
M. J. Toswell. *The Anglo-Saxon Psalter*. Medieval Church Studies 10. Turnhout: Brepols, 2014, xvi + 454 pp., 21 figures, € 100.00.

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This book, in the words of the author, “reconsiders the Anglo-Saxon psalter, attempting to resituate it more fully in our understanding as to how this book of the Bible was copied and used in Anglo-Saxon England” (38). The emphasis is on the surviving Latin psalter manuscripts, and on the role of the psalms in Old English literature. For her monograph, Professor Toswell received the Book Award for 2015 from the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists.

The Introduction deals with the “Roles and Functions of the Psalms in Anglo-Saxon England”, including subjects such as the psalms as teaching material in Latin grammar, the versions of the Latin psalter known to the English, the Old English terms for Latin *psalmus*, *psalterium* etc., and the psalms in the liturgy – would here printing just one complete specimen Office have helped

some readers better to understand their use than from the author's introduction (24–25)?

Chapter 1 is concerned with “The Psalms in the Lives of Individuals in Anglo-Saxon England”, i.e. in the works of Bede, Alfred and Ælfric. Here as elsewhere in this review it is of course impossible to mention or discuss all the aspects and details treated in the book. In this chapter, it seems notable that the author is well aware of the recent controversy about Alfred's authorship of literary works, but is inclined to ascribe the Old English prose version of the first fifty psalms to the King (75–82).

In each of the following three chapters, and in Chapter 7, we find treatments of a number of psalter manuscripts,¹ mostly written in Anglo-Saxon England, which the author has studied, and of which she presents her observations and impressions in very great detail (certainly exceeding what one expects in the modern descriptive catalogues), but she does not provide systematic descriptions. Thus in Chapter 2, “Psalter Manuscripts in Conception and Use” (95–150), she deals with the Paris Psalter (BNF 8824; 99–130), with the Salisbury Psalter (Salisbury Cathedral 150), and the Achadeus Psalter (CCCC 272, imported from France).

Even more extensive are the accounts of eleven manuscripts or fragments in Chapter 3, “The Psalms in the Material Culture of Anglo-Saxon England”, preceded by sections dealing with the psalms in architecture, sculpture, and manuscript decoration. Some readers may find that the heading of Chapter 4, “The Bilingual Psalters”, is a misnomer, for here the author exclusively deals with *glossed* books, and, after all, an interlinear gloss (i.e. a continuous gloss, even if it is on ruled lines, as in the Cambridge Psalter) is not a translation, but is meant to explain, and *to help* with translation work. The problem of the relationship of the Old English psalter glosses has occupied scholars for over a hundred years now, and Chapter 4 takes due account of this.

Chapters 5 and 6 – perhaps constituting the most important part of the book – are concerned with “The Psalms in Old English Texts”. The fifth chapter considers allusions, adaptations and translation, and draws especial attention to the not so well known transmission of the metrical psalms outside the Paris Psalter, and to the remarkable poem, probably from Canterbury, the *Kentish Psalm*. In Chapter 6, the author continues with the study of the psalms as literary sources, and with their structural echoes, with special reference to some of the Old English elegies and Cædmon's *Hymn*. Finally, in Chapter 7, she looks at “An Anglo-Saxon Perspective on some Anglo-Norman Psalters”: the St Albans Psalter at Hildes-

1 Regrettably, the Lambeth Psalter, with highly independent and innovative Old English gloss, is not among them.

heim, the Eadwig Psalter (B.L. Arundel 155), a landmark in the history of English handwriting, and the Eadwine Psalter, an English twelfth-century copy of the famous illustrated ninth-century Utrecht Psalter.

Readers will notice that the author, throughout the book, tends to refer to earlier work in her field, sometimes extensively, as in her discussion of Old English psalter glosses, with a detailed account of Evert Wiesenekker's work (235–239). This is not a disadvantage, helping those with as yet no or little knowledge of the subject to understand the course and history of previous scholarship. Regrettably, however, the pioneering studies of Anglo-Saxon psalter manuscripts by Uno Lindelöf (1904) and Karl Wildhagen (1913, 1920), and other work by them, are completely ignored by Toswell (cf. her vague remarks, pp. 131, 228), and – while no serious scholar would deny the outstanding achievement of Celia and Kenneth Sisam in their edition of the Salisbury Psalter (1959) – it is simply misleading to state that “modern study of the glossed psalters *begins*” with them (228; my emphasis). Otto Heinzel's (unconvincing) attempt at analysing the psalter gloss relationships (1926) should at least have been mentioned.

A book like *The Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, with such a wide range of topics, cannot of course meet everybody's expectations. But let me mention two subjects which recent published work (overlooked in the present book) has enabled us to understand or understand better. One has been demonstrated in an article by Richard Pfaff (1999): psalter manuscripts could include sample weeks, or sample periods, of full Offices, helping to teach, learn and comprehend the structure and contents of the Divine Office. The other is the teaching of rhetoric in Anglo-Saxon England, based on evidence from the psalms, discussed by Toswell in her treatment of Bede's *De schematibus et tropis* (47–50), and previously, more comprehensively, especially with regard to Cassiodorus' *Expositio psalmorum*, studied in the work of Gabriele Knappe (1996).

Unfortunately, the book suffers from inaccuracies, errors and unfounded claims, as will be seen in the following examples. How do we know that the psalms were sung “with accompaniment, usually and appropriately, to the psalter” (3)? The *Psalterium Romanum* “is now usually dated 84 CE” (11), and Old Latin texts “remain current in Anglo-Saxon England” (12): where is the evidence? – The discussion of the Old English terms *salm*, *sealm* etc. and their derivatives and compounds (15–17) could have been shorter and, above all, clearer by referring the reader to § 143 in Campbell's *Old English Grammar* (dealing with pertinent dialectal developments), and especially to the excellent article “*sealm*, *salm*” by Helene Feulner (2000: 335–336). – Readers will also be baffled by the quotation of Alcuin's(!) forms of OE *salm scop* etc.; obviously the forms cited are from Alfred's version of the *Cura Pastoralis* (i.e. the spellings of the scribes); Alcuin wrote in Latin (16). – MS B.L. Harley 2904 is not from Crowland

and has been confused with MS Bodleian Douce 296 (19, 404). – The Kentish translation of Psalm 50 is in MS B.L. Cotton Vespasian (not Titus) D.vi (23, 447). – The Vespasian Psalter does not contain a full hymnal (26); the selection of only three hymns on fols. 152–154 is explained in *Anglia* 75 (1957), 127–128; one of these hymns, quoted on p. 299, is *not* “generally” found in English books. – The vernacular minuscule of the Paris Psalter has of course “some distinctions in letter formation from the Latin script” (104). – The passage about books of hours (128) is literally repeated on p. 384; the explanation that these books contained “shortened versions of the Offices” is misleading. – The Achadeus Psalter, Cambridge CCC 272 (140), has been confidently ascribed to Rheims by Bernhard Bischoff and others; see Rebecca Rushforth’s article (2009) listed on p. 432. – Francis Wormald in 1934 edited the calendars from Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, not the litanies (170).

On Harley MS 863 (192–197): this is a typical treatment of a psalter manuscript in this book, with numerous details about script, initials, punctuation, decoration, but incomplete and unsatisfactory descriptions of the contents; thus we read to our surprise that “at about Psalm 118, the antiphons disappear”, but previously we have only heard about “opening versicles for some psalms” (193). The “eight-fold Benedictine division of the psalter [is] not followed here” (196), as one would expect in a book for a community at a secular cathedral (Exeter). The “service material”, of some importance, in fact consists of the ‘Sample Week’ of the Office (see above), followed by (incomplete) Nocturns of the Office of the Dead, here ignored. The *oratio post psalterium* “Liberator animarum mundi redemptor”, on fol. 118r–v, “not appearing elsewhere in these psalter manuscripts” according to the author (196), is actually found in such books: Arundel 60, Arundel 155, Douce 296, and the English import from France, Galba A. xviii (as well as in continental manuscripts).

Of MS Cambridge University Library Ff.5.27, the author (178–180) has confused fol. i, a flyleaf from a seventh/eighth-century psalter written in Northumbria, and fol. 1, the first leaf of an eleventh/twelfth-century copy of the *Paradisus* by Heraclides. As a result, the reproduction of fol. 1r on p. 179 (Figure 7) shows the first page of the *Paradisus*, for which, however, the caption by the author reads “Psalter fragment. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.5.27, fol. 1r”. – Under the heading “Psalters in Anglo-Saxon Bibles”, the author describes the psalter in “the Royal Bible (London, British Library, MS Royal 1.E.vi)” (187), a two-volume tenth-century (really s. x/xi) Bible from Canterbury. As it turns out, Royal 1.E.vi is a ninth-century Gospel Book (from a Bible?) and not what Toswell describes on pp. 187–189, incidentally first calling it a deluxe manuscript and then denying this. In fact, her psalter is in a Bible with the shelfmarks Royal 1.E.vii and 1.E.viii; these, however, occur nowhere in the present book. To add to the confu-

sion, footnote 88 on p. 188 refers to Mildred Budny's important thesis, this time a work about the real Royal 1.E.vi, which has nothing to do with Toswell's two-volume Bible. – MS Rouen B. M. A.44 "ends with a hymnal, including its own set of canticles" (203), i.e. a set of monastic canticles, as always quite independent of the hymnal, and recorded in Korhammer's standard work (1976: xvi), not here consulted. – There is no sacramentary in MS CCCC 391 (206), nor is this book defined as a manual by Sarah Larratt Keefer, as we are made to believe (380).

We are told that the Latin in the psalter MS B.L. Stowe 2 "is a good open vernacular minuscule" (i.e., in insular handwriting), on p. 255, but it is quite clear from the facsimile on the preceding p. 253 that the script is English Caroline minuscule, nor is the Old English gloss in square minuscule. Conversely we find that the Latin of MS Royal 2.B.v, the famous Royal Psalter, "is written in a large and very good English Caroline Minuscule hand" (262), yet two pages further on the reproduction of fol. 25r clearly shows us an excellent square minuscule; the definition of the same scribe's handwriting in MS Royal 4 A.xiv, on p. 267, is no better. There is no word about the script of two more manuscripts treated in the same chapter (Cambridge UL Ff.1.23; B.L. Add. 37517). – The discussion of the *Vita* of Mary of Egypt in Chapter 5 begins with the transmission of its Latin text in Anglo-Saxon England, here thoroughly misunderstood. We are told that it survives in three manuscripts of Paul the Deacon's Latin homiliary (288). Now this *Vita* has nothing to do with the Carolingian scholar and his homiliary (where one would not expect a saint's life anyhow). What we have is the Latin version by the ninth-century Paulus Diaconus of Naples, based on a Greek original. This version is extant in England in three collections of saints' lives; two are copies of the well-known Cotton-Corpus legendary (B.L. Cotton Nero E.i; Salisbury Cathedral 221), the third is the late (s. xi/xii) collection in B.L. Cotton Claudius A.i, fols. 41–157 (often misdated and not properly distinguished from fols. 5–36 of the book). – The date of the original part of the Bosworth Psalter, B.L. Add. 37517, is variously given as tenth or eleventh century (275, 365). – The English psalter formerly at St. Petersburg, MS O.v.I.45, is no longer "a mystery" (381); what is known about the book, now lost, has been recorded in Gneuss (2008: 418–419).

The Anglo-Saxon Psalter is a volume in the series "Medieval Church Studies"; it seems surprising that the Editorial Board of this series and their referees (see p. 455, unnumbered, on their principles and standards) should not have noticed such points, and many others, and not have discussed them with the author.

In her Preface (x), Professor Toswell notes "the relative dearth of scholarship on the Anglo-Saxon psalms and the psalter". Her book would appear to speak against this, and certainly so its 35-page Bibliography, to which a few items could be added that are relevant and essential for the subject: the indispensable handbook by Andrew Hughes (1982); the critical edition of the *Psalterium Gallicanum*

in the Vatican edition of the Vulgate (1953), recording, unlike the edition of 1994 by Weber and Gryson (cited p. 12, n. 28), the readings of the Eadwine Psalter; the thorough description of the Paris Psalter by Birgit Ebersperger (1999: 92–103); the chapter on the *Kentish Psalm* by Ursula Kalbhen (2003: 110–113); the important work on the Royal Psalter by William J. Davey (1979, 1987). – The great repertory of manuscript colophons is by the *Bénédictines*(!) of Bouveret (411).

Readers sharing the enthusiasm for psalm studies with Professor Toswell may find much of interest to them in *The Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, but the book can hardly be considered a ‘reference guide’, even though the author believes “it may well serve such a purpose” (38), and notwithstanding earlier reviews in *Speculum* 90 (2015): 1175–1176, and *Parergon* 32 (2015): 399–400.

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