principal characters” in Western music history: a “genre consacré”, that is Gregorian chant or plain-chant, which is not really an art but an element of

⁸ Joseph d'Ortigue, “De l'expression du chant ecclésiastique comparée à l'expression de la musique mondaine. Distinction du génie social et du génie individuel dans les arts,” *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 6, no. 39 (15 August 1839): 307-10.

Christian worship; and a “genre appelé libre”, that is: *music* as a brilliant art which always develops in its theory, its expression, its forms, its resources and its means of effect. This wording may seem to imply a rejection of Gregorian chant, but that is certainly not the case. I quote: “One cannot study with too much attention and interest the history of this kind of music which has been identified, from the beginning, with Christian worship, and which, since fourteen hundred years, is, as we said, part of the liturgy. If we have refused the name of *art* to this wonderful and venerable chant, it is..... because it is as superior to [art].... as... the language of the Holy Scriptures is superior to the often conventional and artificial beauties of our modern languages.” Practising the wonderful chants of the Roman liturgy should be observed for two reasons: firstly, their religious value; and secondly, because the “genre consacré” has given birth to the “genre libre” and will always have to feed and enrich it.

So, in 1839 D’Ortigue eloquently pleads for the preservation of the Roman chant (which he then presumes to be the medieval chant) in liturgical practice. However twelve years later he takes a radically different view. In 1851, he writes in three open letters that the attempts to return to the medieval chant are futile.⁹ This chant, he says, cannot be sung anymore, because our ears are fully adapted to the completely changed modern tonality. And he admits that his views have changed: “The true mistake is to persuade oneself that the tonality of the plainchant exists in the present and will exist in the future as it has existed in the past. That is the mistake, and if I challenge it, it is with regret, as a person who has endorsed it for a long time.....”.

This point of view was immediately disputed by François-Joseph Fétis.¹⁰ Fétis had clearly realized that all his research into the medieval chant was deemed futile. And he argues against D’Ortigue that different concepts of music can and do coexist. Firstly, he says, the traditional conservatory training in solmization was continued after 1600, together with the training in tonal harmony and counterpoint. Second, the practice of Gregorian chant, although

⁹ Joseph d’Ortigue (1802-1866): “Lettre à M. le Prince de la Moskowa sur les tentatives de restauration dont le chant d’église est l’objet,” *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 18, no. 19 (11 May 1851): 147-48; id., “Deuxième lettre à M. le Prince de la Moskowa sur les tentatives de restauration dont le chant d’église est l’objet,” *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 18, no. 21 (25 May 1851): 164-66; id., “Troisième lettre à M. le Prince de la Moskowa sur les tentatives de restauration dont le chant d’église est l’objet,” *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 18, no. 22 (1 June 1851): 181-83.

¹⁰ François-Joseph Fétis, “Lettre à M.J. d’Ortigue au sujet de sa lettre à M. le prince de la Moskowa insérée dans le no. 19 de la *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*,” *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 18, no. 21 (25 May 1851): 161-64.

altered and mutilated, has continued until today. And third, the yearly performances in Rome during Holy Week of Palestrina and Allegri, and other historical concerts attract many listeners. And, says Fétis, there will be new phases again, in which other systems of musical organisation will be created, namely, as soon as the expressive possibilities of tonal harmony will be exhausted. However, art has not broken with the old tonality: it has enriched and will again enrich itself with a new heritage, but it does not reject its old patrimony.

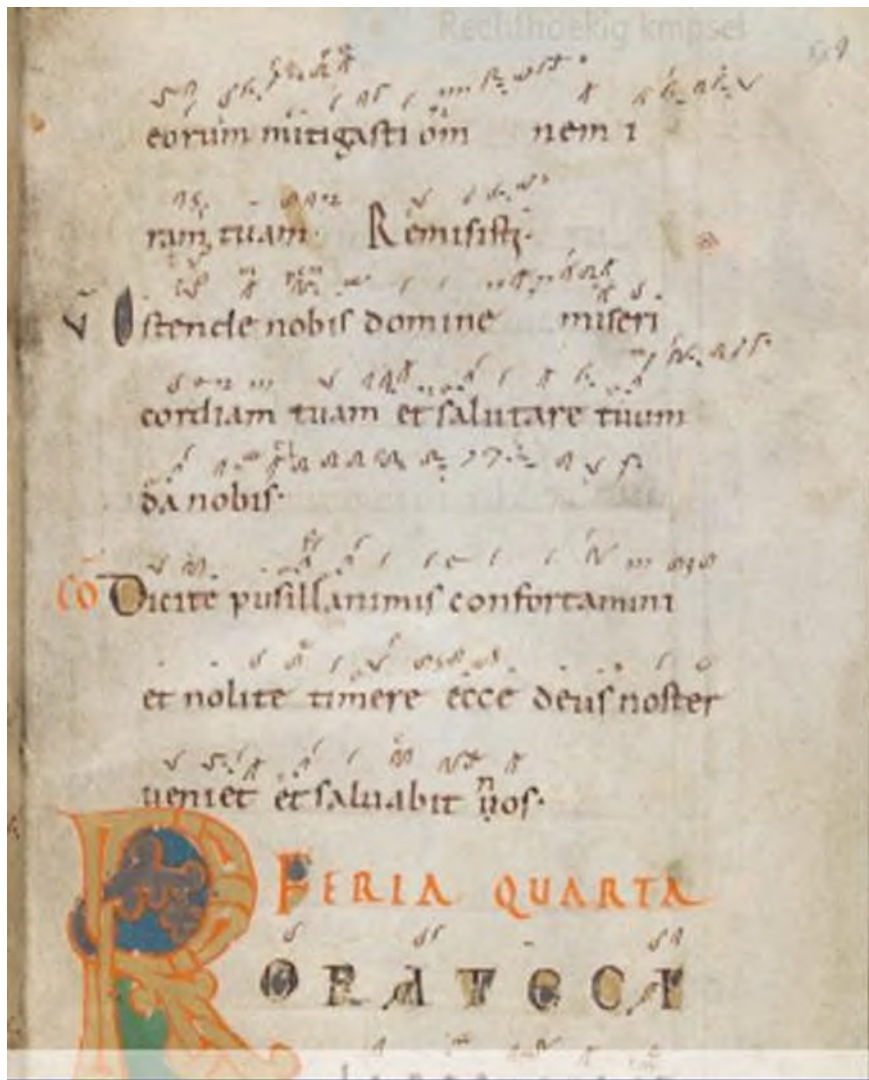
The importance of this debate certainly surpasses the subject of Gregorian chant: fundamental questions are raised about music perception and music aesthetics. One must absolutely admire the vision of François-Joseph Fétis, which, for example, allows for dodecaphony, serialism and all other developments in the history of composition.

We go to the next big question: *Is reconstruction of the medieval chant technically possible? The views of Adrien de la Fage and Jules Bonhomme*

This question was also hotly debated . It was answered negatively by the musical scholar and composer Adrien de la Fage, and positively by the priest and scholar Pierre Jules Marie Bonhomme.¹¹

As you will probably know, the medieval notation consists of so-called neumes. What is a neume? A neume is a graphic sign that represents essentially the movement in pitch of a melody, however without specifying the intervals or pitches. So, neumes were not a full melodic notation. Singers had first to learn a melody by hearing and remembering it, before they could read it in the neumes. The main purpose of neume notation was only to serve as a reminder of the melody, and the earliest notated chant books were probably used for reference rather than performance.

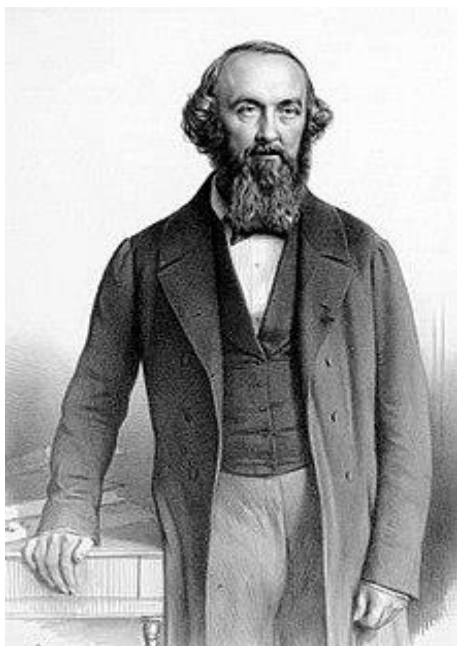
¹¹ Ernest Glaeser, "Bonhomme (Pierre-Jules-Marie)," in *Biographie nationale des contemporains* (Paris: Glaeser, 1878), 59.



Neumatic notation (ms. Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 121.)

Adrien De la Fage thinks that the medieval notation is unreadable and will remain so. In 1852 he publishes three articles on the subject.¹²

¹² Adrien de la Fage, "Des neumes employées à la notation du plain-chant (premier article)," *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 19, no. 29 (18 July 1852): 235-36; id., "Des neumes employées à la notation du plain-chant (2e article)," *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 19, no. 31 (1 August 1852): 251-54; id., "Des neumes employées à la notation du plain-chant (3e et dernier article)," *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 19, no. 33 (15 August 1852): 267-68.



Juste-Adrien-Lenoir de la Fage (1801-1862)

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la mémoire du bienfaiteur. Aussi le comité a-t-il décidé, dans sa dernière séance, qu'une messe funèbre serait célébrée en l'honneur de M. le baron de Trémont, dans l'église de Saint-Enstache. L'exécution en aura lieu vers la fin du mois de septembre, et le beau *Requiem* composé par M. Hector Berlioz a été choisi pour cette solennité.

P. S.

DES NEUMES

Employées à la notation du Plain-Chant.

(3^e et dernier article) (1).

Ainsi que l'a remarqué M. Misard, les monuments de la notation neumatique peuvent se diviser en trois classes : 1^o musique d'église : ceux-ci sont fort nombreux, et presque toutes les grandes bibliothèques, sans parler d'établissements moins considérables, possèdent des livres de liturgie de diverses époques notés en neumes pures ou lignées ; 2^o musique séculière : les monuments de ce genre sont rares, et la liste de ceux qui sont connus n'est pas longue à rédiger ; 3^o musique élémentaire ou tableaux des signes neumatiques avec leur dénomination, plus rares encore que les précédents. C'est à ces derniers qu'il faudrait surtout s'attacher, s'ils nous fournissaient les documents nécessaires ; mais il s'en faut qu'ils nous instruisent de ce que nous voudrions savoir. Quand, au moyen-âge, il s'agit d'expliquer quoi que ce soit, les auteurs ont deux manières tout à fait opposées : ou ce sont de prolixes et confuses dissertations appliquées à des questions oiseuses, tandis que les points essentiels sont constamment négligés ; ou bien tout se borne à des renseignements très succincts, de toute part insuffisants.

mais voilà tout. Les difficultés énoncées plus haut subsistent dans leur entier, et nous ignorons toujours, dans un très-grand nombre et même dans le plus grand nombre des cas, la distance des degrés entre eux. (Il est bien entendu que je ne parle que des neumes pures, c'est-à-dire dépourvues de portée et des autres indications qui pourraient aider à la lecture.) Or, nous n'avons plus là les maîtres du x^e siècle pour les consulter, et nous ne pouvons plus savoir ce que pensent sur tel graduel ou telle antienne maître Salomon, maître Aubin ou maître Trudon ; d'ailleurs, nous savons qu'ils n'étaient pas d'accord, et nous ignorons si, revenant au monde aujourd'hui, nos vieux confrères s'entendraient mieux : laissons-les donc dans leur repos.

Ainsi l'a pensé le père Lambillotte dans l'ardue et pénible tâche qu'il s'est imposée et pour laquelle il lui faut véritablement un courage et une persévérance bien rares et bien dignes d'éloges, sans parler des moyens matériels dont il peut disposer. En effet, il se donne bien de garde d'afficher la prétention d'interpréter les neumes *a priori* ; son procédé est, au contraire, complètement *a posteriori*. Après avoir examiné bien attentivement le sens des neumes et les moyens que l'on a d'arriver à en avoir l'intelligence, il ne s'aventure pas à traduire de lui-même, il interroge les traducteurs les plus rapprochés de l'époque et il suit jusqu'à nos jours les opérations des reproductions de traductions anciennes ; car il ne faut pas se faire illusion : une fois les neumes placées sur des lignes, c'est à ces nouvelles copies que chacun s'est attaché, et personne n'a plus été faire de confrontation dans les manuscrits en neumatique pure. Partant donc de l'époque de Guido, c'est-à-dire des neumes appliquées à la portée musicale, qui conduisent assez promptement à la notation actuelle du plain-chant, le père Lambillotte procède précisément comme ont fait les savants qui

Remarkably enough, he starts in a very positive way. He defines a neume as a series of musical degrees executed at one stretch (*d'une haleine*): a modern music note is always an

isolated sign representing a unique tone, while a neume can contain one or more tones executed in one stretch. Neumes, he says, offer the advantage of painting the progressions of the voice for the eye. That is their true and incontestable utility.

But then, there comes a remarkable cliffhanger: “I will say soon which serious disadvantages they [i.e.: the neumes] carry with them.” And indeed, his second article is all about that. Firstly, the intervals are not indicated; secondly, as a consequence of that, all neumatic groups start at the same height, thereby excluding the possibility to distinguish their relative heights as well; and thirdly, there is no indication of the starting tone of the chant. So, De La Fage concludes, for many chants the entry was closed, and it was up to the skill and the memory of the singers to do the best they could. However their master came to their aid by giving them the tradition, and later they again passed it on to their students. So, the role of the masters remained crucial.

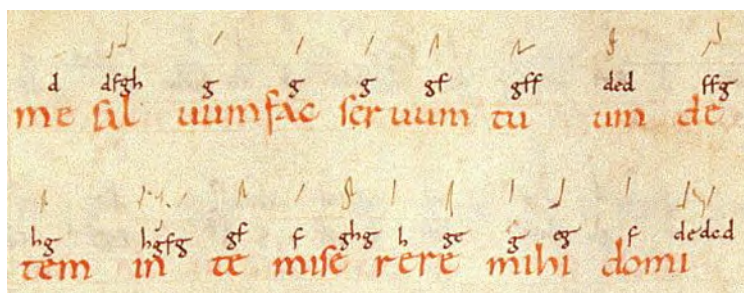
The shortcomings of the neumatic notation were redeemed by Guido d’Arezzo, so De la Fage. This 11th century monk invented the stave and so, the pitches could now be exactly indicated



Cistercian neumes, St. Denis/St. Evrault, North France, 12th century.

However, in his third article he rejects the option of deciphering the neumes with the help of sources in staff notation, because these sources are of a later date. And probably for the same reason he also rejects the use of the recently (1847) discovered chant manuscript of St. Bénigne de Dijon, although he does not say so explicitly. This manuscript, dating from the 11th century, has a double music notation, in neumes AND in pitch letters. So, it does not

only provide the neumes but also a readable translation:



Montpellier, B. u. Médecine, H. 159 (Tonary from S. Bénigne de Dijon, fragment.)

Jules Bonhomme, *Principes d'une véritable restauration du chant grégorien et examen de quelques éditions modernes de plain-chant; The Gradual and Antiphonary of Reims-Cambrai*

De la Fage's view is rejected by Jules Bonhomme in his book *Principes d'une véritable restauration du chant grégorien et examen de quelques éditions modernes de plain-chant* (1857).



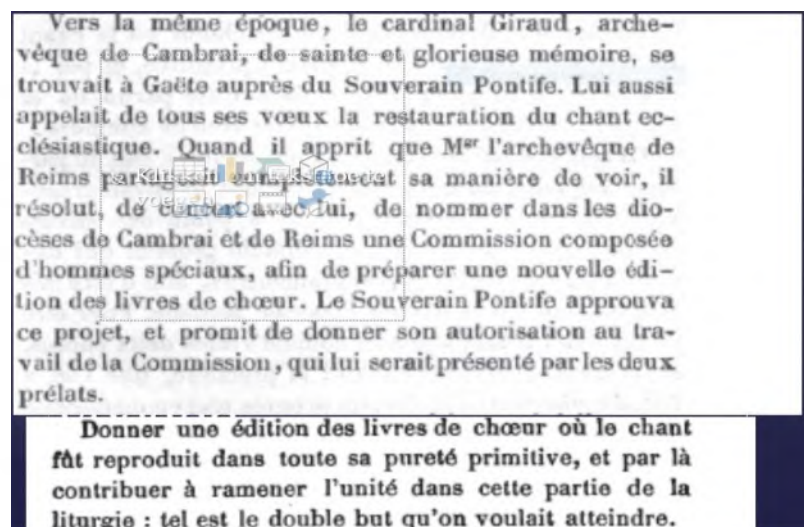
Bonhomme's argument can be read as a direct answer to De la Fage.¹³ Firstly, he says, it is not correct that nothing is legible in the early sources: in some of them the neumes are placed at different heights. Secondly, when we compare the Guidonian books with the preceding ones, we see that the neumes have remained the same: they have been put on four lines but

¹³ Jules Bonhomme, *Principes d'une véritable restauration du chant grégorien et examen de quelques éditions modernes de plain-chant* (Paris: Jacques Lecoivre et Cie., 1857), 20-29.

they are unchanged and Guido must have known how to sing them. So, the Guidonian books are the translation of the earlier sources and can be used for interpreting them. And, there are the new insights provided by the manuscript of St. Bénigne de Dijon, with its double notation in neumes AND pitch letters.

Bonhomme deals with many more important aspects, for example: whether the conformity between so many sources is an argument for finding the original versions of the chants (to which he answers positively) and whether present-day churchgoers wouldn't be extremely bored by the long and virtuosic medieval melodies!!! (to which question he answers negatively: he states that it all depends on the quality of the performance).

And Bonhomme was not the first to pursue these lines of thought. They had already been taken up a few years earlier: in 1849, the archbishops of Reims and Cambrai had asked a commission to prepare a gradual and an antiphony, "dans toute sa pureté primitive" as it is said in the original French text.¹⁴ Thanks to the manuscript of St. Bénigne de Dijon, it had become much clearer what that purity was. They had even consulted with the Pope about it, as becomes clear from a very interesting *Mémoire*, written by the commission.



The Gradual of Reims-Cambrai is the first serious attempt to reconstruct the medieval chant. As for the conformity between the sources, the editors share Bonhomme's point of view.

¹⁴ *Graduale romanum, complectens omnes missas omnium dominicarum et festorum duplicium et semiduplicium totius anni, necnon officium nocturnum nativitatis Domini et praecipuas processiones. Cantu reviso juxta manuscripta vetustissima* (Parisiis: apud J. Lecoffre et socios, 1852); *Antiphonaire romain.... Chant restauré par la Commission de Reims et de Cambrai d'après les anciens manuscrits* (Paris: J. Lecoffre et Cie., 1857).

And, the so-called Gradual of Reims-Cambrai of 1852 already looks very much like our present-day Gradual:

However, the editors are a little worried about its reception. They sometimes leave out repetitions, but indicate them with special signs, so that they can eventually be sung, and they explain that in their foreword. As for the performance, their views are comparable to Bonhomme as well. In their foreword, they write: “..... We believe that the more one succeeds in creating an ensemble without rigorous measurements, the closer one approaches the true rhythm suitable for Gregorian chant.” And again, it is as if we already hear Joseph Pothier, who almost thirty years later would write: ”we can feel it [i.e.: the rhythm], the ears are deliciously affected by it, but we cannot tell what it is So, this is the rhythm which characterizes Gregorian chant and which rests mainly, as we see, on the way in which the sounds or the syllables are divided and in which the divisions are proportioned.” (*Les mélodies grégoriennes d’après la tradition*, 1880).

And so we have arrived at the last big question in the 19th century French debate on Gregorian chant:

Should the new unified chant be aimed at the musical abilities of the average churchgoer? Or is liturgical chant a matter for virtuoso specialists?

We have already touched upon this matter, however a number of musicians and scholars debate this question from still other perspectives. I will still make a few remarks about two of them. The first one is: a pastoral perspective. Louis Lambillotte, a Belgian Jesuit, was convinced that a reconstruction of the medieval chants was possible. He was even convinced that the manuscript Sankt Gallen 359 was the original chant book of Saint Gregory, the pope who was thought by many to be the composer of the Gregorian chant! We won't go into that now, that would be a lecture in itself. But he was also convinced that it made no sense to impose them to the average churchgoer. So, he did two things: he made a facsimile of Sankt Gallen 359, and he made a practical edition of it (1857), in which he heavily shortened its melodies.

INCEN SUM TANTUM.

STA ADSCM MARIAM.

RISURREXI ET ADHUC.

Psat. Dñe probasta me.

Rchæc di es quam fecit Domi

nus exulte mus

& laetemur in t a.

Confitemini Do mino quo

niam bo nus quoniam in

fac culum misericordia

auf.

Alleluia.

Pascha nostrum.

la

est xpius.

DOMINICA RESURRECTIONIS. 203

vi-si ses-si-o-nem meam et re-sur-re-cti-o-nem me-am.

Glô-ri-a Pa-tri, et Fi-li-o, et Spi-ri-tu-i san-cto. Si-

cut e-rat in princi-pi-o, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcu-

la sæculo-rum. A-men.

ORATIO.

DEUS, qui hodierna die per Unigenitum tuum, æternitatis nobis
aditum, devicta morte, reserasti: vota nostra, que præveniēdo
aspiras, etiam adjuvādo prosēquere. Per eūdem Dōminum.

Lectio Epistolæ beati Pauli Apōstoli ad Corinthios 1, c. 5.

FRATRES, Expurgāte vetus fer-mentum, ut sitis nova conspē-
sio, sicut estis æzymi. Etenim Pa-scha nostrum immolātus est Chri-
stus. Itaque epulēmur, non in fer-
mento vèteri, neque in fermento
malitiæ, et nequitiæ: sed in æzy-
mis sinceritātis, et veritātis.

GRADUALE.

II MOD. TRANSP. Hæc di-es, quam fe-cit Do-mi-

nus; e-xulte-mus, et læ-te-mur

in e-a. Glô-ri-a. Confite-mini Do-mi-

no, quo-ni-am bo-nus: quoniam in sæ-

cu-lum mi-se-ri-cor-di-a e-jus.

ALLELUIA.

VII MODUS. Alle-lu-ia

The second perspective is a bit difficult to characterize, perhaps one could call it “legalistic” or “(strictly) law-abiding”. Théodore Nisard, a Parisian priest and church musician, was also convinced that it made no sense to impose the medieval chant, but he proposes a fundamentally other solution. In a book on the subject (1856), he voices his opinion.

ÉTUDES
SUR LA
RESTAURATION
DU
CHANT GRÉGORIEN
AU
XIX^e SIÈCLE,
PAR THÉODORE NISARD.



« L'un a tant écrit de la musique et de l'art
de chanter, qu'il en a écrit que plusieurs
à la suite des écrivains de cet ouvrage ou le
multiplicent, et ne le donnent au public que
l'œuvre inutile ! Mais il y a une chose de ce
genre que les personnes dignes de se
soucier de savoir, et qu'ils voudront con-
naître avant que de juger. »
(Dont l'auteur, Professeur de La Science
et de l'Art de l'Église de Paris.)

RENNES,
J.-M. VATAU, IMPRIMEUR,
RUE S.-FRANÇOIS, N.

PARIS,
CHEZ L'AUTEUR,
RUE DES DAMES, 112, A BATHILLIERS.

1856.

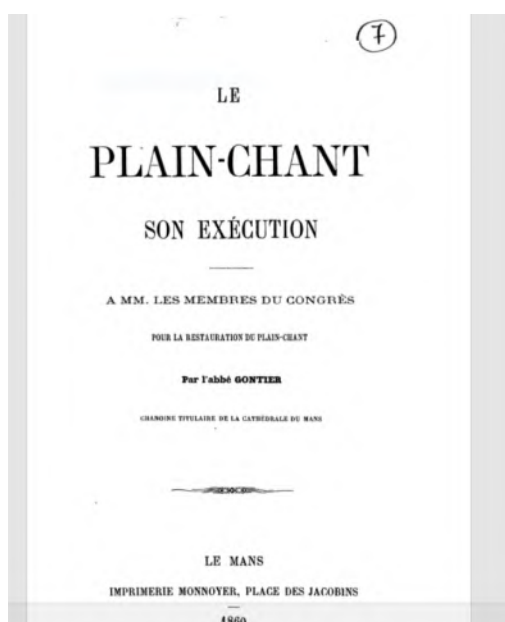
The church, he says, has abandoned the long medieval offices and chants, because they needed virtuosos and masters. *L'illustre saint Grégoire avait songé à former des maîtres*. And we must reconcile ourselves with that practice. However, a unity must nevertheless be created. Nisard proposes “to find back archeologically the melodies of Saint Gregory, and to operate a large fusion between all the existing editions of these melodies, correcting according to the true types and with formal approval from the Sovereign Pontiff, clumsy or faulty abbreviations and the no less reprehensible additions which disfigure our chant books.” So, although the formulation is very confusing, this does point forward to extensive source research as would be practiced by Solesmes, and also to a decisive step to be taken by the Pope. However, removing “reprehensible additions” certainly remains an option for Nisard.

The work of Solesmes

And now, we are already almost in 1859, the year in which the famous chant scholar Joseph Pothier entered the Benedictine abbey of Solesmes. I will be relatively short on Solesmes, as its work is well known and well described.



The abbey of Solesmes was founded in 1833 as the successor of a medieval monastery dissolved during the French revolution. Its first abbot, Dom Prosper Guéranger, was an ardent Ultramontanist and a lover of everything medieval. So, he really wanted the medieval chants to be sung in his abbey and, ideally, in the entire Roman Catholic church. And as for their so-called excessive length: Guéranger asked his monks to use their intelligence and good sense: to sing the words, and with those words to form phrases. For Guéranger, the most important rule was that chant is an intelligent reading, well accented, well scanned, well phrased. In 1859 he had already fully managed to educate his monks in this style. This is testified by an ear witness: the priest Augustin Gontier, from nearby Le Mans, who frequently visited Solesmes and published several writings based on what he had heard.

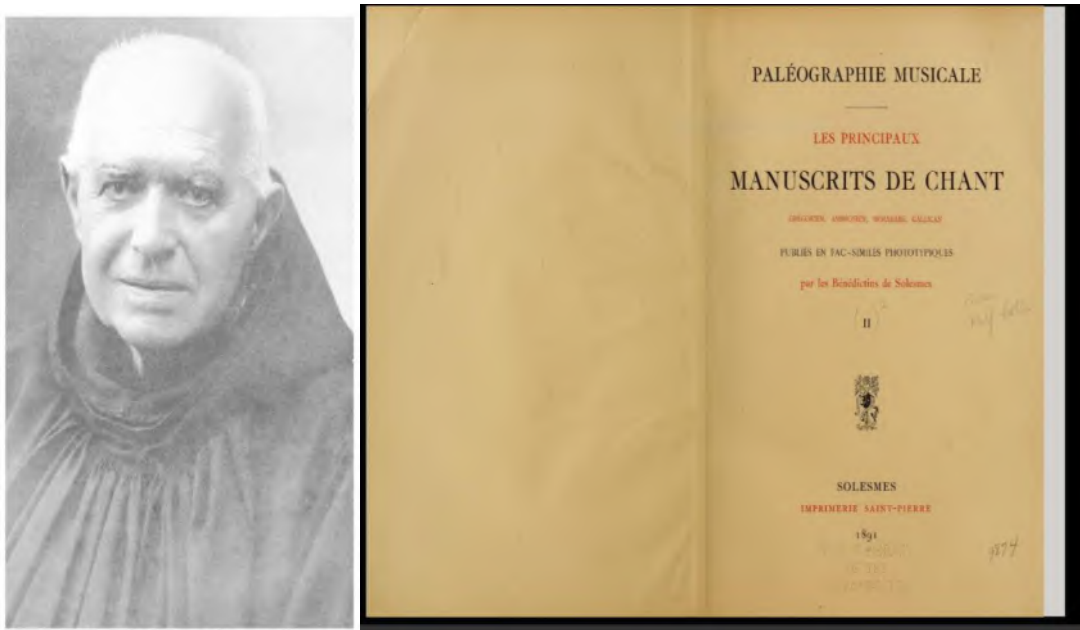


So, just as for many before him: for Guéranger, the quality of the performance is crucial. However he is also convinced that the medieval melodies must and can be revived. And he was even convinced that an original version of the Gregorian chants could be discovered. Already in 1840 he wrote: “We have the Gregorian phrase in its pure state ... when examples from several churches at some distance from one another share the same version”.¹⁵ Now, it happened that two young monks at Solesmes also showed a great interest in chant, namely: Paul Jausions and Joseph Pothier. So, Guéranger put them to work. They worked together from 1860 until 1870, when Jausions died unexpectedly. They managed to get medieval manuscripts on loan or they went to libraries and copied and transcribed them, and thereby started the huge collection of sources available in Solesmes today. And so, Pothier could publish a Gradual for practical use in 1883 with the Desclée firm from Tournai, Belgium.

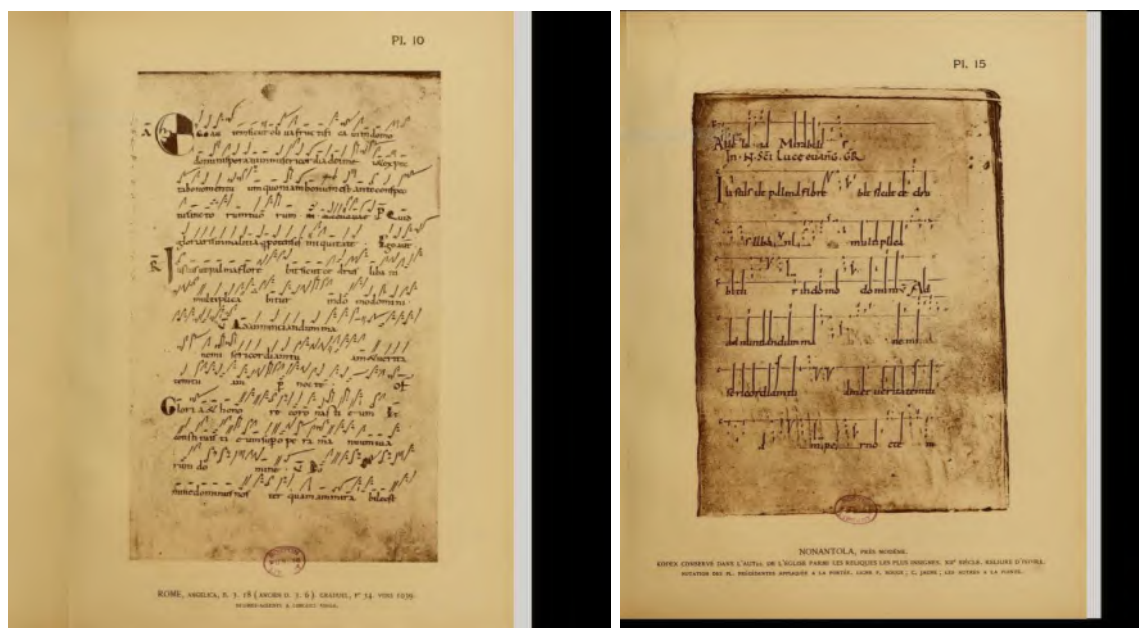


This Gradual was heavily criticized, as it was only based on one manuscript, a very important manuscript (S. Gallen 359) but: only one manuscript. And now another young monk appears on the stage: André Mocquereau.

¹⁵ Guéranger, Prosper: *Institutions liturgiques*, Tome premier (Le Mans: Fleuriot, 1840), 306.



He enters the monastery in 1875, he is also passionate about Gregorian chant and works with Pothier. And in 1889, he starts the project which would make him famous: the *Paléographie musicale*.



This was a publication series meant as a defense of Pothier's work. Mocquereau wanted to offer photographic reproductions of the medieval sources and show that Pothier's transcriptions agreed with them. Pothier and other monks continued transcribing sources and preparing chant books, and the *Paléographie musicale* was continued as well, even until now: the 25th volume was published in 2014. In the course of time, the fame of Solesmes and its

chant editions grew and in 1904, Pope Pius X decided that the Solesmes research would be the basis for the liturgical chant of the entire Roman Catholic church.

However, there were also major disagreements between Pothier and Mocquereau. These disagreements would have a major influence on the fate of Gregorian chant. They had to do with two aspects: the value of later manuscripts, and: performance practice.

As for the value of later manuscripts: for example, Pothier observed that in the late middle ages the SI is often replaced by the UT, for instance in psalmodic recitation. He preferred to maintain the UT in present-day editions, fearing that present-day church singers wouldn't be able to discontinue this deeply rooted habit. Mocquereau was very much opposed to this: he wanted to follow the early sources, as they would come closest to the original.

Pothier's vision gained the upper hand, for the time being. However, views changed, and recent publications show a reorientation, for instance the *Graduale novum* of 2011.

As for performance practice: Pothier, in his famous publication *Les Mélodies grégoriennes d'après la tradition* (1880) advocated a performance practice as wanted by Guéranger: chant is an intelligent reading, well accented, well scanned, well phrased. Gregorian rhythm is free and depends upon the text on several levels: on a general level it depends upon the structure of the sentences, on a detailed level it depends upon the structure and nature of the words and syllables. This is all much too vague for Mocquereau: he therefore develops an ingenious system for dividing the melodies in rhythmical groups of two and three. And all the notes have more or less the same length. This system certainly had pedagogical advantages, and it created musical beauty. But it had no basis in the sources and it was not at all related to the text. So, now, in 2021, very few people believe in it anymore.

As for the performance practice: the Vatican has always kept some distance from Mocquereau's theories. However, chant books with his rhythmical indications were allowed. And they have been very important for popularizing the restored melodies. For instance: in The Netherlands! Until very recently, three or four generations of Dutch singers grew up with the chant books of Solesmes which contained the melodies of Pothier and the rhythmical signs of Mocquereau. The most famous of which was the *Liber usualis*, which contained the chants for the Sundays and feasts. And it also contained an elaborate introduction on the Mocquereau system.

To conclude

Dear colleagues, we have gone a long way from 1811 until now. To conclude, a few remarks on more recent history and a cliffhanger. From 1962 until 1965, the Second Vatican Council took place. As a consequence, important decisions were taken about the liturgy and liturgical music. The idea that the whole Roman Catholic church should sing Gregorian chant was abandoned, and there came room for more skills and more creativity. In a way, it was a return to Mocquereau as for the value of the earlier manuscripts, and a return to Guéranger and Pothier as for performance practice. These experiments were very much stimulated by the prolonged research into the medieval manuscripts, especially by Dom Eugène Cardine of Solesmes, but also by other scholars. They opened up a new era in which many new splendid aspects of Gregorian chant came to light. Undoubtedly, you will hear much more about them during this International Summer Course.