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INTROITS

THE problem of the Introit is essentially one of colour. That there is a need for some musical treatment of this item is clear from the fact that of all the various extracts of scripture that go to form the 'Proper' of the older liturgy out of which our own was born, it is the Introit only that has earned a wide recognition, and the experiments which have been made in clothing this form with music are numerous and varied. The most important of these is the revival of the proper melodies, which have for centuries been associated with the words, and were transcribed for the English service by Dr. Palmer in his *Introits* (S. Mary's Press, Wantage). This is the classic English text, and it corresponds with the words given in the *English Hymnal*.

The function of the Introit is familiar enough. It belongs to the Eucharist only: it is not merely an item of introduction to a service, nor is it a hymn sung processionally. Liturgically it is a composite item consisting of an antiphon (a sentence generally drawn from the Scriptures) appropriate to the day, interlarded with a psalm verse and its *Gloria Patri*, the antiphon (or refrain as one might call it) being repeated both after the verse and again after *Gloria*. Musically it is merely an accompaniment, rather in the nature of a stop-gap. The sacred ministers must be got to the altar, and there will probably be some moving about up there preliminary to the actual liturgy. Some music is required to cover this, but it will be accessory, rather neutral in colour, quietly commenting, a conductor of emotion rather than a stimulant; it will not, of course, be banal or barren, but it will be more frame-like than picturesque. That is why the traditional melodies are so exactly right for that moment; that is why, for instance, the old melody for 'I am risen' on Easter-Day is almost superhumanly restrained: the moment is not yet; the outburst will come in Gradual, Alleluya, or Sequence and the Gospel. Even so, now and again the most austere minded musician could hardly be held back, and five Sundays later he soared up for a moment when 'with a voice of singing declare

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ye' confronted him. But for the most part the Introit melodies are comparatively uneventful. They contribute colour, and very lovely colour, but it is of the neutral order—and how lovely neutral colours may be is increasingly borne in upon us in the modern decorative arts. They are austere rather than warm, arresting yet meditative, cleansing, and transporting into another world that is unmistakably religious. That is why these Introits are so exactly fitted to a preparatory stage of the rite.

I

The ideal arrangement then would be that the proper melodies of the Introits should be used where possible. But there are difficulties—some of a practical order. First, in the majority of churches the limited amount of time available for practising the choir does not admit of the learning a fresh melody for every Sunday of the year. In passing, it must be admitted that it is easy to exaggerate this difficulty, since, of the whole introit unit, it is only the antiphon which is 'new' for each occasion; the psalm-melody and its *Gloria* are recurrent stock in trade. Furthermore, it is by no means essential for the whole choir to sing the antiphon, which may quite well be entrusted to a selection of voices, say to the boys only, or to men only, or to a couple of 'Chanters', or even one, the choir (or part of it) responding with the stock psalm-melody. The practice of economy within a choir is far too often overlooked.

Secondly, there is the (commonly) unfamiliar technique of this type of music. On the other hand, the liturgical chant is a medium which is becoming better known; students passing through the Royal School of English Church Music cannot but become familiar with it; it certainly needs intelligent handling, as of course does any other form of music, but there is no essential difficulty which general musicianship cannot grapple with. As an example, one of the Introits of Christmas-Day is set out at p. 13 with organ accompaniment.

It is on account of the difficulties and weaknesses which have always beset any attempt to make a substitute for these traditional melodies that we would urge a careful consideration, or

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even reconsideration, of the form which is aesthetically the most appropriate to the liturgical moment.

II

On the other hand, an examination of the words of the 'proper' introits as given, for instance, in the *English Hymnal* (nos. 657-733) will reveal that while the complete cycle makes a strong appeal, strengthened by age-long liturgical precedent, the intrinsic value of the individual numbers is unequal; likewise with the music; and it would appear not unreasonable to suggest that a small selection of the proper introits might be made, with a view to covering the liturgical year on the basis of treating the season rather than the Sunday as the unit. In such a scheme one introit might serve Advent, one Christmas-tide, and so on; and in a collection of say a dozen or fifteen the twofold problem of repertory and of organ accompaniment (if any) becomes immensely reduced.

It must be borne in mind too that while the recitation of the 'Proper' may be edifying, it is not essential (that is, it is not imposed by authority), and we are confident that progress along such lines of selection would bring the most artistic solution of the problem within the scope of many churches which are at present using some substitute.

III

Along differing but broadly parallel lines have been evolved schemes of substitutes for the proper melodies, in the shape of a simple form of psalmody. In *The English Gradual*, Part II, by Francis Burgess, Plain-chant Publications Committee, 6 Hyde Park Gate, S.W. 7 (4s.), the Introits are set to one unvarying tone; in *Introits and Graduals* (W. Bucknall, Faith Press), the Introits are set in groups, each to one of several simpler tones. While the former appears to visualize the performance of the complete Proper every Sunday (i.e. Introit, Gradual, Alleluya or Tract, Offertory, and Communion), setting each piece to its individual and invariable tone, the latter selects for each Sunday a psalm-tone of the simplest order,

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to which all or any of the Proper may be sung. Regarding the Introit in isolation, therefore, the former collection provides a fixed melody of a slightly decorated order over the whole year, while the latter gives simpler melodies varying from Sunday to Sunday.

IV

Another alternative might be found in the fact that in many churches where the Eucharist is sung, Mattins is said with little or no music. Here a suitable and orderly substitute for the Introit might be found in the use of the Mattins Office hymn with its proper plainsong melody, which has *ex hypothesi* not been already sung. This would provide for the service an introduction proper to the season during half the year. But for the Sundays after Trinity something else would seem to be needed. It is suggested that the Anthem *Asperges me* ('Thou shalt purge me, O Lord, with hyssop') would provide this. It is eminently suitable as an introduction to the service, and has a melody of the right character, which easily becomes popular. It is set out with an organ accompaniment at p. 11.

On the other hand, on the score of ease in execution, those who are enthusiastic for the proper melodies will find little to choose between the Mattins hymn and the true Introit. They will also throw into the scales the value of the intensely scriptural element in the Proper as compared with the medieval hymn. However, on the score of practical considerations, the provision of organ settings for the Mattins Office hymns in the present edition of the *English Hymnal*, and in *A Plainsong Hymn-book*, have removed the difficulty of supplying a suitable accompaniment. There is the possibility, of course, of using the modern tune in the *English Hymnal* for the Office hymn—it is usually of a distinctively stark character, especially if it be one of the French 'diocesan tunes'.

Short of the conviction born of experience we feel that a field is presented here which deserves patient exploration. At all events it offers an alternative to the comparatively promiscuous modern hymn, edifying and desirable though that may be in another position.

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V

Another alternative, if none of those above are found to be suitable, might be the use of the set of short psalms provided as introits in the Prayer-book of 1549. They could, of course, be sung to either ancient or modern chants according to the use of the church concerned.

VI

If psalmody is the essence of the Introit, modal metrical psalmody can hardly be dismissed as irrelevant, and it is pleasant to draw attention to Sir Richard Terry's editing of *Calvin's First Psalter*¹ of 1539, which seems to have been the parent of all metrical psalmody. Intrinsically the melodies are fine and they display an unusually rich variety both of metre and rhythm. As given by Sir Richard, with good English translations of the original French words, and set out over admirable modal harmonies, they have in their antique aloofness a marked capacity to produce that 'colour' by which, it is contended, the Introit is properly characterized. On the other hand, there are but nineteen psalms, and the need of a cheap choir edition would have to be faced, but that there are circumstances in which these compositions would have a certain suitability for the purpose could hardly be denied. Some idea of their general musical scope may be formed from an example incorporated in the 1933 edition of the *English Hymnal* at No. 233.

VII

Yet another way of dealing with the occasion of the Introit is one in which there is no question of providing a substitute for the 'proper', yet which commends itself with considerable liturgical propriety and musical simplicity, i.e. approaching the altar by the vehicle of the Litany sung in procession.² As the

¹ *Calvin's First Psalter* (Benn Bros.), price 10s. 6d. (Possibly obtainable through Heffers of Cambridge.)

² See *Processions* by Colin Dunlop (Alcuin Club Publications: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 28 Margaret Street, W. 1, price 5s.); also *The Litany, set to the chant of the Sarum Processional* (Church Music Society—Oxford University Press, price 1s. 3d.).

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rubrics of the Litany appear to presuppose that the celebrant himself will be occupied by the closing prayers and grace, the convenience of making the Litany the immediate prelude to the Eucharist (without the addition of any liturgical matter) will best be felt in places where the licence of the 1928 rubrics is embraced and the second half of the Litany (i.e. the 'Supplication') is omitted. In such circumstances the Litany may be concluded at a point at which it is not essential for the Priest to be officiating vocally. Supposing, for instance, that the Litany is being chanted by a lay 'clerk' or 'chanter'—as is perfectly in order—the procession will have been timed so as to reach the sanctuary step by 'Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us'. The sacred ministers (if more than one) may then stand before the Holy Table and at 'O Christ hear us' can readily repair to their accustomed places to begin the opening 'Our Father' and Kyries of the Holy Communion.

It will be observed that the tendency of this leaflet is to recommend the use of plainsong in this feature of the service. This is deliberate, as plainsong is felt to provide the right kind of colouring as an introduction to the service (at a preparatory moment in which the sacred ministers and their assistants are employed with other matters), even where the rest of the service is sung to modern music. There is no more incongruity about this than there is in singing the Preface to its traditional chant, for which few would venture to attempt any substitute in modern style.

Moreover, those who prefer to begin the service with a modern anthem or hymn do not desire the kind of guidance which can be given in a leaflet of this sort. And those who endeavour to substitute a definite set of modern compositions for the traditional melodies are met with the same practical difficulty which is recognized in section I (above), and whether they provide a complete set of introits or a selection like that suggested in II, they will find it difficult not to infringe the canon of style set out, whether rightly or wrongly, at the beginning of this leaflet.

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INTROIT PSALMS FROM THE 1549 PRAYER-BOOK

	Ps.		Ps.
1st S. in Advent	1	4th S. after Easter	82
2nd "	120	5th "	84
3rd "	4	Ascension-Day	47
4th "	5	S. after Ascension-Day	93
Christmas-Day		Whit-Sunday	33
(1)	98	Whit-Monday	100
(2)	8	Whit-Tuesday	101
S. Stephen	52	Trinity-Sunday	67
S. John Ev.	11		
Innocents	79		Ps. 119
S. after Christmas	121	1st S. after Trinity	vv. 1-8
Circumcision	122	2nd "	9-16
Epiphany	96	3rd "	17-24
1st S. after Epiphany	13	4th "	25-32
2nd "	14	5th "	33-40
3rd "	15	6th "	41-8
4th "	2	7th "	49-56
5th "	20	8th "	57-64
Septuagesima	23	9th "	65-72
Sexagesima	24	10th "	73-80
Quinquagesima	26	11th "	81-8
Ash-Wednesday	6	12th "	89-96
1st S. in Lent	32	13th "	97-104
2nd "	130	14th "	105-112
3rd "	43	15th "	113-20
4th "	46	16th "	121-8
5th "	54	17th "	129-36
Palm Sunday	61	18th "	137-44
Good Friday	22	19th "	145-52
Easter Even	88	20th "	153-60
Easter Sunday		21st "	161-8
(1)	16	22nd "	169-76
(2)	3		
Easter-Monday	62		Ps.
Easter Tuesday	113	23rd "	124
1st S. after Easter	112	24th "	125
2nd "	70	25th "	127
3rd "	75	S. Andrew	129
		S. Thomas	128

INTROIT PSALMS FROM THE 1549 PRAYER BOOK

	Ps.		Ps.
Conv. of S. Paul	138	S. Mary Magdalen	146
Purification	134	S. James	148
S. Matthias	140	S. Bartholomew	115
Annunciation	131	S. Matthew	117
S. Mark	141	S. Michael	113
S. Philip & S. James	133	S. Luke	137
S. Barnabas	142	S. Simon & S. Jude	150
S. John Bapt.	143	All Saints	149
S. Peter	144	Burials	42

ASPERGES ME

Set by J. H. ARNOLD.

Antiphon.

Thou shalt purge . . me,* O Lord, with . . . hys - sop . .

ORGAN (*quietly throughout*).

and I . . shall be clean: . Thou shalt wash me,

and I . . shall be whi - ter . than snow.

Psalm: v. 1.

Have mer - cy up - on me, O God,* af - ter thy great good - ness.

* Up to this point it is usual for a single voice to chant.

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Ant. repeated. Psalm: v. 2.

Thou shalt purge . me &c. And ac-cord-ing to the mul-ti-tude of thy mer-cies: *

Ant. repeated.

do a - way mine of - fen - ces. Thou shalt purge . me &c.

Gloria.

Glo-ry be . . . and to the Ho-ly Ghost: * as it was in the be-gin-ning,

is now, and ev-er shall be, world with-out end. A - - men. .

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Ant.

Thou shalt wash me,* and I . . shall be whi-ter . than . . . snow. *rit.*

CHRISTMAS INTROIT

Antiphon. Puer natus est. *Set by J. H. ARNOLD.*

Un - to us . . . * a Child . . is born,

ORGAN.

un - to us . . a Son . . is giv - en: . .

and the go - - vern - ment shall rest

* Up to this point it is usual for a single voice to chant.

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up - on . . . his shoul - - - - der: . .

and his Name . . . shall . . be call - - - - ed, . .

An - gel of . . . migh - - ty Coun - sel.

Psalm.

O . . . sing un - to the Lord a new song: * for

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he hath done mar - vel - lous things. . .

Ant. repeated. Gloria.

Un - to us . . &c. Glo - ry be . . and to the Ho - ly Ghost. *

As it was . . . is now, and ev - er shall be, . .

Ant.

world with - - out end. A - - men. . . Un - to &c.

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