

The Prebendal Psalms in the Church of Wells.

BY REV. C. M. CHURCH, M.A., F.S.A.,

Sub-Dean and Canon Residentiary.

THE daily recitation of the whole Psalter by the members of the Chapter, each member taking his appointed number of Psalms, probably formed part of the "Con-suetudinary" introduced by the Norman bishops, who moulded the constitution of the English cathedral churches in the twelfth century.

The usage can be traced to very early times in the ordinances of the churches of Wells, Lincoln, Salisbury, and St. Paul's, London, though the actual division of the Psalter among the several prebends is of later dates.

The earliest draft of the statutes of the church of Wells is assigned to the time of Bishop Robert, 1136-1166. It contains the order that "the whole Psalter shall be said daily for the brethren and benefactors of the Church of Wells, and two masses each week shall be celebrated for living and dead."

"Præterea singulis diebus dicetur totum psalterium pro fratribus et benefactoribus Wellensis ecclesiæ, et singulis

hebdomadis celebrentur duo missæ pro salute vivorum et defunctorum.”¹

“The earliest recorded statute to be found at Lincoln is one concerning the division of the Psalter for daily recitation by members of the Chapter.”²

An ordinance based upon the “ancient institution” of the church of Lincoln, was drawn up by the dean and chapter, and confirmed by St. Hugh, bishop 1186–1200, “that one mass and one psalter should be said daily for benefactors living and departed, and the assignment was made of particular psalms to the bishop and the fifty-four canons.”

At St. Paul’s, London, the statutes of Ralph de Baldock, dean 1294, bishop 1303–1313, appointed the order by which the canons, thirty in number, were bidden to recite daily a portion of five psalms each,³ and both here and at Lincoln the titles of the psalms were written above the several prebendal stalls in the church.⁴

At Salisbury no order for the daily recitation of the psalms is found in early statutes, but an immemorial usage has existed, and a table of the division of the psalms between the bishop and fifty-two prebendaries is contained in a Processionale of the church of the fifteenth century, a manuscript (no. 145) in the library of the dean and chapter of Salisbury.⁵

At these three churches the assignment of the Proper

(1) R. ii, f. 42, s. 5.

(2) Henry Bradshaw in *Lincoln Cathedral Statutes*, pp. 37, 38.

See the statute and the *divisio psalmoreum* p. 300.

(3) *Statuta et consuetudines ecclesiæ Cathedralis Sti. Pauli Londinensis*, f. 60.

(4) At Lincoln “each of the prebendaries has his own allotted psalms, whose titles, as at St. Paul’s, are inscribed on tablets suspended at the back of his stall, and the closing act of his installation is the direction of his installer to turn and read them and to bear in mind that he is bound to recite them daily if nothing hinders.”—*Church Quarterly Review on Statutes of Lincoln Cathedral*, no. lxix, Oct., 1892.

(5) Jones’ *Fasti Ecclesiæ Sarisberiensis*, p. 200.

Psalms is still made known to each prebendary at the time of installation.

At Wells, though the duty of daily recitation is laid down in the earliest statutes, the table of division of the psalms is not found in any of the registers or original documents now existing in the chapter library. It is found only in two copies of the "ordinale et statuta" of the church, of the latter part of the 15th century.

One is a manuscript book of 357 pages, small quarto, partly parchment, chiefly paper, entitled "Dean Cosyns's MSS." It contains very full transcripts, in various handwriting, of the statutes and acts of the chapter. It bears on page 158 the writing "Liber Wilelmi Cosyn Decani Wellen. Ecclesie Cathedralis—scriptus et collatus labore et sumptibus suis, anno domini 1467." 1506 is added in margin by a later hand. All the pages following are in the handwriting of that time and on parchment. The handwriting of the former part is of earlier dates.⁶

The other is a folio of 155 pages of parchment, bound in rough calf, and lettered at the back "Statuta ecclesie Cathedralis Wellensis." It is in one and the same handwriting, of the sixteenth century.

It is probable that from this later transcript the copy was made of the "Ordinale et Statuta" now in the Lambeth Library, (no. 729), which was drawn up and sent to Lambeth, in obedience to Archbishop Laud's monition, by Dean Warburton and the chapter in 1634.⁷

In both these copies the table of psalms follows upon the statutes of Dean Haselshaw, which were put forth in 1298.⁸

(6) Dean Cosyns lived through the episcopates of Oliver King, Adrian de Castello, Wolsey, and Clark.

(7) Printed in *Wells Cathedral*, H. E. Reynolds, 1881.

(8) The Table of Psalms is printed on pp. 68-69, but contains many mistakes.

R. i, f. 215-219. R. ii, f. 19-23, 'Statuta edita tempore Walteri de Haselshaw.'

The table is found in the Cosyn MS. on page 68, and in the other copy on page 81 without any other heading than the following :

Singulis diebus dicat DOMINUS EPISCOPUS hos psalmos cum confratribus et prebendis totum psalterium quolibet die ut patet inferius.			
	Ps. i	<i>Beatus vir qui</i>	[bonus]
	Ps. ii	<i>Quare fremuerunt gentes</i>	
	Ps. iii	<i>Domine quid</i>	
WEDMORE I.	Ps. iv	<i>Cum invocarem</i>	
		Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus	
CLYVA	Ps. viii	<i>Domine Dominus noster</i>	
	Ps. ix	<i>Confitebor tibi domine</i>	
	Ps. x	<i>Ut quid</i>	
SANCTUS DECU- MANUS	Ps. xi	<i>In Domino confido</i>	
		Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus	
CUMBA I.	Ps. xv	<i>Domine quis habitabit</i>	
		Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus	
CUMBA XII.	Ps. xviii	<i>Diligam te domine</i>	
CUMTONA	Ps. xix	<i>Cæli enarrant gloriam</i>	
		Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus	
IATTONA	Ps. xxii	<i>Domine Deus meus respice</i>	[Ps. 22, 23, 24 (in later hand).
		Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus	
HASELBERGA	Ps. xxv	<i>Ad te domine levavi</i>	
		Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus	
WANDESTRE	Ps. xxix	<i>Afferte Domine</i>	
	Ps. xxx	<i>Exultabo te</i>	
	Ps. xxxi	<i>In te Domine speravi</i>	
SCANDERFORDE	Ps. xxxii	<i>Beati quorum</i>	[boni]
	Ps. xxxiii	<i>Exultate justi</i>	
	Ps. xxxiv	<i>Benedicam</i>	
WEDMORE II.	Ps. xxxv	<i>Judica Domine</i>	
	Ps. xxxvi	<i>Dixit injustus</i>	
CUMBA II.	Ps. xxxvii	<i>Noli æmulari</i>	
	Ps. xxxviii	<i>Domine ne in furore</i>	

CUMBA III.	Ps. xxxix	<i>Dixi custodiam</i>	[domine]
		Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus	
CUMBA IV.	Ps. xlii	<i>Quemadmodum</i>	
		Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus	
BOKLONDE	Ps. xlv	<i>Eructavit cor meum</i>	
		Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus	
MYLVERTON I.	Ps. xlix	<i>Audite hæc omnes gentes</i>	
		Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus	
HENGESTRYNGE	Ps. liii	<i>Dixit insipiens</i>	
		Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus	
TYMBERSCOMBE	Ps. lvii	<i>Miserere mei Deus miserere</i>	
		Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus	
AYSHULLE	Ps. lx	<i>Deus repulisti nos</i>	
		Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus	
CUMBA V.	Ps. lxiv	<i>Exaudi Deus orationem</i>	
		Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus	
ESTONA	Ps. lxxvii	<i>Deus misereatur nostri</i>	[dominus]
	Ps. lxxviii	<i>Exurgat Deus et dissipentur</i>	
ILTONA	Ps. lxix	<i>Salvum me fac domine</i>	
	Ps. lxx	<i>Deus in adiutorium</i>	
CUMBA XIII.	Ps. lxxi	<i>In te domine speravi</i>	
	Ps. lxxii	<i>Deus iudicium tuum</i>	
DUNDEN	Ps. lxxiii	<i>Quam bonus Israel Deus</i>	
	Ps. lxxiv	<i>Ut quid Deus repulisti</i>	
CUMBA XIV.	Ps. lxxv	<i>Confitebimur tibi</i>	
	Ps. lxxvi	<i>Notus in Judæa</i>	[mundo]
	Ps. lxxvii	<i>Voce mea</i>	
CUMBA VI.	Ps. lxxviii	<i>Attendite popule</i>	[juris sui]
DULTICOTE	Ps. lxxix	<i>Deus venerunt</i>	[domine]
	Ps. lxxx	<i>Qui regis Israel</i>	
TAUNTON	Ps. lxxxii	<i>Exultate Deo</i>	
	Ps. lxxxii	<i>Deus stetit</i>	

BRENT	Ps. lxxxiii	<i>Deus quis similis</i> Cum duobus sequentibus psalmis
WYVELESCUMBA	Ps. lxxxvi	<i>Inclina domine</i>
	Ps. lxxxvii	<i>Fundamenta ejus</i>
	Ps. lxxxviii	<i>Domine Deus salutis</i>
ILMYNISTRA	Ps. lxxxix	<i>Misericordias Domini</i>
SUTTONA	Ps. xc	<i>Domine refugium</i> Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus
HOLECUMBA	Ps. xciv	<i>Deus ultionum</i> Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus
WEREMINSTER	Ps. xcvi	<i>Dominus regnavit</i> Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus
CUMBA VII.	Ps. c	<i>Jubilate Deo omnes</i> Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus
CORY	Ps. ciii	<i>Benedic i tantum</i>
WORMESTERR	Ps. civ	<i>Benedic ii tantum</i>
WITLAKYNGTON	Ps. cv	<i>Confitemini i tantum</i>
CUMBA XV.	Ps. cvi	<i>Confitemini ii tantum</i>
MYLVERTON II.	Ps. cvii	<i>Confitemini iii tantum</i>
WEDMORE III.	Ps. cviii	<i>Paratum cor meum</i> Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus
BERTON	Ps. cxi	<i>Confitebor tibi domine</i> Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus
CUMBA VIII.	Ps. cxvi	<i>Dilexi quoniam</i> Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus
WEDMORE IV.	Ps. cxix	<i>Beati immaculate in via</i> [boni] Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus (1—64.)
CUDEWORTHE	Ps. cxix	<i>Bonitatem cum servo tuo</i> Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus (65—111.)
CUMBA IX.	Ps. cxix	<i>Iniquos odi</i> <i>Mirabilia</i> <i>Clamavi</i> (112— 160.)

CUMBA X.	Ps. cxix	<i>Principes persecuti</i> Cum quinque psalmis sequentibus (161—176. Ps. cxx—cxxiv.)
WYTCYRCH	Ps. cxxv	<i>Qui confidunt in domino</i> Cum sex psalmis sequentibus
HARPETRE	Ps. cxxxii	<i>Memento domine David</i> Cum quator psalmis sequentibus
CUMBA XI.	Ps. cxxxvii	<i>Super flumina Babil</i> Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus
WEDMORE V.	Ps. cxl	<i>Eripe me Domine</i> [Ps. 140, 141, 142 (in later hand)] Cum tribus psalmis sequentibus
DYNRE	Ps. cxliv	<i>Benedictus Dominus Deus</i> Cum duobus psalmis sequentibus
LUTTON	Ps. cxlvii	<i>Laudate dominum Lauda</i> <i>Ierusal.</i>
	Ps. cxlviii	<i>Laudate dominum de celis</i>

NOTE—The numbering of the Psalms is the same as in our Prayer Book version. The words in margin are various readings in the copies, probably mistakes of the copyist.

Singulis diebus dicitur totum psalterium a predictis Prebendis pro fratribus et benefactoribus Wellensis ecclesiæ.

BYDSAM prebenda Sancti Andreae.

Cujus vicarius est Magister Scholarum.

Some notes are to be made on this table of psalms.

(a) There seems to be good reason for attributing to Dean Haselshaw's time this distribution of the psalms.

Though the usage dated from very early times, and from the 'antiqua statuta,' yet the actual division of the Psalter must have varied with the varying number of prebends through the times of bishops Reginald, Savaric, and Jocelin. It was not until after the imprebendation of Dinder, the last-made prebend, in 1263, that this final division could have been drawn up. Under Dean Haselshaw there was a general revision of the Consuetudinary with a view to enforce stricter

rules for the vicars choral, and to promote order and reverence in the services of the Church.

The daily recitation was to be a private act on the part of the prebendaries, and was left to individual consciences, under a general order and statute. At the same time provision was made for a public observance of the statute, either supplementary or vicarious, in case of neglect of duty among the prebendaries or of vacancies of prebends.

Among the statutes of 1298 there is one, "*De altaristis quod dicant psalterium singulis diebus*,"⁹ which enjoins upon the altarists, or chantry priests who served at the several altars where obituary services were endowed, that they should say daily a psalter "for the bishop and chapter and for the benefactors of the church":—

"Injungimus etiam tabulario quod diligenter curam adhibeat quod altariste singulis diebus psalterium dicant pro domino episcopo et capitulo et benefactoribus ecclesie ut tenentur—quod si negligentes reperti fuerint decernimus amovendos et eorum loco alios idoneos subrogandos."

Again, forty years later, another statute of Dean Walter of London, 1338, enforces upon altarists greater exactness in fulfilling their duties, and specifies that it was their duty to say the psalter daily, "in the name of the canons":—

"Unum psalterium nomine canonicorum ecclesie Wellensis pro animabus omnium defunctorum singulis diebus dicere."¹⁰

In both cases it is implied that the obligation on their part, as well as on the part of canons, was older than these orders of the Dean and Chapter.

The chantry priests must have discharged their duty publicly, either as a body, or in portions assigned to each and separately, for their failure of attendance and observance was

(9) R. ii, f. 21. Reynolds, p. 65.

(10) Reynolds, p. 89.

to be marked down by the "tabellarius." The canons were not thereby relieved from their obligations, but provision was made that the cycle of daily prayer and praise and intercession should be completed by another body of ministers, as the vicars choral supplied the musical services of the church, either together with the canons when resident, or "in their name" when absent.

(b) How is the omission of this table from the register to be accounted for?

It is not the only document contained in these copies which is not found in the registers and documents now existing in the chapter library. There is also another very interesting table, which appears in the Lambeth copy and in each of these two copies, but not in the registers. It is entitled "*Kalendarium de coloribus vestimentorum utendis et variandis prout festa et tempora totius anni requirunt in ecclesia Wellensi.*"¹¹

It may be that these two tables were entered in one of the service books which have been lost. We have notices of destruction of muniments, episcopal and capitular, at various times of civil trouble, and the history of one of these two copies illustrates the danger of destruction, down to very late times, of service books and documents which savoured of "superstition."

In the second of the transcripts above described there are copious notes in the margin and headings to the pages in a handwriting of the eighteenth century, which, by comparison with notes in other books of the library, can be traced to one of the canons, Robert Wilson prebendary of Litton, 1742, and of Tymbrescombe, 1765, and canon residentiary. He had read, marked, and digested this copy of the statutes and Ordinal, and then purposed to consign it to destruction. On the first leaf of the book along the length of the page is this entry :

"To Robert Tudway Esq. mayor of Wells at the Old Almshouse from Robert Wilson residentiary at Wells in

(11) Reynolds, p. 95.

obedience to the act of 3. 4 Edward VI. cap x. concerning the taking away and destroying superstitious Images and books."

If this act of Edward VI., 1551, which orders that such books "are to be delivered up to the Mayor, who is to give them to the bishop to be destroyed or burned," was thus observed as late as 1765 by a member of the chapter, we can imagine what wholesale destruction of service books may have taken place two hundred years earlier under the same statute.

This book, however, escaped the fate intended for it. The mayor, or the bishop (Dr. Willes), more tolerant than the canon, probably returned it to the dean (Dr. Creswick), and it remained in the possession of the several occupants of the deanery. In 1885 it was sent to Dean Plumptre by a member of the family of Dean Ryder (dean 1812-1831, and Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry), and was restored to the library of the dean and chapter. It bears no marks of fire, only of damp and long neglect. There is reason for thinking that this is the manuscript book quoted by Chyle as "Mr. Creighton's manuscript."¹²

(c) We see that the number of the prebends among which the Psalter was distributed was fifty-three. There is another prebend mentioned, that of Bydsam (Biddisham), to which no psalms were assigned. This prebend was instituted by Bishop Robert to form a fabric fund for the Church of St. Andrew¹³—the titular prebendary was St. Andrew—the master of the schools held nominally the place of vicar.

"Bydsam prebenda Sancti Andreae, cujus vicarius est magister scholarum."

(12) Reynolds, Introduction, p. xii, quotes the late Mr. F. H. Dickinson, writing in 1871: "Chyle quotes generally from a book he called Mr. Creighton's MS., which appears to have contained copies of many of the more curious documents relating to the cathedral, which it would be very desirable to identify if it lies hid in some public library."

(13) R. i, f. 31.

In the charter of Queen Elizabeth of 1592, which confirmed the prebendaries then existing in their several possessions, the number of prebends enumerated was forty-nine. Four prebends had disappeared in the interval. The prebend of Clyva (Cleeve), attached to the Abbey of Bec in Normandy¹⁴; Ilminster, attached to Muchelney Abbey¹⁵; and Sutton to Athelney¹⁶ Abbey; had been lost at the dissolution of the religious houses. Wedmore 1st, and Biddisham had become attached to the estate of the Dean, and probably were absorbed by the Crown after the surrender of the deanery by Dean Fitzwilliam, and were not restored at the reconstitution of the deanery in 1547.

The psalms assigned to these lost prebends now remain unappropriated, viz.,

Psalms iv, v, vi, vii, which belonged to Wedmore 1st,

Psalms viii, ix, x, to Cleeve,

Psalms lxxxviii, to Ilminster,

Psalms xc, xci, xcii, xciii, to Sutton.

The assignment of the first portion of the psalter to the bishop, and the stall in the Chapter House, witness to the early and close connection between the bishop president of the whole chapter and the whole body of the chapter his council. With this exception, the psalms are assigned to prebends, not to offices or dignities, except where prebends were attached to offices.

At this time, 1298, the Dean held the prebend of Wedmore annexed to his office,¹⁷ the prebend of Huish and Brent was annexed to the Archdeaconry of Wells,¹⁸ and that of Milverton to the Archdeaconry of Taunton.¹⁹

(14) Original charter, No. 16, by Savaric.

(15) R. i, f. 41, iii, f. 384, by Savaric, 1201.

(16) R. iii, f. 49, by Savaric, before 1201.

(17) R. i, f. 58, anno 1210, by Jocelin.

(18) R. i, f. 41, by Savaric, before 1206.

(19) R. iii, f. 136, by Jocelin in 1241.

The possession of the prebend alone gave these officers and dignitaries a place and voice in chapter, and a share in the psalms to be recited by the brotherhood.

In the charter of Elizabeth, 1592, the prebend of Curry was united with and annexed to the dignity and office of the dean. Huish and Brent, and Milverton are recognised and confirmed as annexed severally to the Archdeaconries of Wells and Taunton.

(*d*) It may be added that there is a different division of the 119th Psalm (of our Prayer Book version) in the several tables of Psalms.

At Wells there were four divisions, numbered according to our Prayer Book enumeration of verses—

(*a*) 1-63 (*b*) 64-112 (*c*) 113-160 (*d*) 161-176 and Pss. 120-121.

At Salisbury, three divisions—

(*a*) 1-48 (*b*) 49-128 (*c*) 129-176, with Pss. 120-121.

At Lincoln, four divisions—

(*a*) 1-16 (*b*) 17-80 (*c*) 81-128 (*d*) 129-176.

At St. Paul's, Psalm 118 and 119 to verse 11, formed one portion, and from verse 11 to the end of Psalm 119 another.

I have confined myself to the archæological history of the usage of recitation of the Psalter by the members of the capitular body.

It is obvious that the usage witnesses to the devotional value set upon the psalms by the early church, and to the idea of brotherhood among the prebendal body. The joint recitation by the members of a religious body was felt to be a bond of union and brotherhood, as the participation in a daily and common offering of prayer and praise and intercession by the members of one body, however distant and separated by time and place. To know the psalms assigned to each prebend under the old constitution of the cathedral church, may be a help towards recognition of brotherhood among the present members of the chapter scattered throughout the diocese, and

the daily private recitation a means towards spiritual union and united intercession.

This time-honoured custom was established by the present Archbishop of Canterbury at Truro, when bishop of that see, "as a memorial of fraternal unity in work and worship, and as a spiritual intercession for the whole church"; and by Bishop Ridding in the cathedral church at Southwell, "not as a rule obligatory on the conscience, but as a help for the remembrance of their brotherhood."²⁰

(20) See an article on "Statutes of Lincoln Cathedral," in *Church Quarterly Review*, no. lxix.