THE 2015 NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION
Salt Lake City, Utah

Interest Session
Reclaiming the Ancient Hymnal: the Art, Devotion and Practice of Psalm-Singing
Howard Helvey, presenter

Friday, February 27, 11:00 AM, Salt Palace Convention Center, Meeting Room 251 A & D

Origin of the Psalms
(Numbering)
Authorship and Era of Formation
Voice

Classifications and Types of Psalms (two selected assessments)
Hermann Gunkel
Praise
Lament (Entreaty)
Instruction

Walter Brueggemann
Psalms of orientation
Psalms of disorientation
Psalms of new orientation

Admin. Augsburg Fortress. Reproduce by permission.
No further reproduction allowed without the written permission of Augsburg Fortress.

Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry
Complete Verses
Lack of Regular Rhythm
Parallelism ("thought rhyme")

SYNONYMOUS PARALLELISM
Sing with joy to God our strength
and raise a loud shout to the God of Jacob. (81:1)

They see your procession, O God,
your procession, O God, into the sanctuary, my God and my King. (68:24)

ANTITHETICAL PARALLELISM
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked is doomed. (1:6)
SYNTHETIC PARALLELISM

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
He will not always accuse us,
nor will he keep his anger for ever. (Psalm 103:8-9)

English Translations and Language Issues

Early Singing and Music Associated with the Psalms

Selected Localized Methods of Singing the Psalms (with a few pros and cons)

Choral Presentation as an Anthem or Motet

Stanzaic Metrical Paraphrase (set to a hymn tune or modified plainchant)

Words: Isaac Watts (1674-1748); alt. by John Wesley (1703-1791), alt.; para. of Psalm 146
Music: Pen ucha, Welsh melody by Morfydd Llwyn Owen (1891-1918)
1. O Lord our God, in all the earth Your great Name is ex-tolled; Your maj-es-ty is far be-
praise your Name to-day, That all your en-e mies and
stars in heaven a-bove, Lord, why should you re-mem-
hon-or and re-nown Than all the heaven-ly hosts a-
rule in your great Name; O Lord our God, in all the

2. You have or-dained that chil-dren’s lips Should have no more to say.

3. When I look up and see the moon And us And vis-it us in love?

4. Yet you have made us on-ly less In yond What heaven it-self can hold.

5. All sheep and ox-en, beasts and birds, We world Your glo-ry we pro-claim.

Words: Psalm 8, A New Metrical Psalter, © 2008 by Christopher L. Webber. Reprinted with permission.
Music: RH Walker Jr, Howard Helvey (b. 1968); © 2008

solo 1. You are my light, my Sav-i or, Lord; Of whom should I have an-y fear?

all 2. You hide me, Lord, when trou-ble comes, In hid-den plac-es no one knows

women 3. God e-ven now, has raised my head A-bove all those who would de-stry;
solo 4. You lift my head a-bove my foes, There-fore I make my of-fer-ing;

men 5. Lord, lis-ten to me when I call, Have mer-cy, Lord, and an-swer me;

all 6. Do not for-ev-er hide your face, Nor in your an-ger turn a-way;

You are the strong-hold of my life; Whom should I dread if you are near?
And set me high up-on a rock And keep me safe from all my foes.
And so, will I re-joice and sing And sac-ri-fice with shouts of joy.
With sounds of glad-ness I will come, Make mu-sic to the Lord and sing.
You move my heart to seek your face; Your face, Lord, I de-sire to see.
For you have been my help-er, Lord, Do not for-sake me when I pray.

Words: Psalm 27:1, 5-13, A New Metrical Psalter (RCL ed.), Copyright © 2008 by Christopher L. Webber. Reprinted with permission.
Music: Splendor paternae gloriae, plainsong, Mode I, Worcester MS., 13th cent.
Monotone (with optional pitch change on the final stress of each line)

Cantor, with Assembly Response

(Psalm 6)

1 LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger; *
do not punish me in your wrath.

2 Have pity on me, LORD, for I am weak; *
   heal me, LORD, for my bones are racked.

3 My spirit shakes with terror; *
   how long, O LORD, how long?

4 Turn, O LORD, and deliver me; *
   save me for your mercy’s sake.

5 For in death no one remembers you; *
   and who will give you thanks in the grave?

6 I grow weary because of my groaning; *
   every night I drench my bed
   and flood my couch with tears.

7 My eyes are wasted with grief *
   and worn away because of all my enemies.

8 Depart from me, all evildoers, *
   for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.

9 The LORD has heard my supplication; *
   the LORD accepts my prayer.

10 All my enemies shall be confounded and quake with fear; *
    they shall turn back and suddenly be put to shame.
(Psalm 8)
1 O LORD our Governor, *
how exalted is your Name in all the world!
2 Out of the mouths of infants and children *
your majesty is praised above the heavens.
3 You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, *
to quell the enemy and the avenger.
4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, *
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
5 What is man that you should be mindful of him? *
the son of man that you should seek him out?
6 You have made him but little lower than the angels; *
you adorn him with glory and honor;
7 You give him mastery over the works of your hands; *
you put all things under his feet:
8 All sheep and oxen, *
even the wild beasts of the field,
9 The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, *
and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.
10 O LORD our Governor, *
how exalted is your Name in all the world!

(Psalm 51:1-4)
1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your | loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion | blot out | my offenses.
2 Wash me through and | through · from my | wickedness *
and | cleanse me | from my | sin.
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

(Psalm 23)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.

He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his Name’s sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.
Psalm 23, with text embedded within the chant:

1. The LORD is my shepherd;
3. He re - - - - - vives my soul;
5. You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;

I and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
you have anointed my head with oil, ' and my cup is running over.

2. He makes me lie down in green pastures
4. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, ' I shall fear no evil;
6. Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and you are with me; ' your rod and staff, they comfort me.
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.
Unison Congregational Psalm Antiphons with Organ
(Psalm 84:1-6)

Antiphon

Chant

© 2015, Howard Helvey

1. How dear to me is your dwelling, O LORD of hosts! *
   My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the LORD;
   my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

2. The sparrow has found her a house
   and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
   by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts,
   my King and my God. ANTIPHON

3. Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
   they will always be praising you.

4. Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
   whose hearts are set on the pilgrims’ way. ANTIPHON

5. Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *
   for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

6. They will climb from height to height, *
   and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion. ANTIPHON (fine)
The same psalm as above (84:1-6) formatted for the congregational bulletin:

**Psalm 84:1-6 (Chanted by the Choir)**

Anglican Chant by Charles V. Stanford (1852-1924)

The Congregation, remaining seated, sings the Antiphon before the psalm, and when indicated.

<antiphon>

1
How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts!
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

2
The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young;
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.  

3
Happy are they who dwell in your house! They will always be praising you.

4
Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *  
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims’ way.

5
Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *  
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

6
They will climb from height to height,  
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.

<antiphon>

An antiphon example, from Psalm 70, particularly addressing shadow vowels, and direction/energy into/over a dissonance followed by a tapered resolution:

<antiphon>
THE CLIFTON ANTIPHONS

Refrains for Unison Congregation (and/or Choir) and Organ to Integrate with the
Appointed Psalms and Canticles for All Sundays and Holy Days within the
Three-Year Revised Common Lectionary

for instructions on receiving a free downloadable PDF, visit:
howardhelvey.com (see The Clifton Antiphons under the WORKS heading)

A few selected examples from THE CLIFTON ANTIPHONS
(Melody-only versions are shown here. All antiphons also have organ-accompanied versions.)

Psalm 145

Psalm 62

Magnificat

Psalm 96

Psalm 27

Psalm 31

Psalm 22

Psalm 42

As the deer longs for the water-brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God.

© 2015, Howard Helvey

The eyes of all wait upon you, O Lord.

For God alone my soul in silence waits.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the whole earth.

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

© 2015, Howard Helvey
Psalm 143

© 2015, Howard Helvey

Psalm 118

© 2015, Howard Helvey

Psalm 47

© 2015, Howard Helvey

Psalm 104

© 2015, Howard Helvey

Psalm 34

© 2015, Howard Helvey

Psalm 80

© 2015, Howard Helvey

Psalm 150

© 2015, Howard Helvey

Psalm 37

© 2015, Howard Helvey

Psalm 95

© 2015, Howard Helvey
Additional Resources to Explore

Psalms for All Seasons (co-published by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and Brazos Press, 2012)
(Metrical paraphrases and many other methods of psalm-singing.)

(Many of Roberts' chants are based on the general shape of traditional hymn tunes, so they have a sense of familiarity.)

(This resource contains a wealth of various chants, and complete pointed text for all the psalms.)

Selected Bibliography


