

**THE PARAGRAPH
PSALTER, ARRANGED
FOR THE USE OF CHOIRS**

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The Paragraph Psalter, Arranged for the Use of Choirs by Brooke Foss Westcott

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Arranged for the use of Choirs

BY

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PREFACE.

DURING the last few years great care has been successfully bestowed upon the pointing of the Psalter, so as to ensure an intelligent musical rendering of each clause of the separate verses; but, as far as I am aware, no attempt has been made to exhibit the general structure of the Psalms in such a manner as to suggest the variety of musical treatment which is required in different Psalms and in different parts of the same Psalms for their true interpretation. The present arrangement, which has been made and tested during the last six years of my work at Peterborough, is an endeavour to obtain this object, or at least to indicate what must be aimed at, as far as I can judge, in order that the chanting of the Psalms may contribute in the highest degree to the edifying of the Choir and of the Congregation.

It is evident upon the least reflection that no one uniform method of chanting can be applicable to the whole Psalter. Sometimes the verses are separately complete; sometimes they are arranged in couplets, sometimes in triplets; sometimes they are grouped in unequal but corresponding masses.

In most cases the verses consist of two members, but not unfrequently they consist of three or four. If therefore the Psalms are sung antiphonally on one method in single verses, or in pairs of verses, or in half verses, the sense must constantly be sacrificed; and the Music instead of illuminating the thought will fatally obscure it.

Thus, for example, the second Psalm consists of four triplets, which offer remarkable internal correspondences. The teaching of the Psalm is wholly destroyed if the separate unity of these four stanzas is not clearly marked in chanting. There are cases again when the form of the composition is changed in its course. Thus in the nineteenth Psalm there is an abrupt transition from a triple to a double structure. The glory of God in the heavens is portrayed in two stanzas of three verses each: His glory in the Law, and man's consequent prayer, in two stanzas of four verses each. The simplest music which accentuates this form of composition necessarily directs the attention of the hearer to the progress of thought with which it corresponds. If no clear change of rendering meets the change of structure, the idea probably remains hidden. In the twenty-fourth Psalm, to take an illustration of a different kind, the question and answer in *vv.* 8, 10 ought clearly to be separated. There are also obvious changes of feeling, from confidence to prayer, from prayer to thanksgiving, and even alternations of feeling in the same Psalm, which call for musical recognition.

I have striven therefore, after long and repeated study, to mark the main divisions of the Psalms, and by very brief marginal notes to characterize them. The sharpest divisions are distinguished by a space and a dash (*e.g.* Ps. ii): divisions more or less clear by a broader or narrower space (*e.g.* Ps. i and Ps. iii). In making them I have carefully weighed conflicting views. In some cases variations in my own judgment from time to time shew that the conclusion reached is uncertain; but in the majority of Psalms the same outline of structure is recognised by a general consent of commentators, and cannot fail to approve itself to the reader.

It happens sometimes that the conjunctions which have been introduced in the Prayer-book Version mar the sequence of thought (i, 7, '*But* the Lord' in place of '*For* the Lord'; viii, 3, '*For I will*' in place of '*When I*'). These inaccuracies have necessarily been disregarded.

One important feature of many Psalms in relation to their musical rendering is the recurrence of 'refrains.' These are sometimes simple (Pss. viii, xlii f, xlix, lvii, lxii, lxvii, lxxx, lxxxvii, xcix, cxv, cxvi, cxxxvi), sometimes double (Pss. xxiv, lix, cvii), and sometimes complicated (cxviii). In all cases they require to be marked in some way so as to bring out plainly the character of the composition. In respect to these again the irregular freedom of the English version injures in several cases the perfect symmetry of the original. Thus in Ps. xlix, 12, the additional clause taken from *v.* 13 destroys the perfect correspondence with *v.* 20; in cxvi, 13

(parallel to 16a), the words *unto the Lord* are omitted without authority, and *now* has the same claim to appear in *v.* 16 as in *v.* 13; in cxlii, 6, 14, cxliii, 5, there are three distinct renderings of one phrase (see also lix, 6, 14; cxviii, 1, 29; 10 ff. &c.).

The *Gloria* at the close of each Psalm must be regarded as one uniform refrain. In many cases (*e. g.* Pss. lxxxviii, cxlii f.) it ought to be rendered by a distinct chant, that so the voice of praise may be clearly heard after the saddest utterances. Sometimes it can be made in this way to bind together a group of Psalms in a greater unity. Sometimes (as in Ps. cxix) it will mark by its measured recurrence successive breaks in the development of one idea.

In this connexion it may be noticed that the first four of the five Books into which the Hebrew Psalter is divided are closed by a special Doxology (Ps. xli, 13; lxxii, 18 f.; lxxxix, 50b; cvi, 46). These Doxologies form no part of the Psalms to which they are appended, and should be treated distinctly. As they stand at present, the Doxology in Ps. xli wholly mars the structure of the Psalm; and that in Ps. lxxxix mars the sense. The last Psalm is a grand Doxology to the whole Psalter.

The 'refrains' and doxologies are printed in italics.

It has not seemed desirable to introduce into the text the enigmatic word *Selah*. The term indeed appears to mark some change in the original musical accompaniment,—perhaps a passage for the instruments alone,—but its interpretation