

## PREFACE

SOME readers of this volume will remember *The Plainsong Psalter* of the Rev. Canon Winfred Charles Douglas. Originally published in 1932 by the H. W. Gray Company, Father Douglas's Psalter remained in print until about 1960. Many pious English-speaking Christians have learned the ancient art of Western plainchant from Father Douglas. During the years in which *The Plainsong Psalter* has been out of print many parishes have found themselves without sufficient copies for the recitation of the Daily Office. Some parishes have no copies at all. Still others, especially in England, made use of the *Sarum Psalter* of the Rev. G. H. Palmer, published by St. Mary's Convent Press in Wantage. These days, the pious will search far and wide to obtain either of these Psalters from used book sellers.

It is evident that an entirely new traditional English Psalter set to Gregorian plain-song would be a timely remedy for this dearth of books needed for the most basic element of the Church's worship: the singing of the Psalms. To this end, the new *Saint Dunstan's Plainsong Psalter* has been prepared by the Lancelot Andrewes Press of Glendale, Colorado.

Whereas the 1932 Douglas *Psalter* was produced in modern notation (which can cause unnecessary problems for the varied voices found in parishes and schools), the new *St. Dunstan's Plainsong Psalter* has been produced in the original, antique "square" notation proper to Gregorian plainchant. The chief advantage of this system of notation over the modern system is that it does not tie the chant to absolute pitches, and thus it can be easily adapted to the voices at hand. And, as experience shows, persons with little musical training more readily learn the "square note" system than modern notation.

Canon Douglas's *Psalter* included no settings of the Canticles, nor of the Ordinary parts of Prayer Book Matins and Evensong. However, following the precedent of the medieval Psalters, *Saint Dunstan's Plainsong Psalter* does include the noted Ordinary and numerous settings of the Canticles: *Venite*, *Pascha nostrum*, *Te Deum*, *Benedicite*, *Benedictus es*, the Old Testament Canticles of the Latin Breviary, and the *Benedictus*, *Quicumque vult* (the Athanasian Creed), *Magnificat*, and *Nunc dimittis*.

Another feature of *Saint Dunstan's Plainsong Psalter* is its restoration of certain old Psalm tones which were generally abandoned or forgotten over the centuries of development within the Western Rite. Many of these tones survived in the pre-Reformation Uses of great English cathedrals and monasteries. Only recently have these tones been re-introduced through the efforts of scholars such as G. H. Palmer, who included them in his *Sarum Psalter*.

The texts used in the *Saint Dunstan's Plainsong Psalter* are those of the Book of Common Prayer, the enduringly beautiful "Coverdale Psalter," and the Authorized Version of 1611. It should be noted that the Psalter text is based on the 1928 American redaction of the Coverdale Psalter - although in some cases the text has been restored to its original Coverdale readings when the American readings are contrary to those of the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. The numbering of the Psalter is given to what was thought to be the ancient Hebrew system (as in the Prayer Book) as well as

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in the system of the Septuagint and the Latin Psalters. The Latin incipits have been expanded for the benefit of learned readers. The translation of the *Quicumque Vult* has been slightly amended from its original Prayer Book form. Words have been replaced whose meanings have lately been radically altered from their original meanings in Tudor and Elizabethan times (for example, the word “incomprehensible” whose original non-cognitive meaning was akin to “infinite” or “immeasurable”).

The commentaries of Rev. Dr. J. H. Blunt have been employed because he is familiar with the English texts as we have them, because he is familiar with a daily and corporate recitation of these Offices as we have them, and because he endorses the radically mystical and Christological understanding of the Scriptures favored by orthodox Christians.

With due reverence, we place this Psalter under the heavenly patronage of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 19th May 988). Dunstan, a major figure in the development of English Christianity, is revered by Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Anglicans alike. Of course, Dunstan is an obvious patron, as he is well known for his considerable musical abilities, well versed in chant and hymnody, as well as in the manufacture of church bells and organs. However, in a time of great social, moral and spiritual decline, Saint Dunstan arose as a restorer of the spiritual life – especially the monastic way of life in England, a life centred on the chanting of the holy Psalmody, hymnody and prayers of the Divine Office. Dunstan encouraged the integration of this monastic way into the everyday life of the laity. His reforms restored not only the monasteries, but also the general piety of the entire English nation. Although he was an advisor to kings and nobles, the humble man found no greater joy than in instructing youth in theology and chant in his cathedral school.

By God’s help, through the prayers of St. Dunstan, we offer this Psalter in the hope that it will be found helpful to pious orthodox Christians in their daily devotions.

J. B. M.    J. C. C.    B. J. A.

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