

# Plainchant

Not really all that plain...

A photograph showing the interior of a Gothic-style cloister. The space is defined by a series of arches supported by columns, leading towards a bright opening at the far end. The walls and ceiling are made of stone, showing signs of age and slight greenish moss. Light filters through several arched windows along the left wall.

Plainchant isn't music for entertainment.

It enhances spiritual contemplation.



# Liturgy

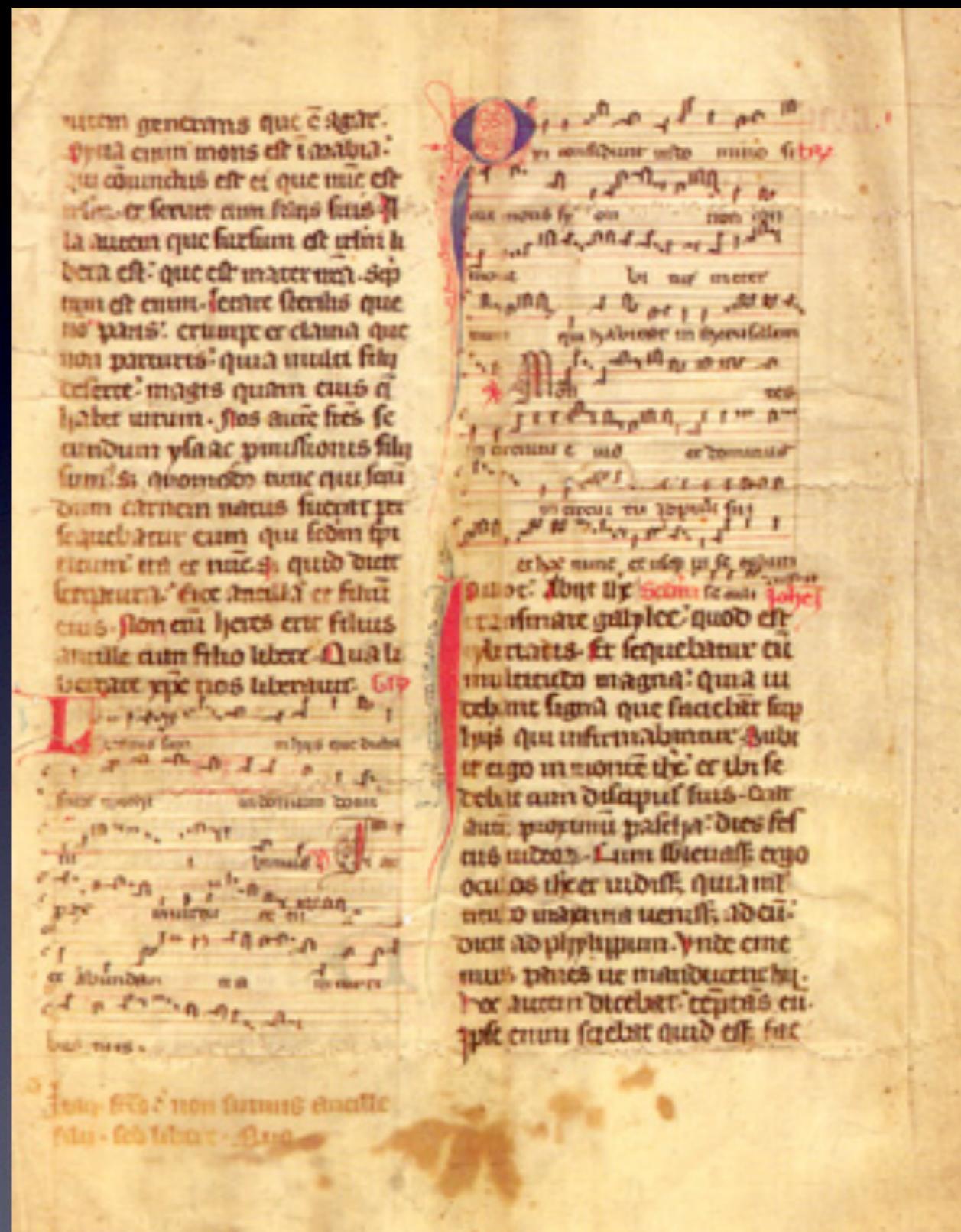
- A “liturgy” is a set of rules and practices that are established for a particular spiritual tradition.
- For people in the Middle Ages, the liturgy was a central and cherished part of life.

# Chant before Charlemagne

- Before Charlemagne's day, Europeans practiced many different Christian liturgies, each with its own particular variety of plainchant.

# Ambrosian Chant

## Milan, Italy



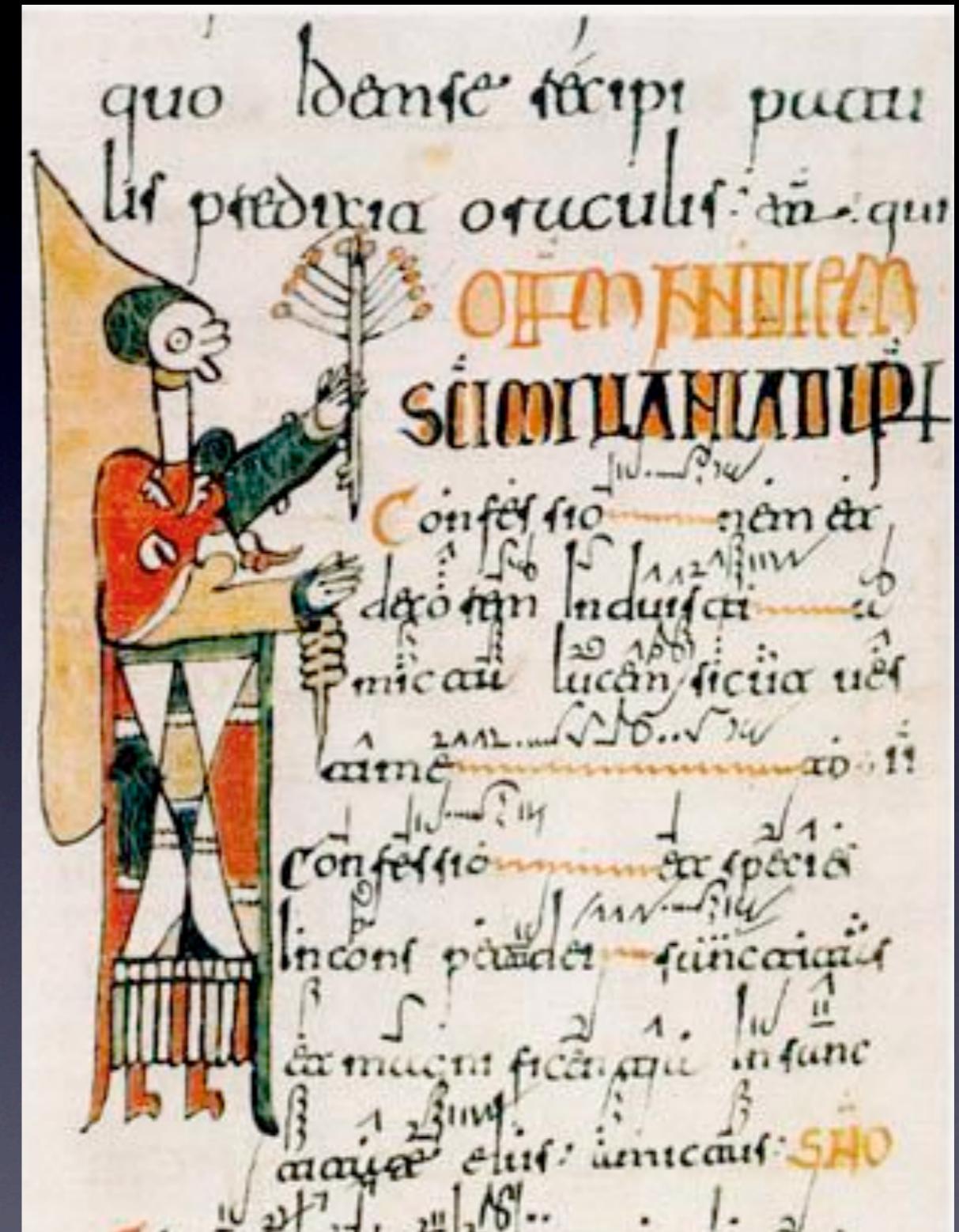
# Gallican Chant

Northern France



# Mozarabic Chant

Iberian Peninsula



# Charlemagne

742 (maybe 747)—January 28, 814

Emperor of the “Holy Roman Empire” which lasted (on paper, anyway) until World War I.



# Maintaining an Empire

- Conquering is one thing; maintaining it is another.
- The key lay in education, bringing the varied cultures of Europe into a coherent culture.
- Liturgy was an indispensable component.

# Maintaining an Empire

- Old customs had to be suppressed.
- The “Gallican” rite of Northern France was such a custom.
- The Gallican rite was to be replaced with the official Roman rite.

# Admonitio Generalis

- March 23, 789
- Decreed the abolition of the Gallican rite in the Frankish Kingdom.



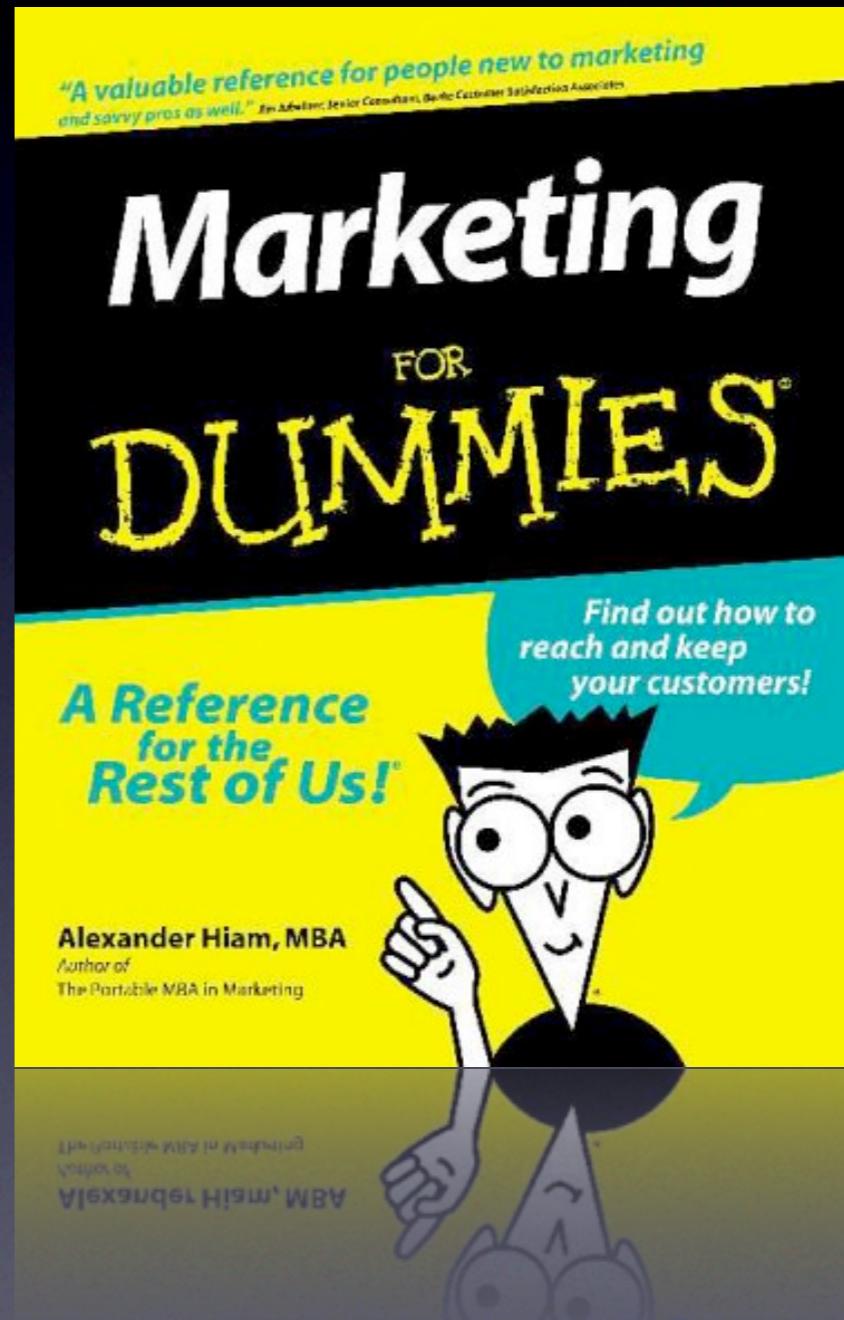
# Replacing the Liturgy

- Monks and scholars arrived from the south to begin re-educating the populace.
- They met with considerable resistance.
- Finger-pointing was common on both sides:
  - The southerners blamed Northern barbarism.
  - Northerners blamed insensitive, ignorant Southerners.



# Successful Marketing

- Faced with impending failure, the educational authorities introduced a brilliant marketing/propaganda scheme.



# Step One: Create a Hero

- Pope Gregory I (pope from 590 - 604.)
- Busy, influential pope.
- Seems to have been an ignorant boob in a lot of ways.
- Had really nothing much to do with liturgy or church music, though.



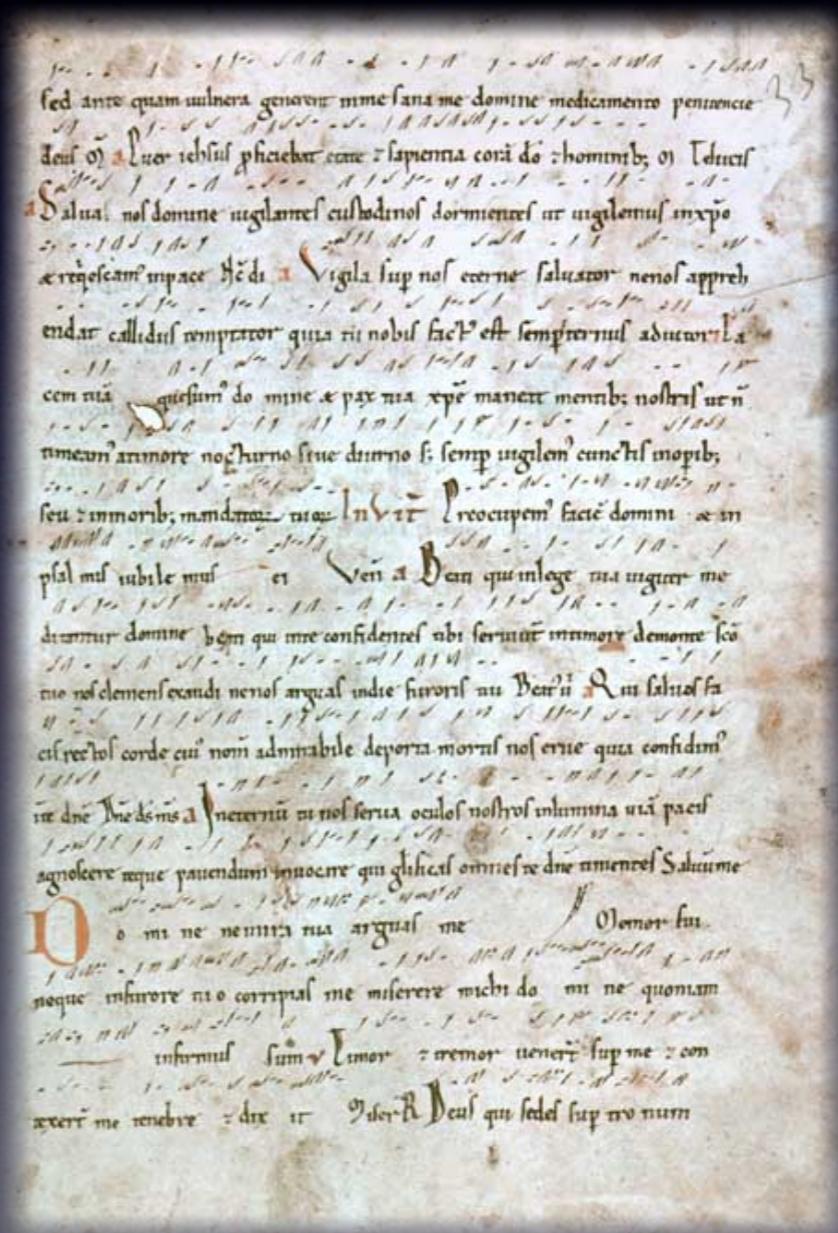
# Step Two: Create a Hero's Story

- Gregory was said to have “written” much of the Roman liturgy, esp. its plainchant.
- It was even said to have been divinely inspired, in the form of a dove which descended, then stuck its beak in Gregory’s mouth.
- Since music writing hadn’t been invented yet, Gregory couldn’t have possibly written down the plainchant books attributed to him.



# Step Three: Saturate the Media

- A lot of early printed musical chant books attribute their contents to Gregory.
- Paintings and illustration furthered the story.



# A Chant is Born

- It was one of the most successful marketing campaigns in history.
- Not only did it work in the Frankish Kingdom —
- To this day we still refer to Roman Catholic Chant as:

# Gregorian Chant

**Accelerate  
your marketing  
success**

**Use our expert consultants**



**Use our expert consultants**

Gregory's role—if any—was probably slight.



# Origins

- Seems to have originated in monastic communities in the earliest years of Christianity.
- Melodies would have been assembled from a wide variety of sources—including the ancient world.

7.

I N paradi-sum : dedúcant te Ange-li : in tú-o ad-  
véntu suscí-pi- ant te Márty-res, et perdúcant te in ci-  
vi-tá-tem sánctam Je-rúsa-lem. Chórus Ange-lórum te  
su- scí-pi- at, et cum Lázaro quondam páupe-re aetér-  
na- scí- pi- erat et cum Lázaro quondam páupe-re aetér-

# In Paradisum

# Antiphon

- A genre of Gregorian chant.
  - Prose text
  - Usually sung in association with a psalm.

# In Paradisum

- Sung in procession on the way from the final blessing of the corpse in church to the graveyard where the burial takes place.



# Hildegard of Bingen

Abbess  
Musician  
Writer  
Anchorite



# Non-Gregorian plainchant

- Hildegard wrote plainchants, but they aren't part of the Roman Catholic liturgy.
- Therefore, they aren't **Gregorian** chants.



Columba aspexit

# A Sequence

A

A<sup>1</sup>

B

B<sup>1</sup>

C

C<sup>1</sup>

etc..

