Canticles Divine

Volume 2

being

The complete and unaltered text of

21 Psalms

in the form of

Musical Settings

arranged for

Mixed chorus

(Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass)

Composed by

Frederick Steinruck

&

Michael E. Owens

All selections are in the Public Domain

"Canticle" means "song." The two words could be used as synonyms, though "canticle" is slightly more specific, referring to a lyric which is not metrical and does not rhyme, but which is in all other ways quite poetic. The book of Psalms is not in meter nor is it rhymed, in Hebrew or in translation. But it is certainly poetic; in fact, it is divine poetry. Prompted by a line from the hymn "When Morning Gilds the Skies," Fred Steinruck and I have adopted a working title for these settings of Scripture to music: "Be this, while life is mine, my CANTICLE DIVINE."

Anyone who has seen our first project, PSALM 119 (first printed 2002), will know what sort of music we have to offer. This sequel is not much more adventuresome. We want settings that are 1. prose, 2. complete, 3. simple enough for congregational use, and 4. musically interesting. And finding almost nothing that meets those criteria by our definitions, we've taken the project in hand ourselves.

In reading and research over the past two years, however, I've begun to realize that there already exists a genre of music following that description, though not large or well known, called "through-composed" vocal music. Even so, what others have taken to be complete and simple, etc., varies so much than what we've done here still appears to be quite rare. However, our last project was rather well-received by a diverse audience within the Christian faith. The project appeared worth continuing, and we have continued it.

A few notes all musical style, and on textual selection, then, to explain where this project stands in relation to others.

There are two places one could start, in writing music for a text. One can start from the words, and adapt the music to fit them. Or one can start with the music, and adapt the words to fit it. On the text-driven end of the spectrum, we have various types of chant—plainchant, Anglican chant, and so on—where the text is basically recited on a few musical tones. Also at this end are many of the through-composed Psalms I have found. In these, the words form the music into their image. On the music-driven end, we have a metrical hymn setting, or a more complex chorus piece. Here, the plain form of the words is altered to fit the music, either by making the metrical, or by repeating them in certain phrases.

Both can be done well or done poorly, and both have their uses. But neither was our goal. We aim for the midpoint on that spectrum. For our ideal the musical phrases would all be well-constructed and connected. The music should remain cogent even if the words were removed. And at the same time, each phrase of music should fit each line of words in natural speech-rhythm and in contour (rise and fall), so that the rhythm of the words would remain intact apart from the melody, and the contour would be authentic even with a brisker rhythm. The text would thus determine a large part of the rhythm and the melodic contour, and this text/melody combination would determine the harmony. And since the words and rhythms are not very complex, I believe the melodies and harmonies need not be complex either—no more than an average congregation could sing with a half-dozen tries.

This is the prize. Perhaps neither of us has achieved it here, but this is our best at this point. Hopefully as we learn, our settings will improve along those lines.

As you become familiar with these 22 settings, it will be clear that even in that narrow field, Fred and I have different approaches. We both aim for the center of the spectrum, but Fred comes from the musical end and I from the textual end. He writes great tunes loosely based on the feeling of a textual section, and bends the text to the melody lines. You might call it "music, with words." I find this reproach very pleasing to listen to, but not the best for memorizing. He must then bear with me as I harmonize it, because I make suggestions for changing the tune to fit the specific words, and many good-natured arguments ensue. (Psalm 84 has been through the mill in this respect.)

By contrast, I take a specific text and sing it the way I would say it, exaggerating and extending the natural speech rhythm and inflection. This creates melodies which may not be quite as interesting, and risk being disjointed. But I think this approach works better for memorizing. You might call it "words, with music." (Unfortunately, there is no one to temper my shortcomings.)

The other difference between my settings and Fred's is in the choice of text. We both have chosen translations which are formally equivalent (non-interpretational), and non-text-critical. But while he prefers the classic sound of the 1611 version and I argue trenchantly for a current translation into our language, the *New King James*, I hope no one will turn down either version because it's not really the Word of God. Neither is the original inspired Hebrew, but either is closer to God's Word than the text of any other music you could sing.

Lastly, I've been asked a number of times, "What style of music is it?" The true answer is, "Practice style." This is tonal music written by two people who scarcely know the first lesson in melody and harmony writing beyond the hymns we grew up with. it can't be said to fit into any class other than Music Composition 101.

(The exception is Psalm 93, my brief fling into the modern "Praise" style. I'm afraid it's not well enough crafted to excite anyone who really enjoys that genre, but is probably distinctive enough to repel those who don't! Either way, don't worry. It's short and I don't intend to try it again.)

But hopefully, this is just the beginning of the road. One hundred twenty-eight Psalms remain to be set, not to mention other poetic passages of Scripture. How many can we complete? Can we improve our technique quickly enough to tackle the longer psalms before we die? We welcome encouragement and criticism, and we press on.

For God's sole glory,
Michael E. Owens
September, 2003

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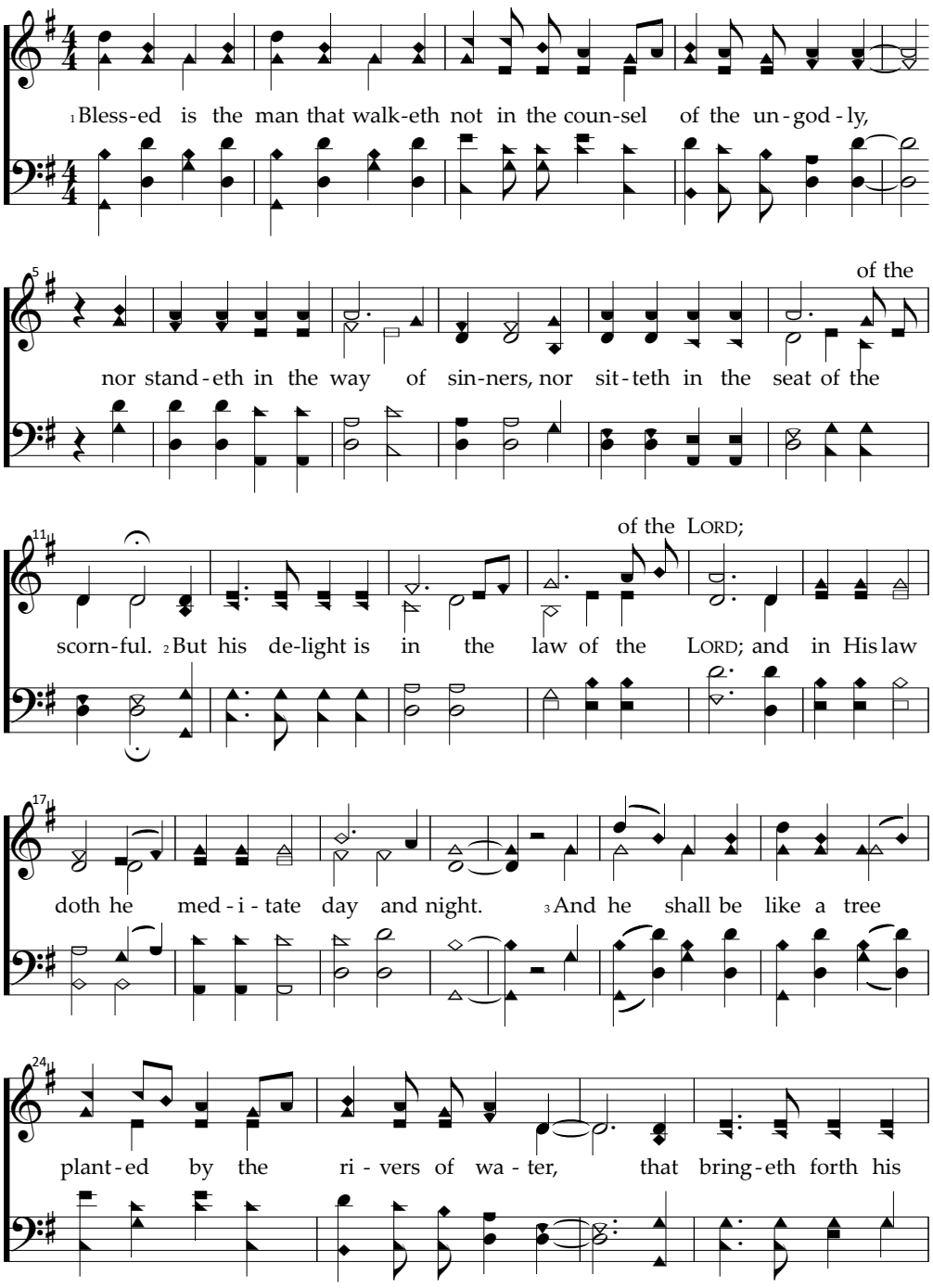
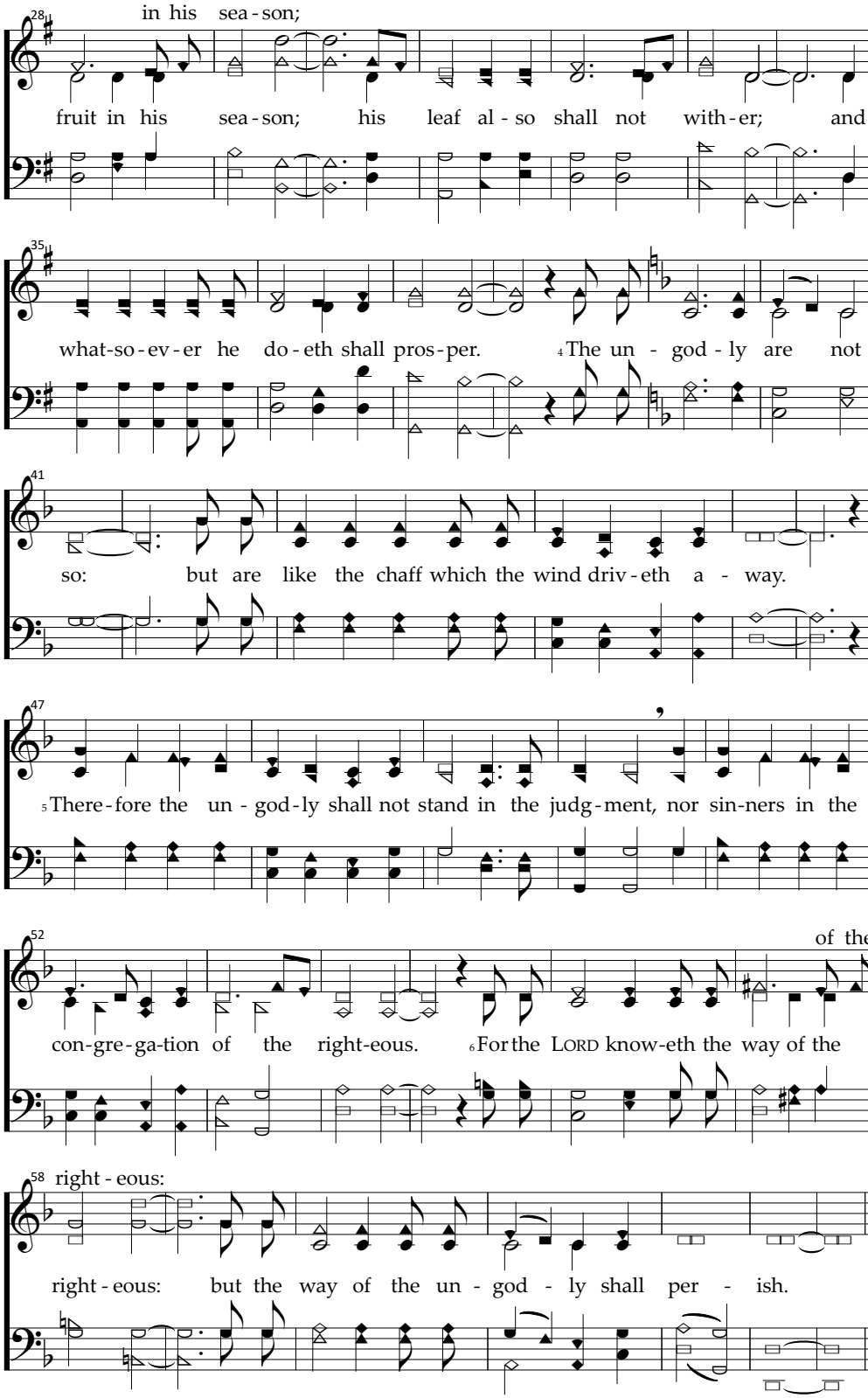
Psalm 1

King James Version

Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002

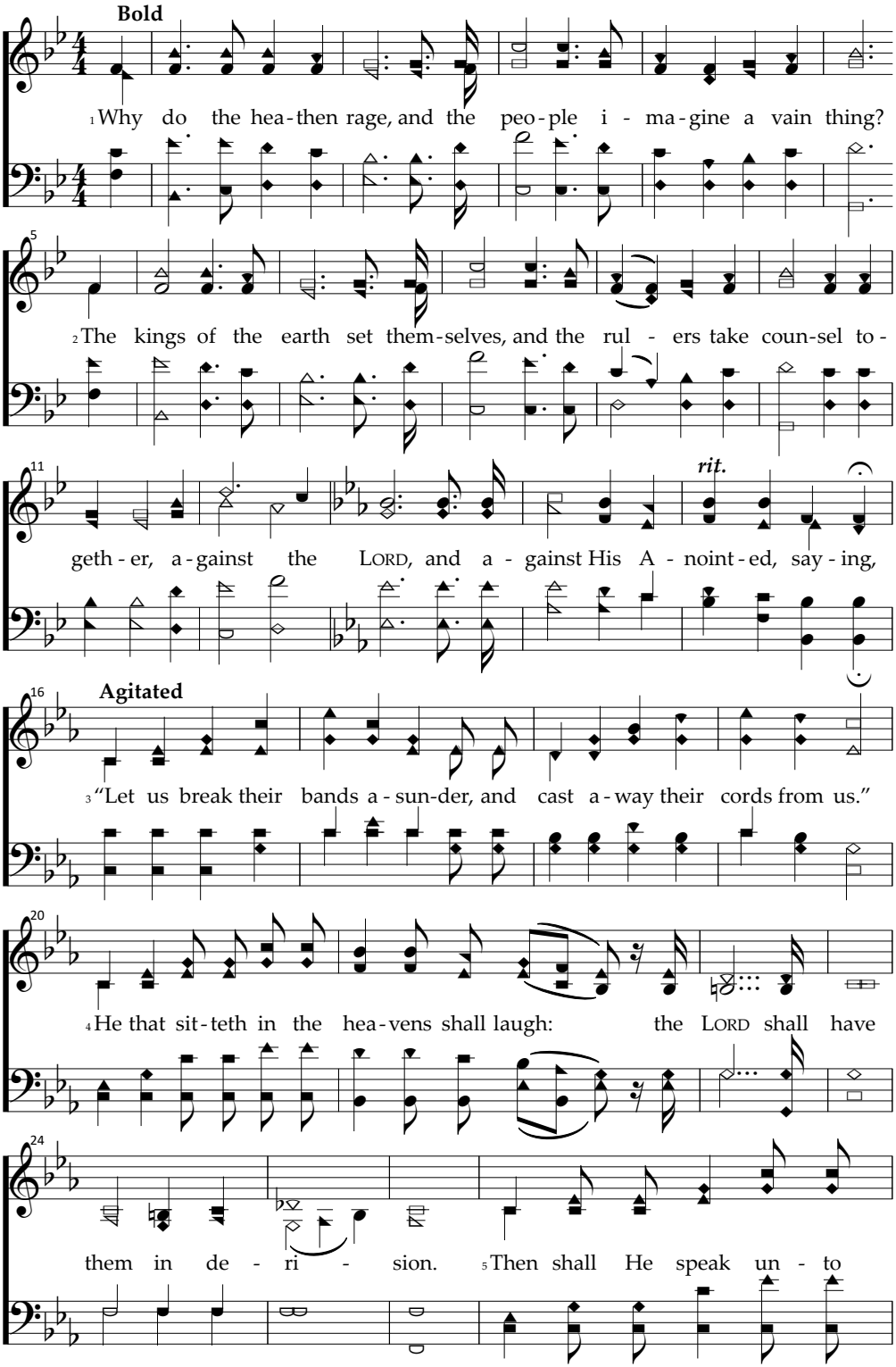


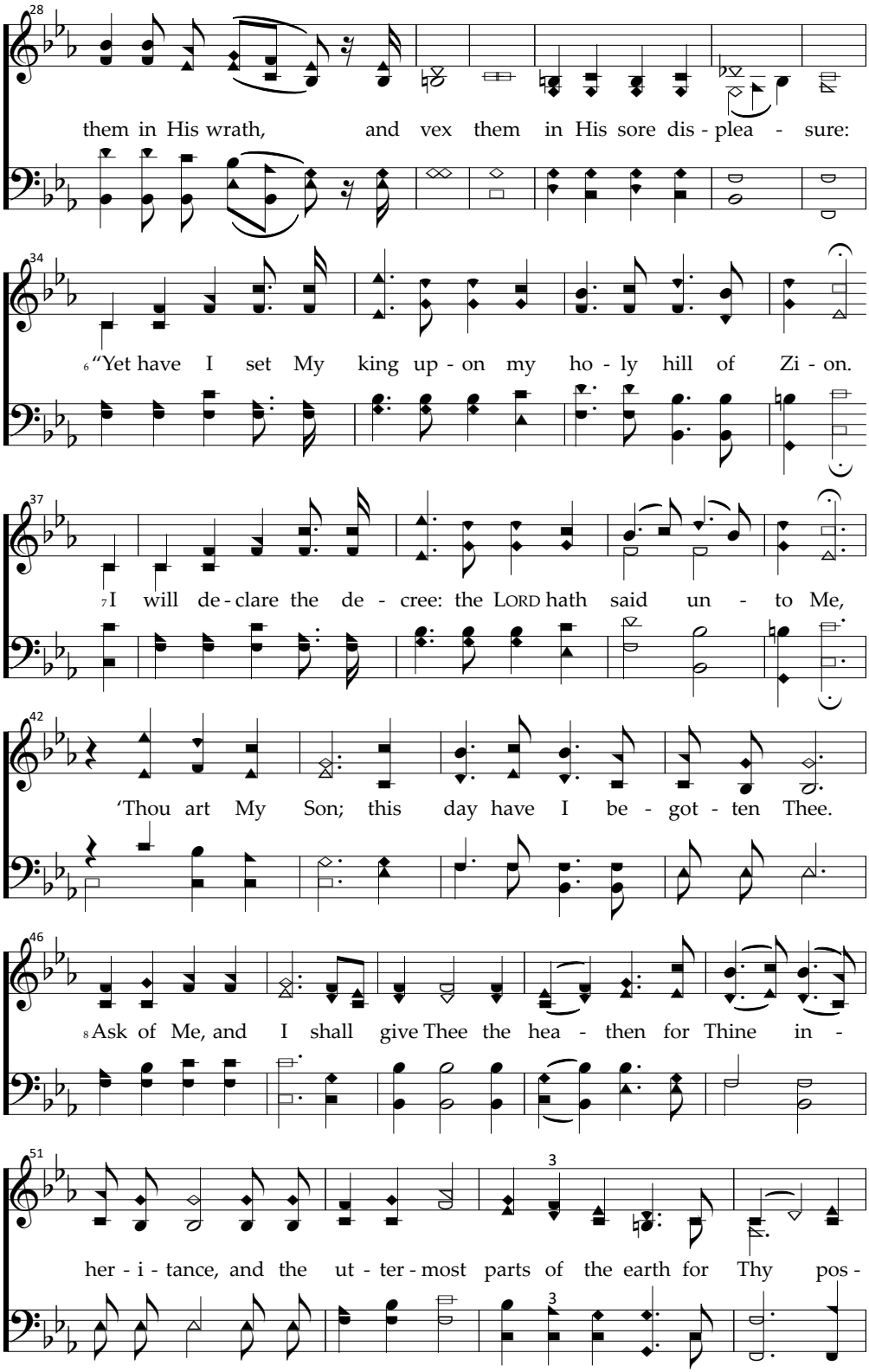

28 in his sea - son;
fruit in his sea - son; his leaf al - so shall not with - er; and
35
what-so-ev-er he do - eth shall pros - per. 4 The un - god - ly are not
41
so: but are like the chaff which the wind driv - eth a - way.
47
5 There - fore the un - god - ly shall not stand in the judg - ment, nor sin-ners in the
52 of the
con-gre-ga-tion of the right-eous. 6 For the LORD know-eth the way of the
58 right - eous:
right - eous: but the way of the un - god - ly shall per - ish.

King James Version

Psalm 2

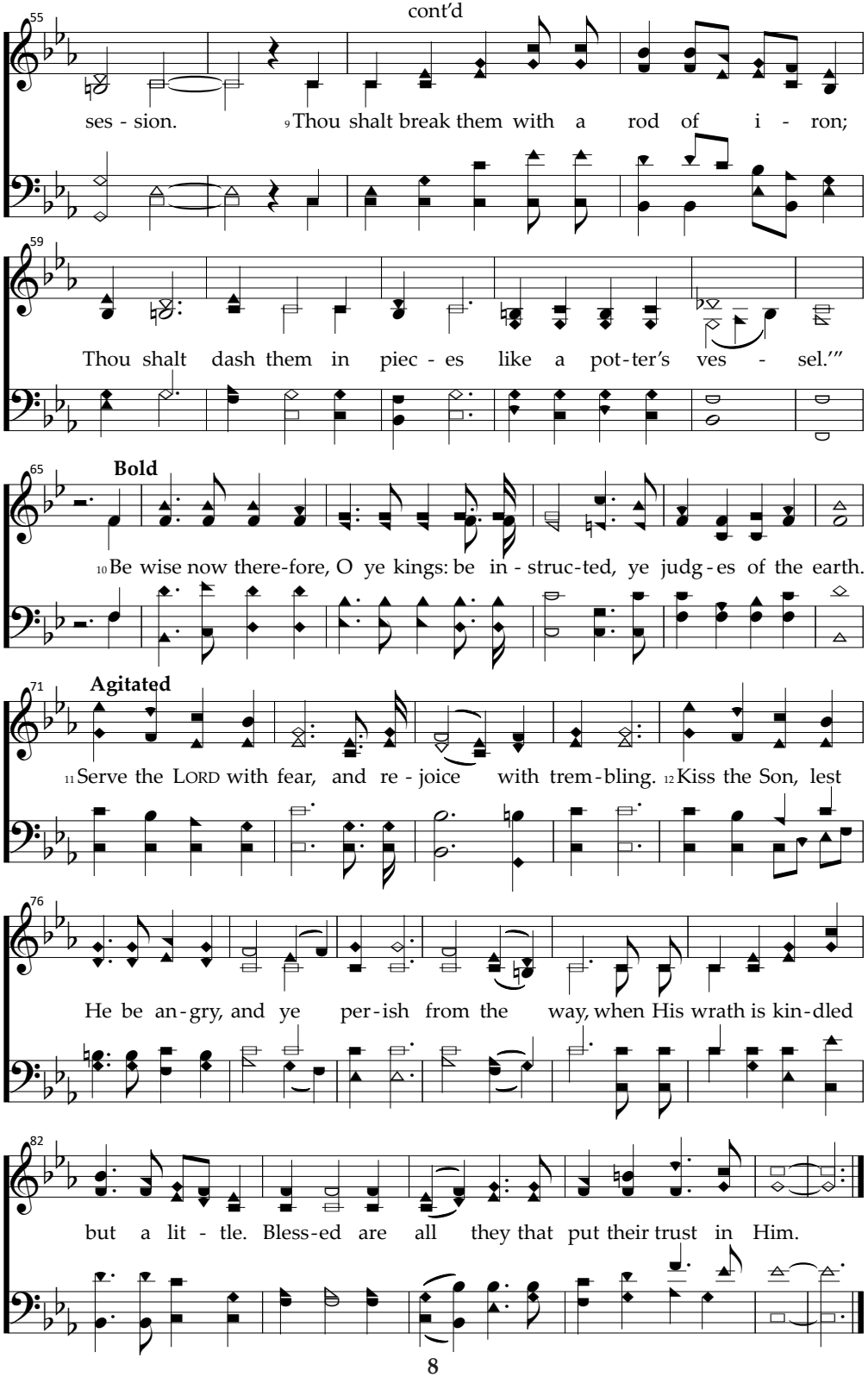
Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002




28
them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore dis - plea - sure:
34
6 "Yet have I set My king up - on my ho - ly hill of Zi - on.
37
7 I will de - clare the de - cree: the LORD hath said un - to Me,
42
'Thou art My Son; this day have I be - got - ten Thee.
46
8 Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the hea - then for Thine in -
51
3
her - i - tance, and the ut - ter - most parts of the earth for Thy pos -
3

Psalm 2

cont'd



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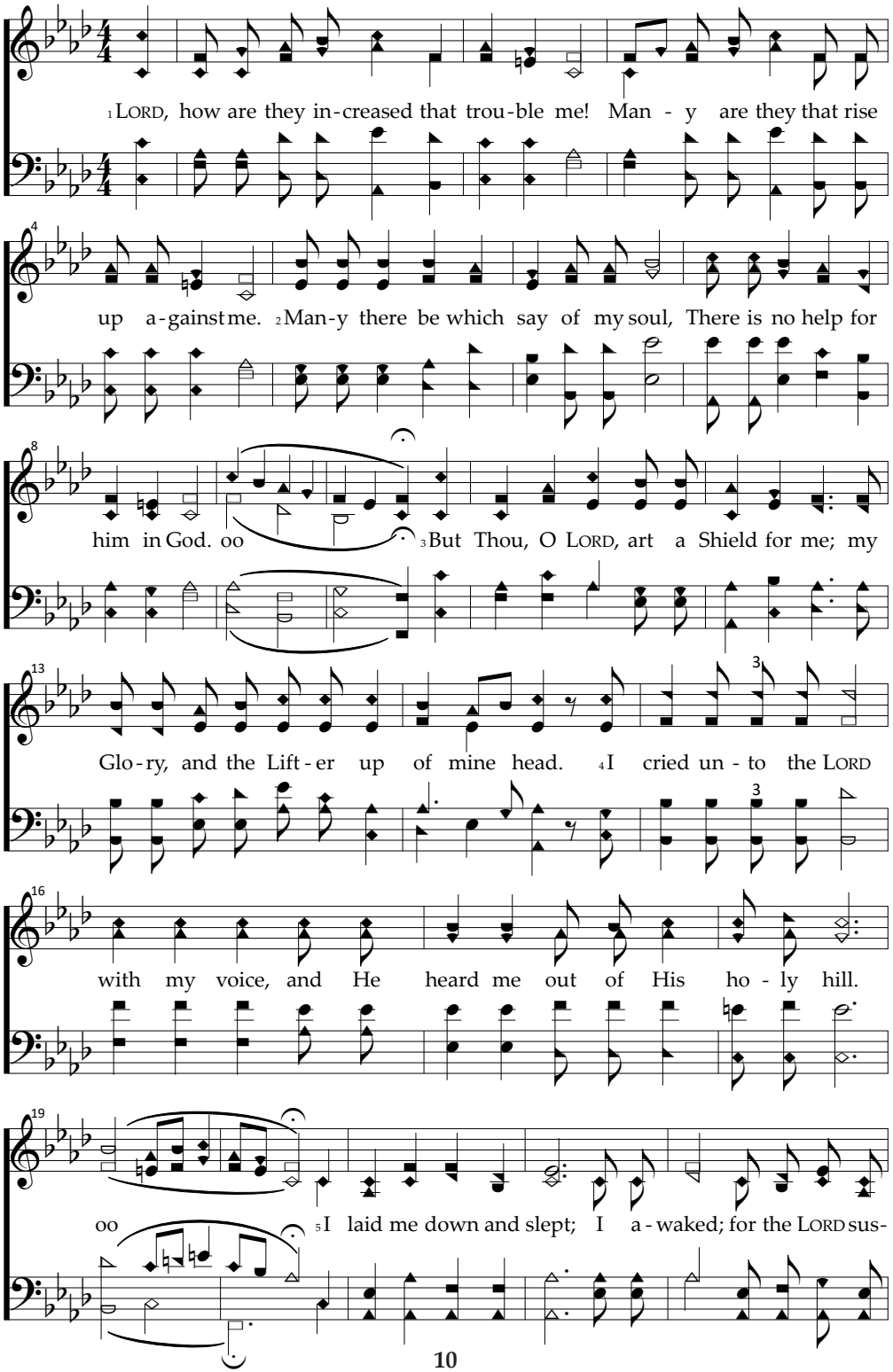
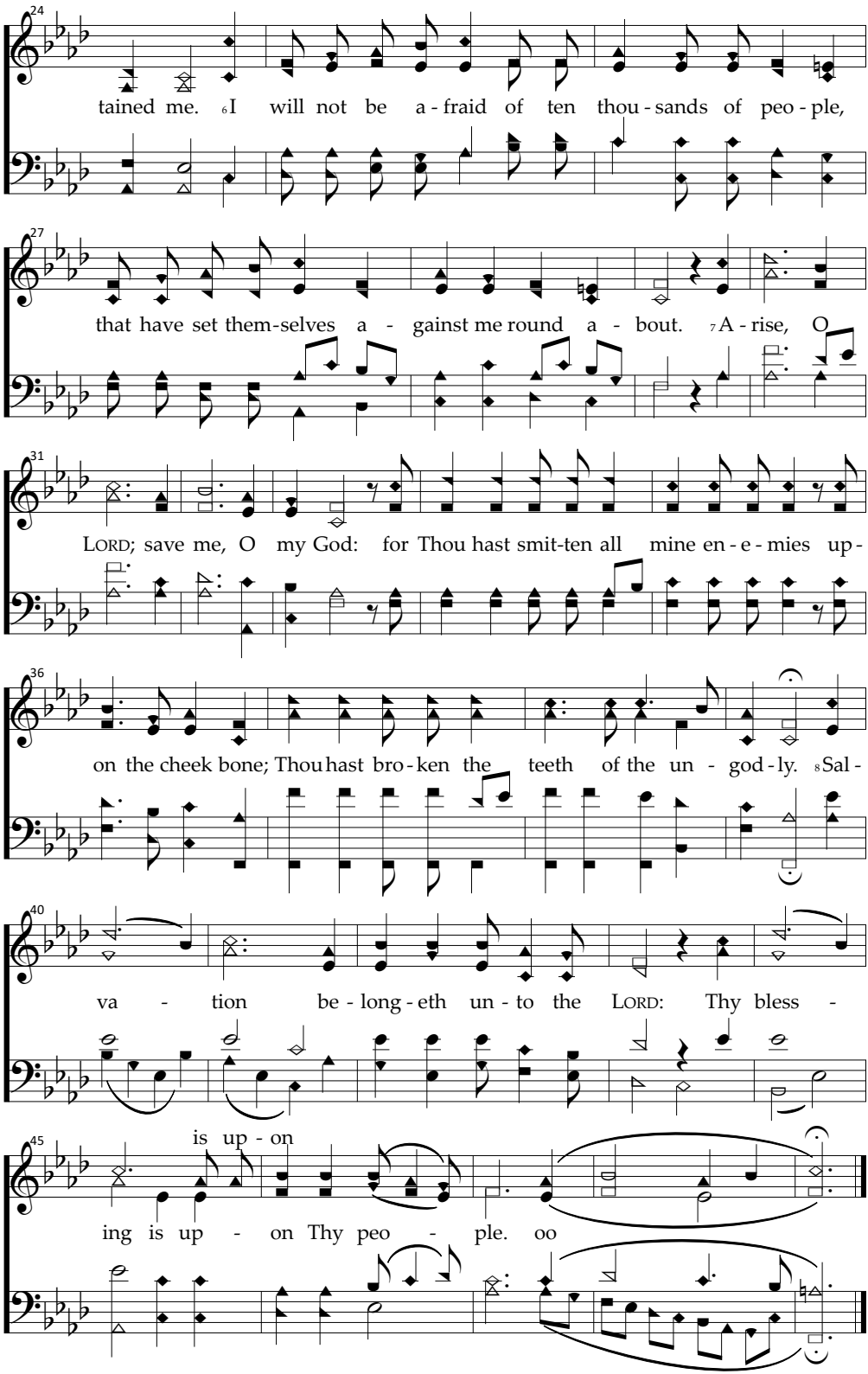
Psalm 3

King James Version

A Psalm of David
when he fled from Absalom his son

Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002



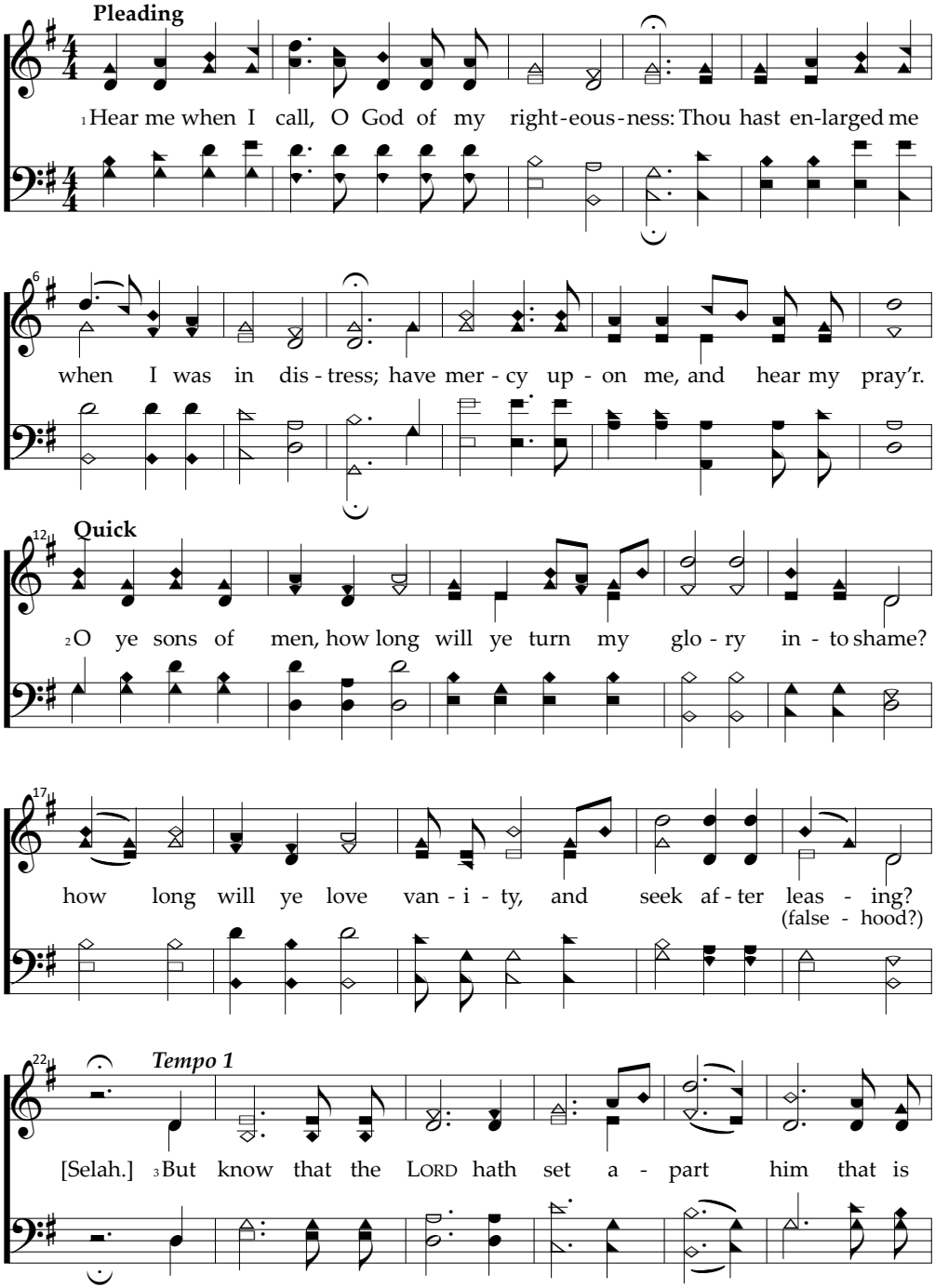

24
tained me. 6I will not be a - fraid of ten thou - sands of peo - ple,
27
that have set them-selves a - gainst me round a - bout. 7A - rise, O
31
LORD; save me, O my God: for Thou hast smit-ten all mine en - e - mies up -
36
on the cheek bone; Thou hast bro - ken the teeth of the un - god - ly. 8Sal -
40
va - tion be - long - eth un - to the LORD: Thy bless -
45
is up - on
ing is up - on Thy peo - ple. oo

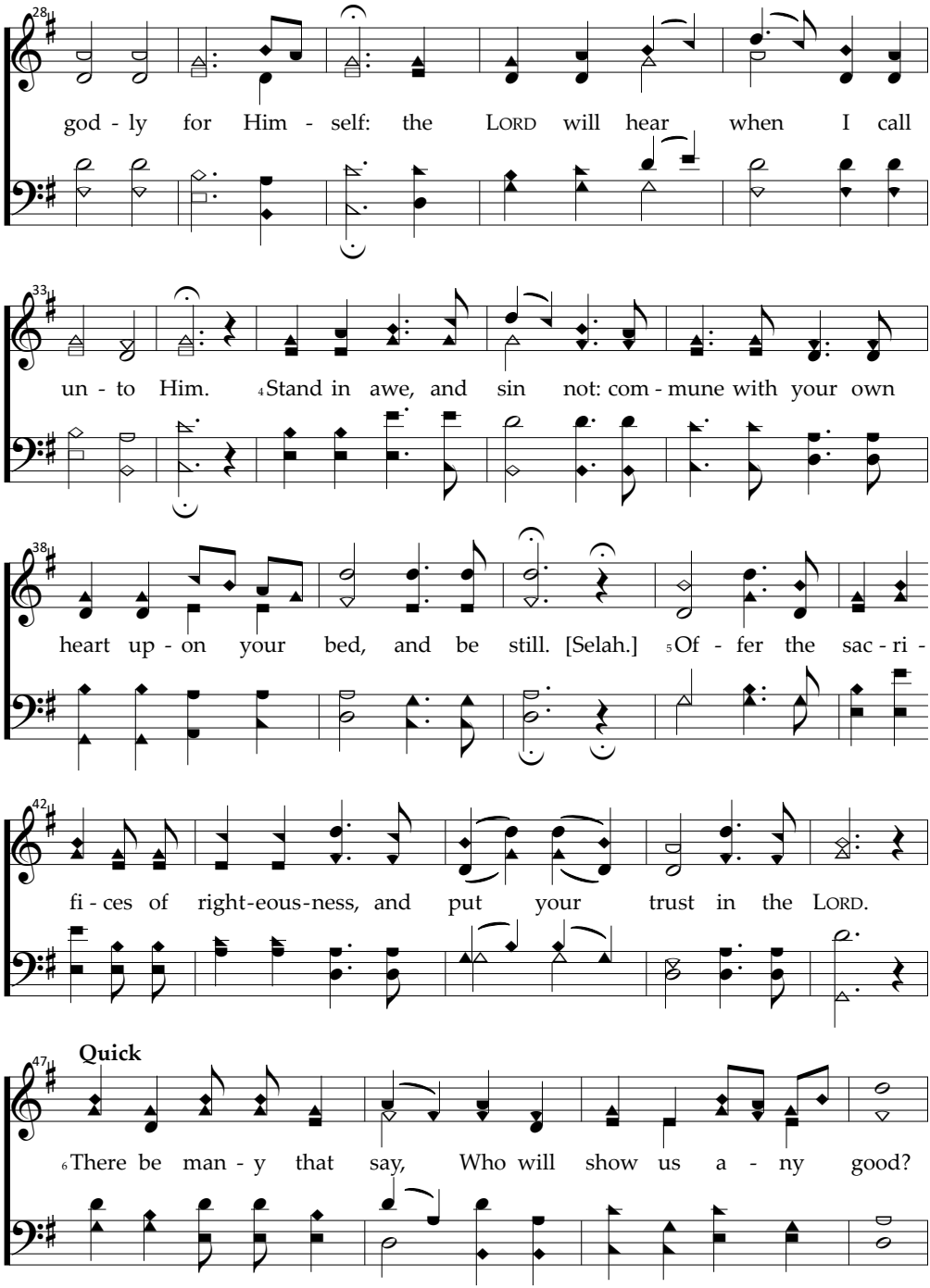
Psalm 4

King James Version

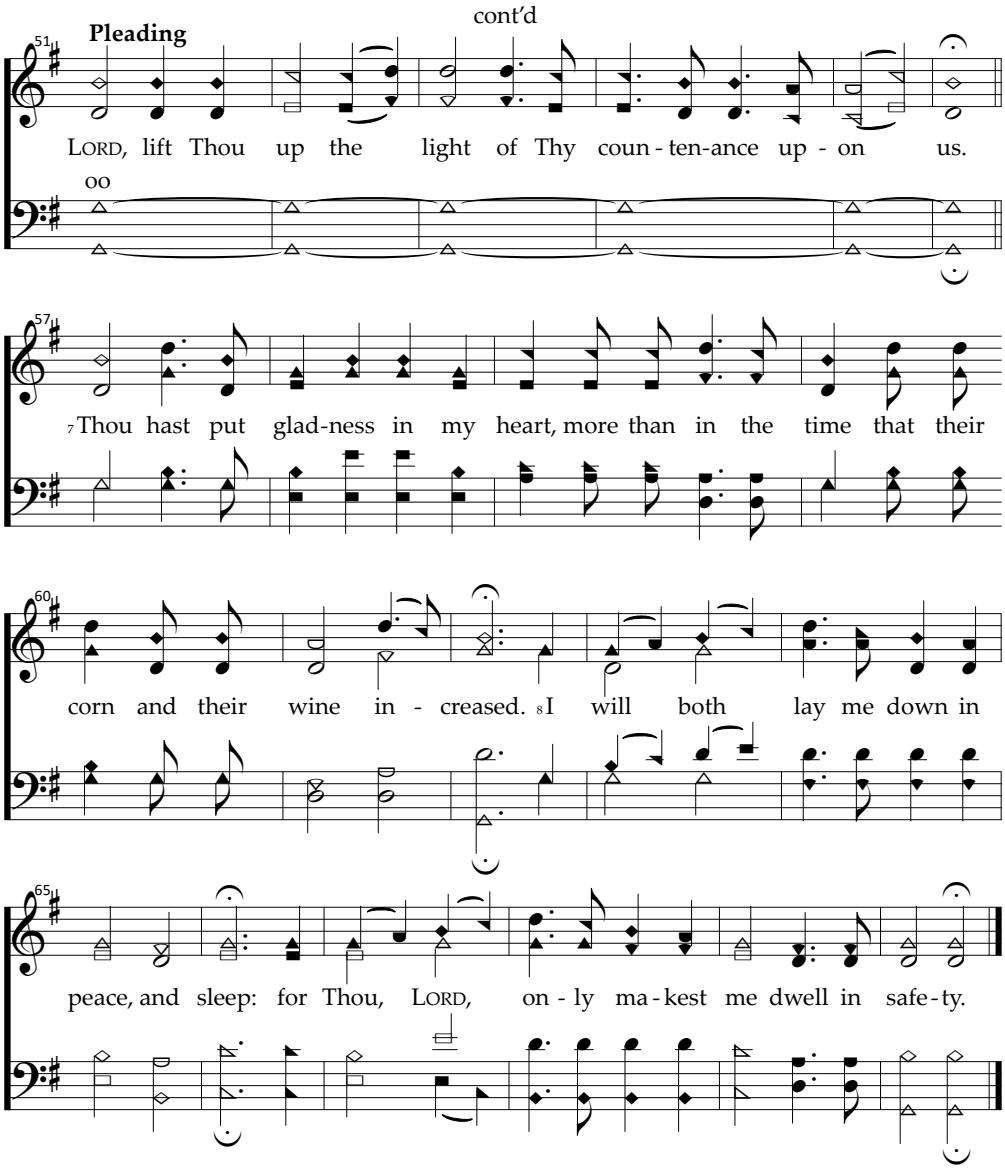
To the chief Musician on Neginoth,
A Psalm of David.

Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002




28
god - ly for Him - self: the LORD will hear when I call
33
un - to Him. 4 Stand in awe, and sin not: com - mune with your own
38
heart up - on your bed, and be still. [Selah.] 5 Of - fer the sac - ri -
42
fi - ces of right-eous-ness, and put your trust in the LORD.
47
Quick
6 There be man - y that say, Who will show us a - ny good?

Psalm 4

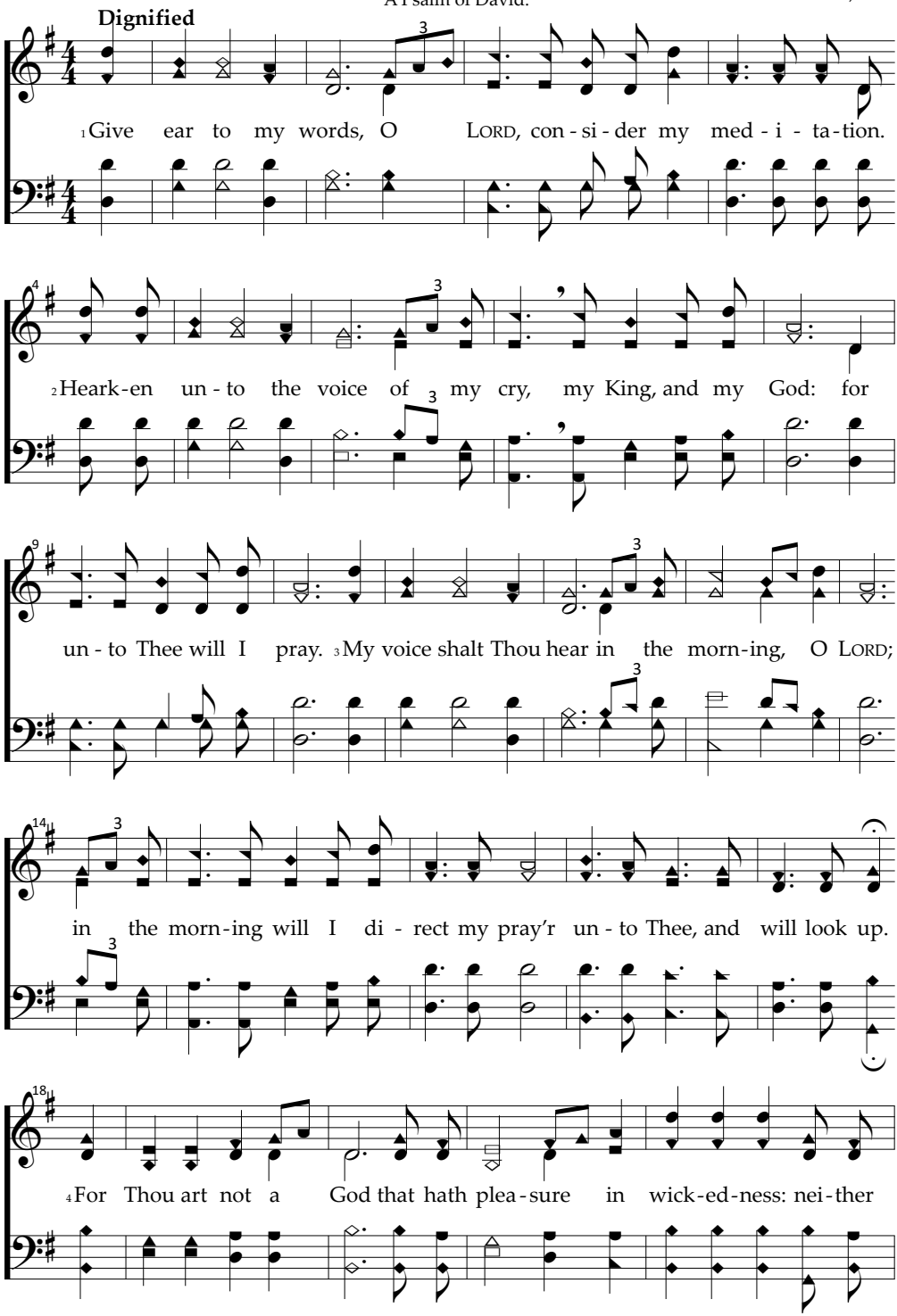

cont'd
Pleading
51
LORD, lift Thou up the light of Thy coun - ten-ance up - on us.
oo
57
7 Thou hast put glad-ness in my heart, more than in the time that their
60
corn and their wine in - creased. 8 I will both lay me down in
65
peace, and sleep: for Thou, LORD, on - ly ma - kest me dwell in safe - ty.

Psalm 5

King James Version

To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth,
A Psalm of David.

Frederick Steinruck, 2002
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2003



Psalm 5

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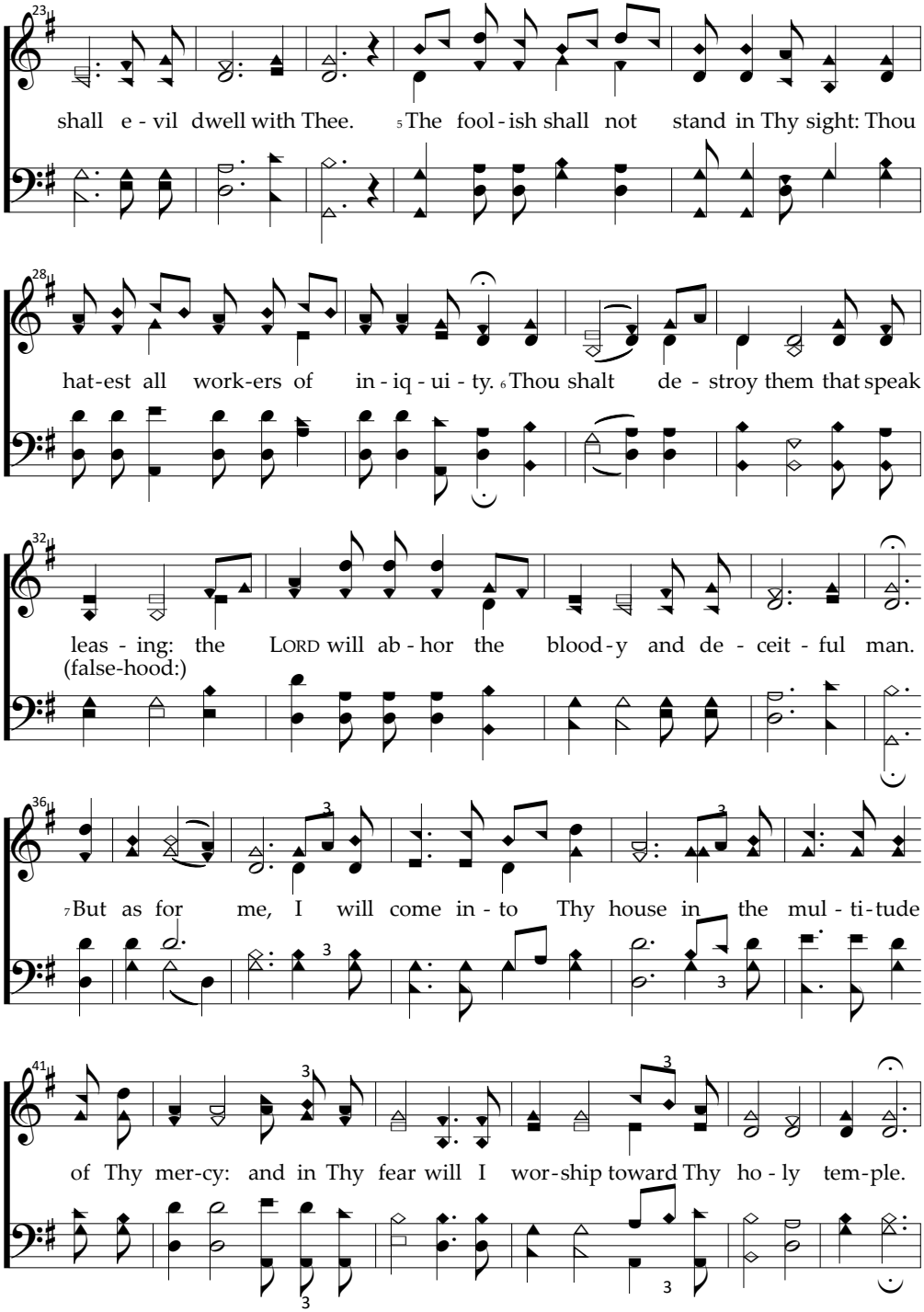

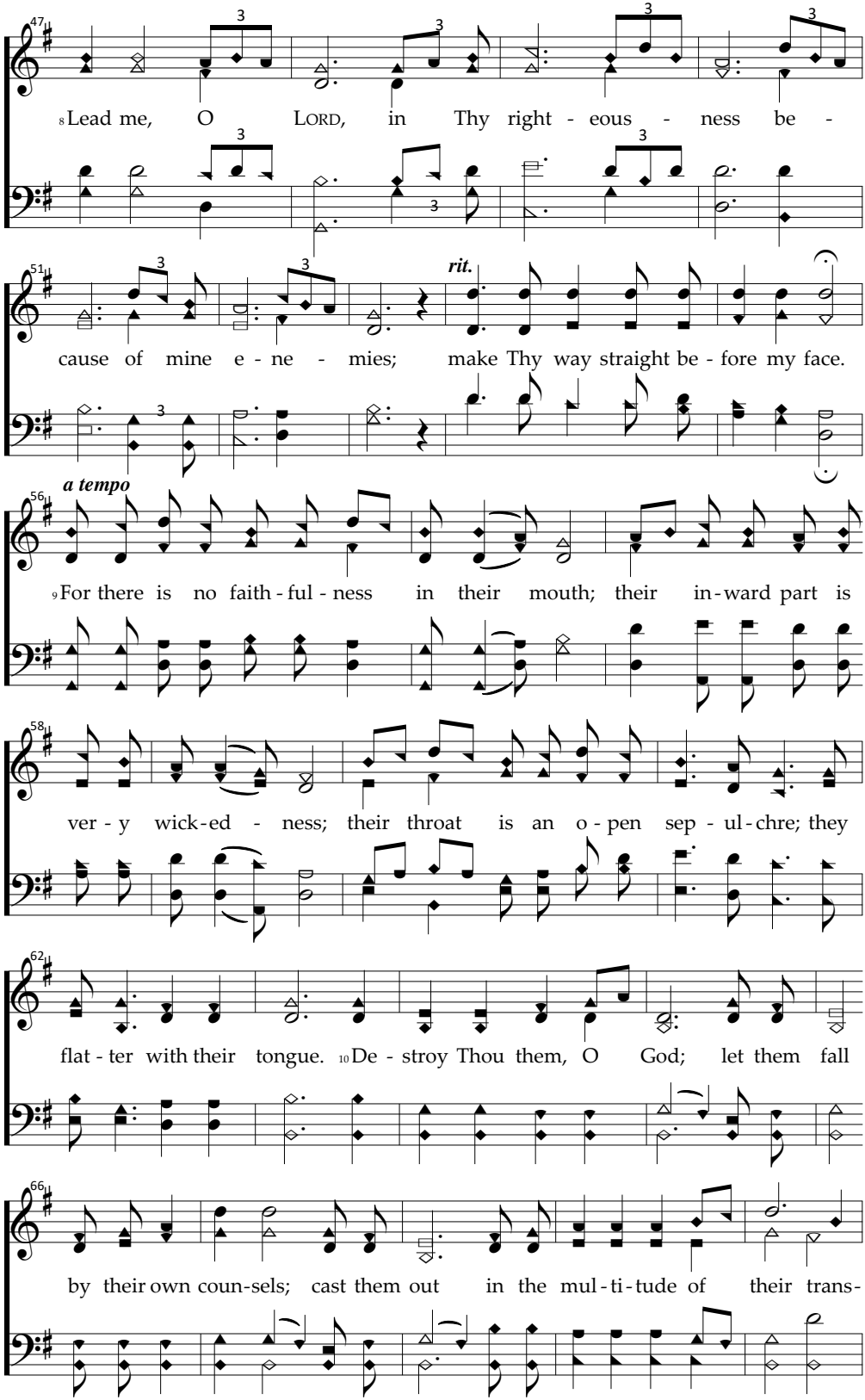
47
8 Lead me, O LORD, in Thy right - eous - ness be -
51
cause of mine e - ne - mies; make Thy way straight be - fore my face.
rit.
a tempo
56
9 For there is no faith - ful - ness in their mouth; their in - ward part is
58
ver - y wick - ed - ness; their throat is an o - pen sep - ul - chre; they
62
flat - ter with their tongue. 10 De - stroy Thou them, O God; let them fall
66
by their own coun - sels; cast them out in the mul - ti - tude of their trans -

Psalm 5

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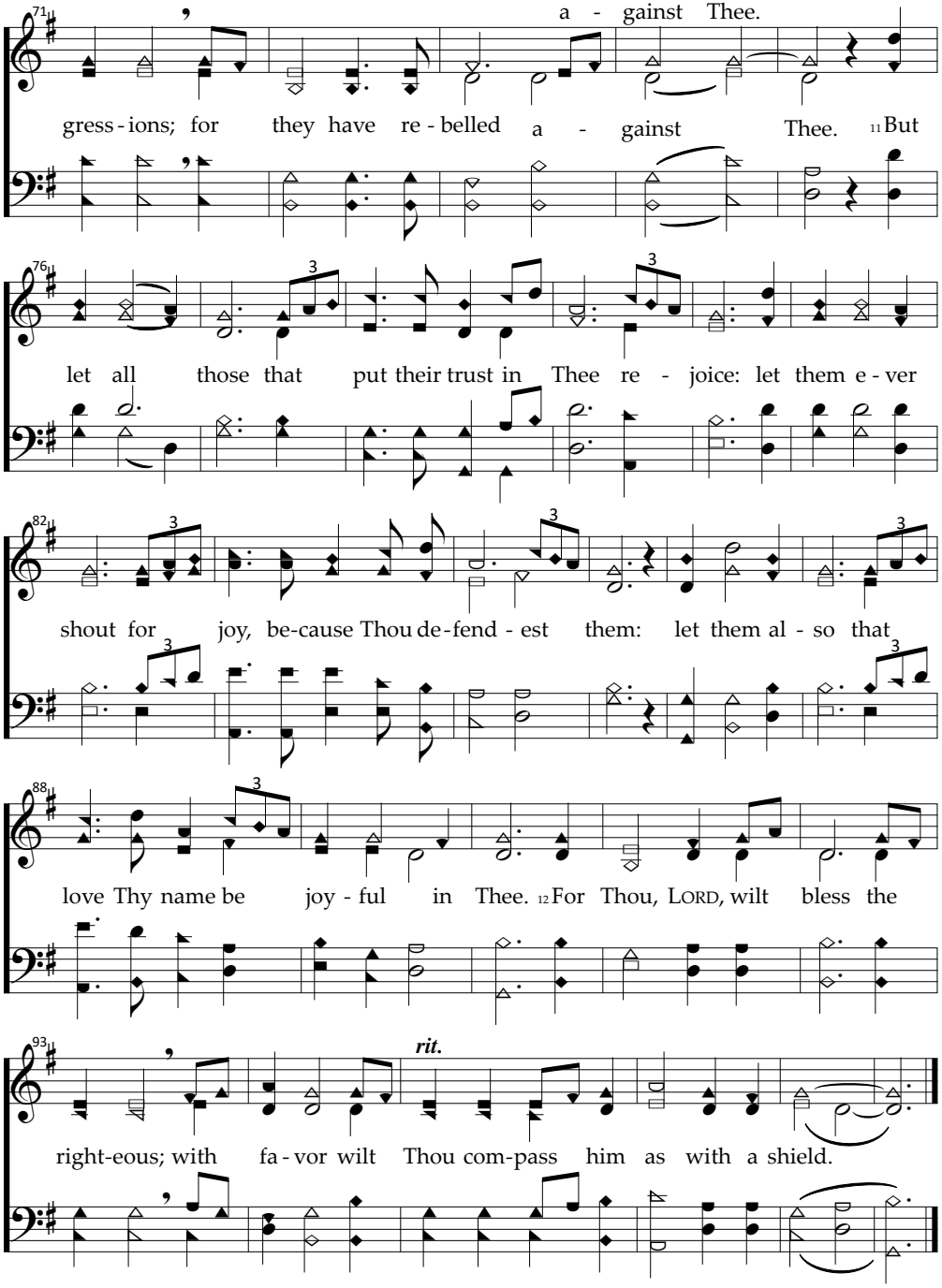
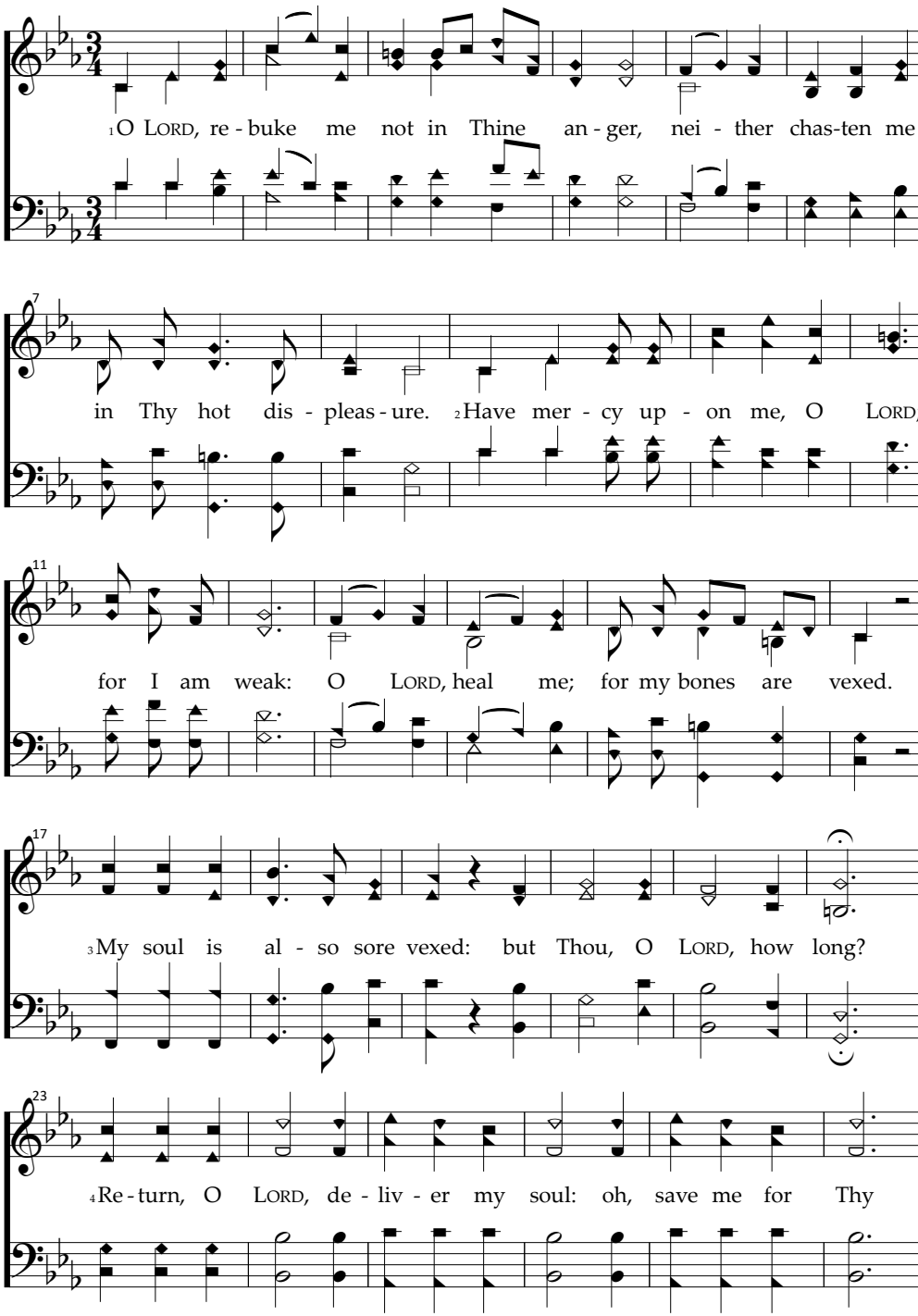


Psalm 6

King James Version

To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith,
A Psalm of David.

Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002



Psalm 6

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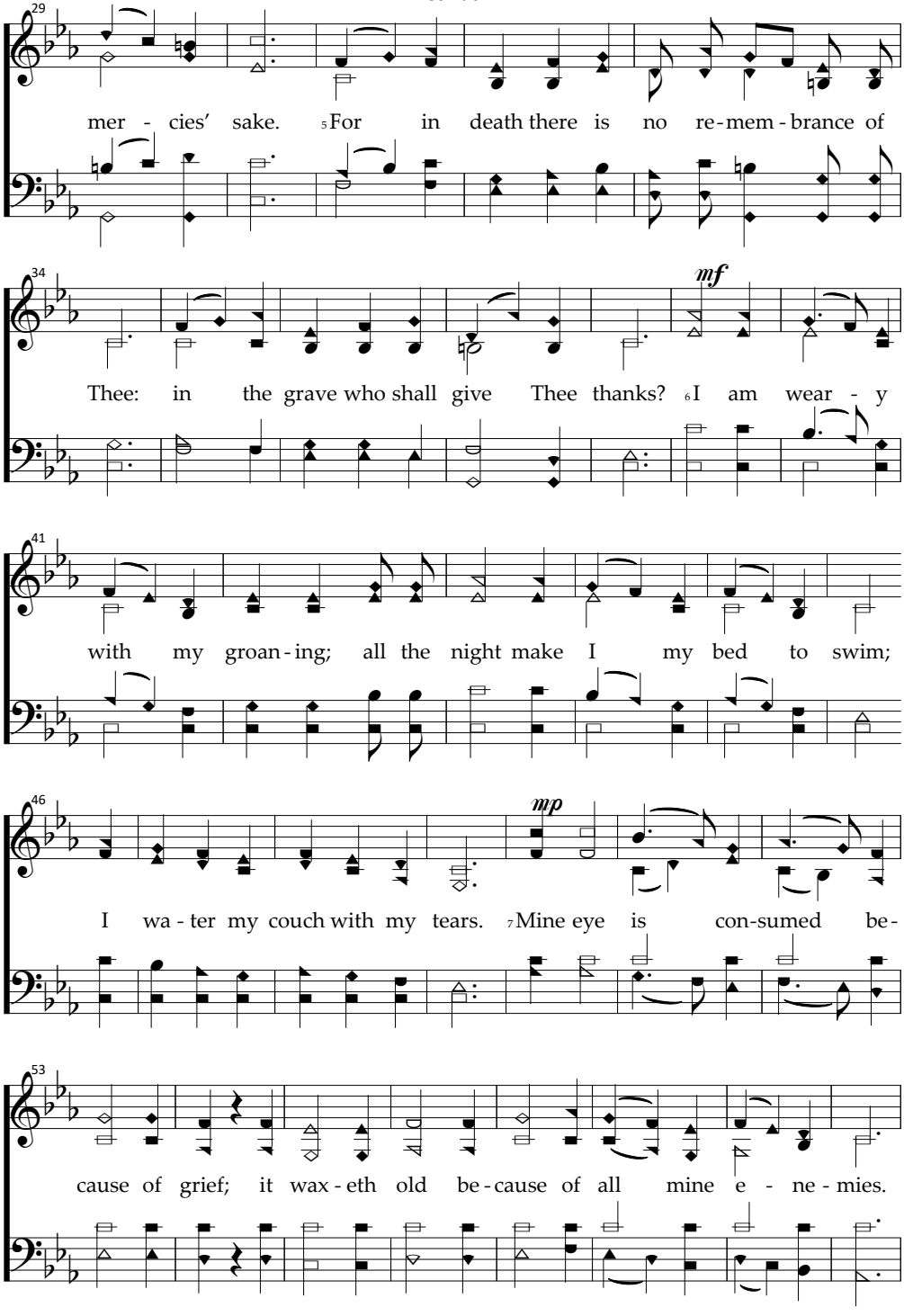
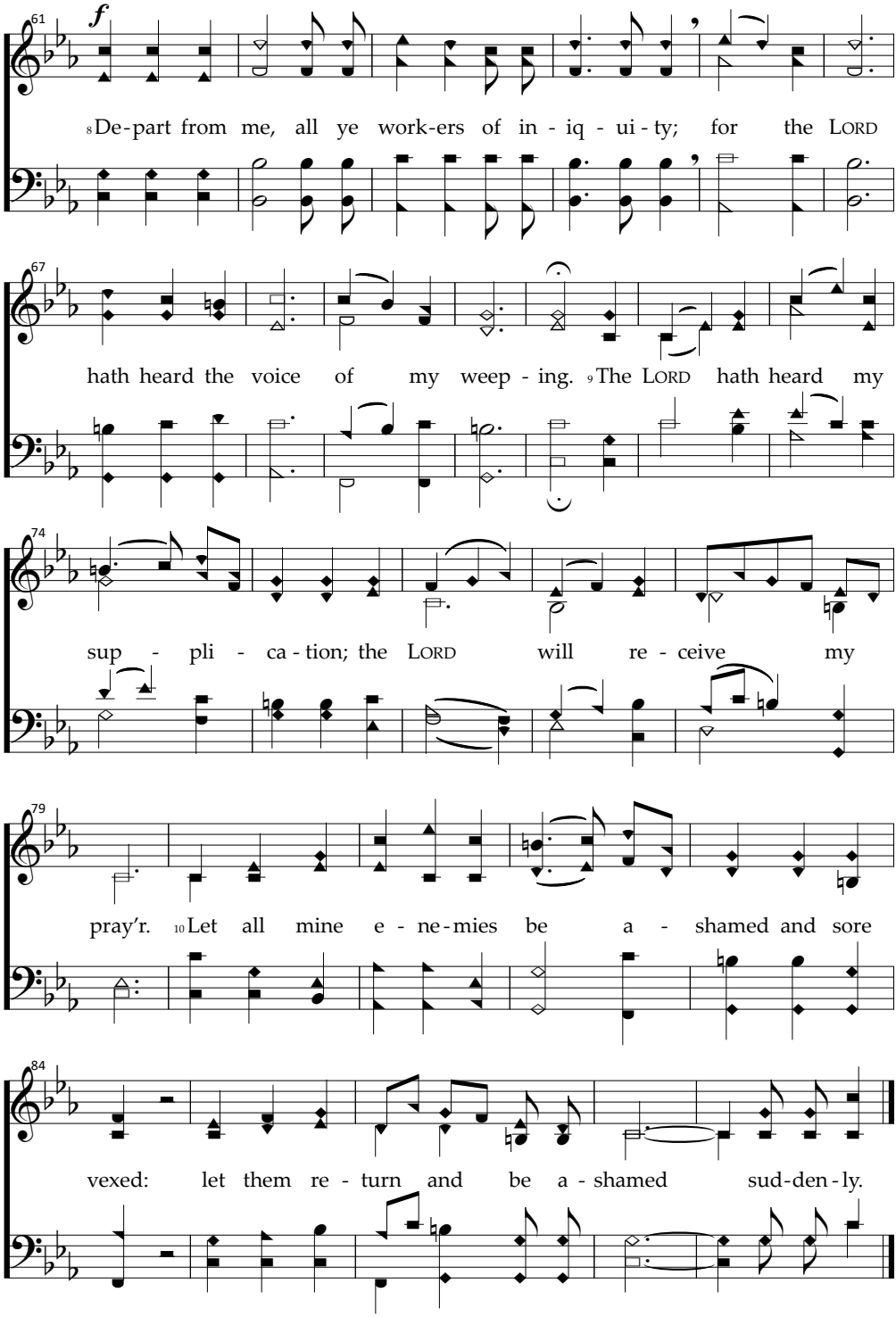


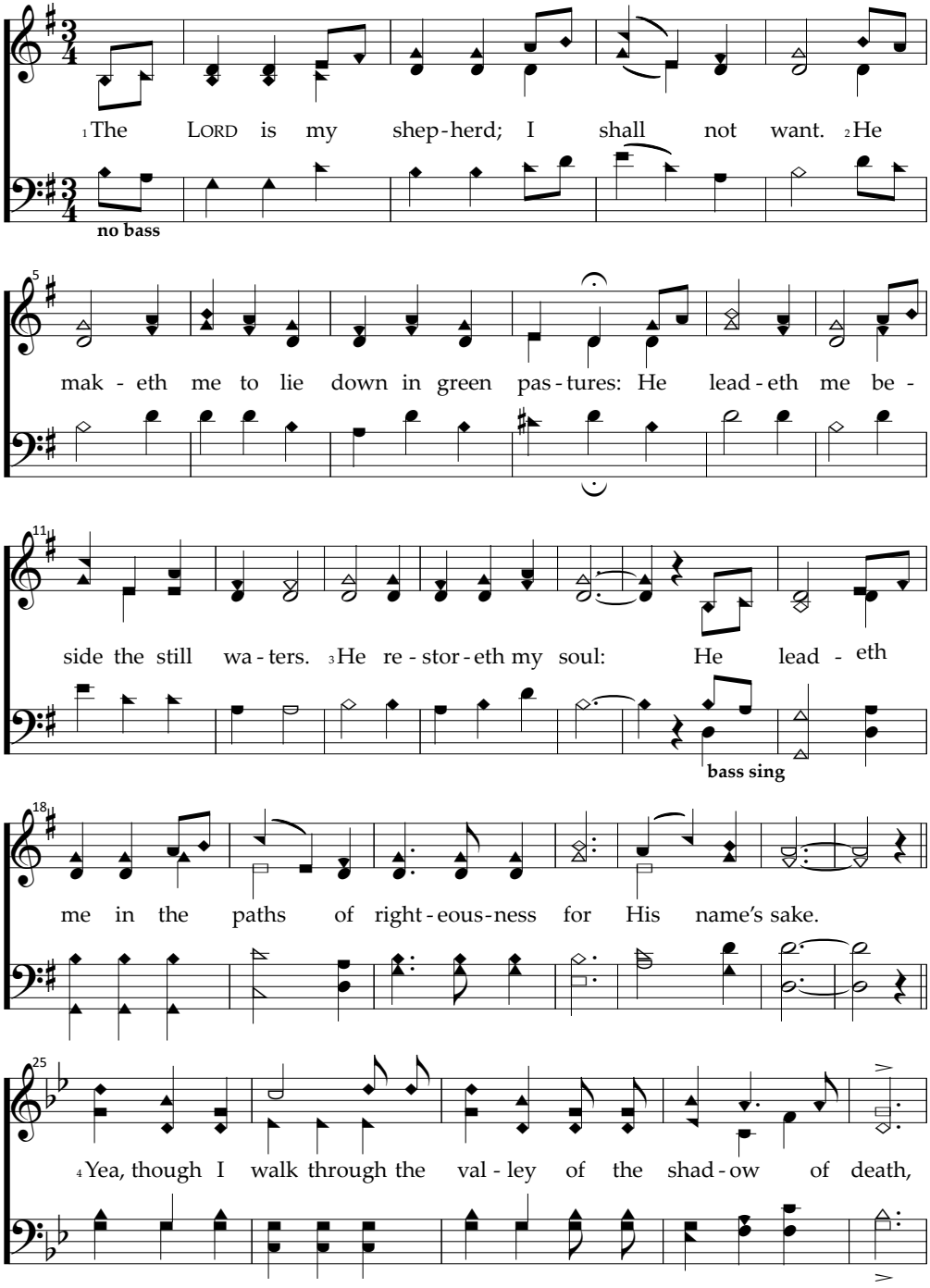

61
f
8 De-part from me, all ye work-ers of in - iq - ui - ty; for the LORD
67
hath heard the voice of my weep - ing. 9 The LORD hath heard my
74
sup - pli - ca - tion; the LORD will re - ceive my
79
pray'r. 10 Let all mine e - ne - mies be a - shamed and sore
84
vexed: let them re - turn and be a - shamed sud - den - ly.

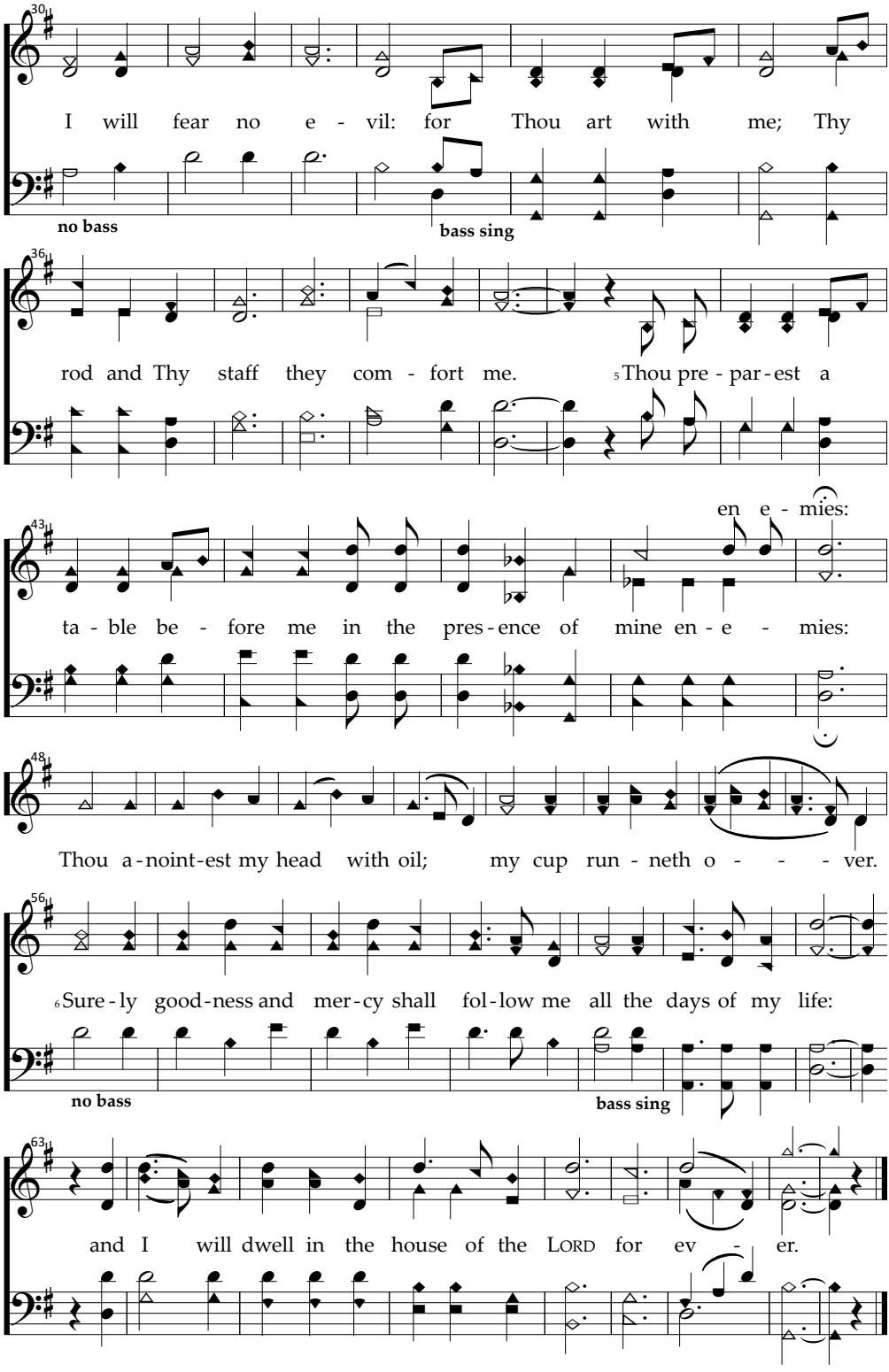
Psalm 23

King James Version

A Psalm of David.

Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002



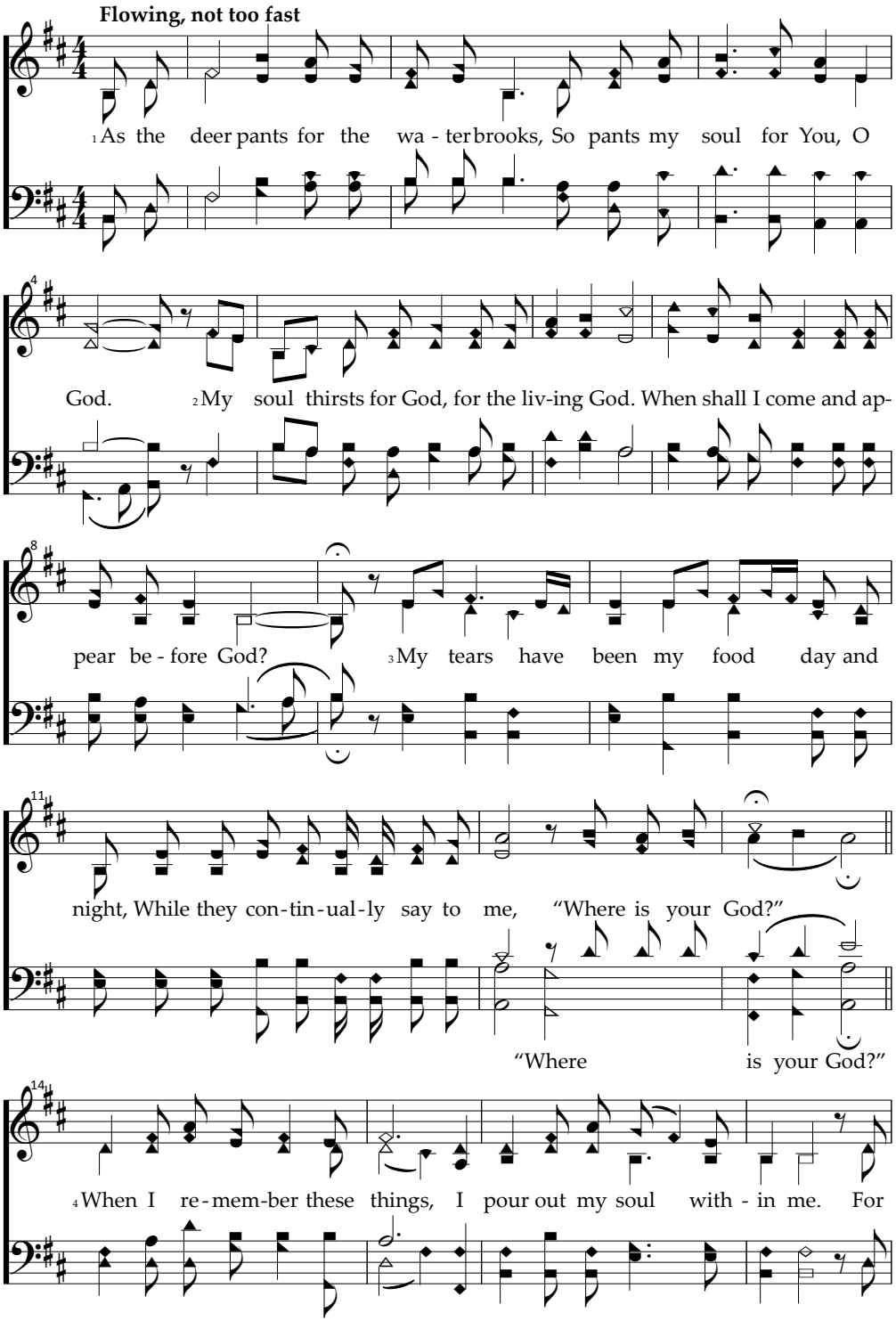

30
I will fear no e - vil: for Thou art with me; Thy
no bass
bass sing
36
rod and Thy staff they com - fort me. 5 Thou pre - par - est a
en e - mies:
43
ta - ble be - fore me in the pres - ence of mine en - e - mies:
48
Thou a - noint - est my head with oil; my cup run - neth o - - - ver.
56
6 Sure - ly good - ness and mer - cy shall fol - low me all the days of my life:
no bass
bass sing
63
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ev - er.

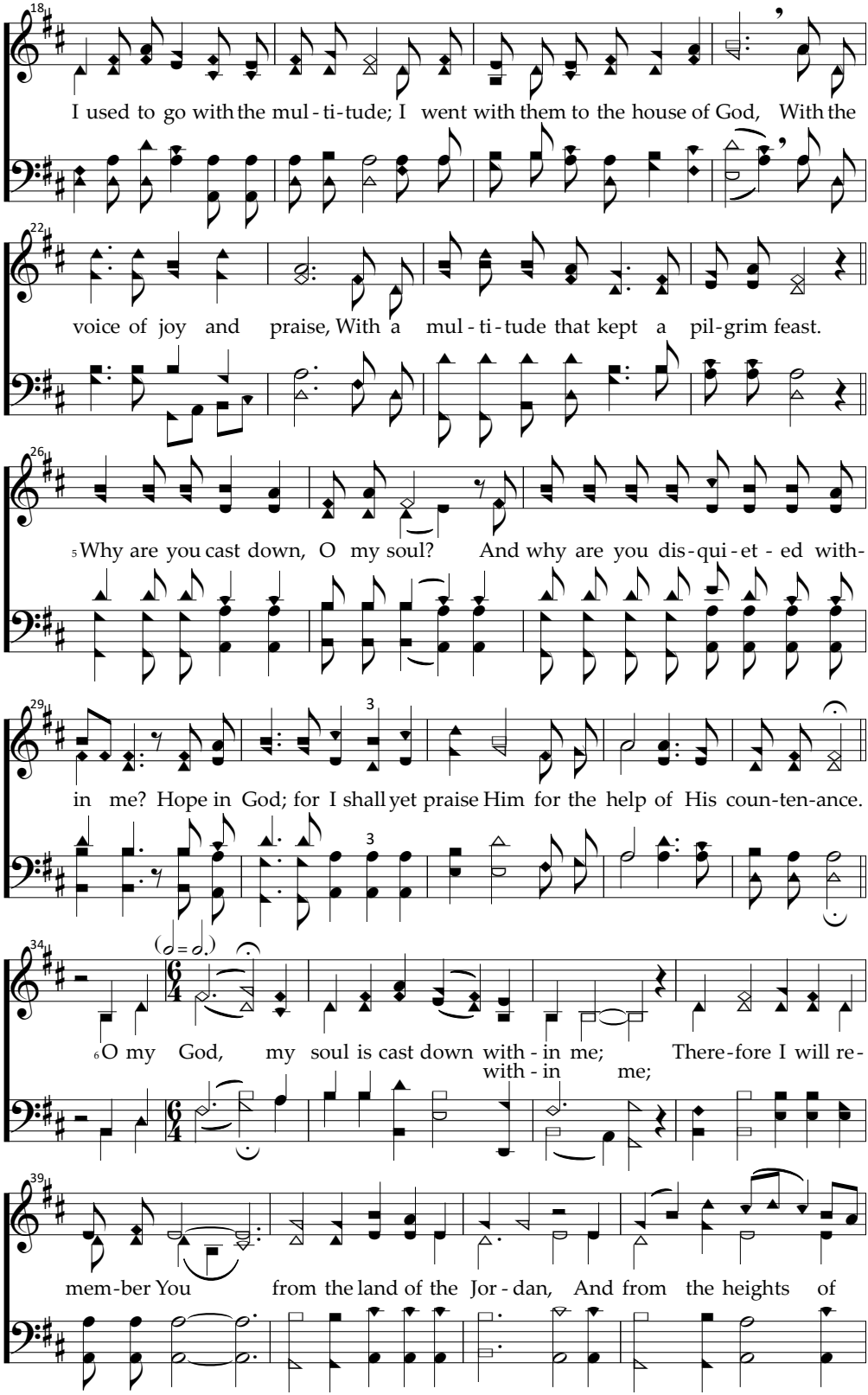
Psalm 42

New King James Version

To the Chief Musician.
A Contemplation of the sons of Korah.

Michael E. Owens, 2002




I used to go with the mul - ti-tude; I went with them to the house of God, With the
voice of joy and praise, With a mul - ti - tude that kept a pil-grim feast.
5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you dis-qui-et - ed with-
in me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His coun-ten-ance.
6 O my God, my soul is cast down with - in me; There-fore I will re-
with - in me;
mem-ber You from the land of the Jor - dan, And from the heights of

Psalm 42

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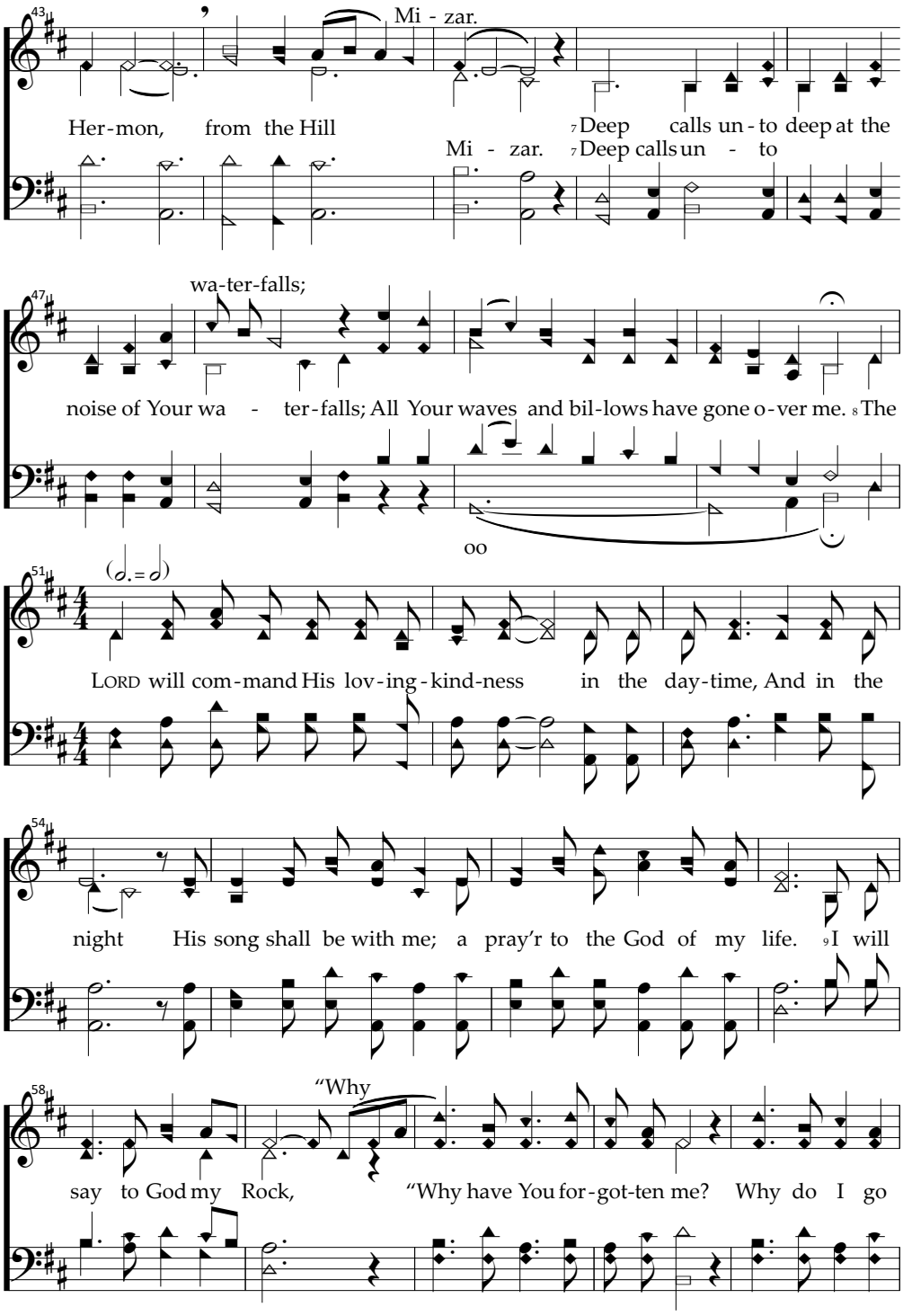
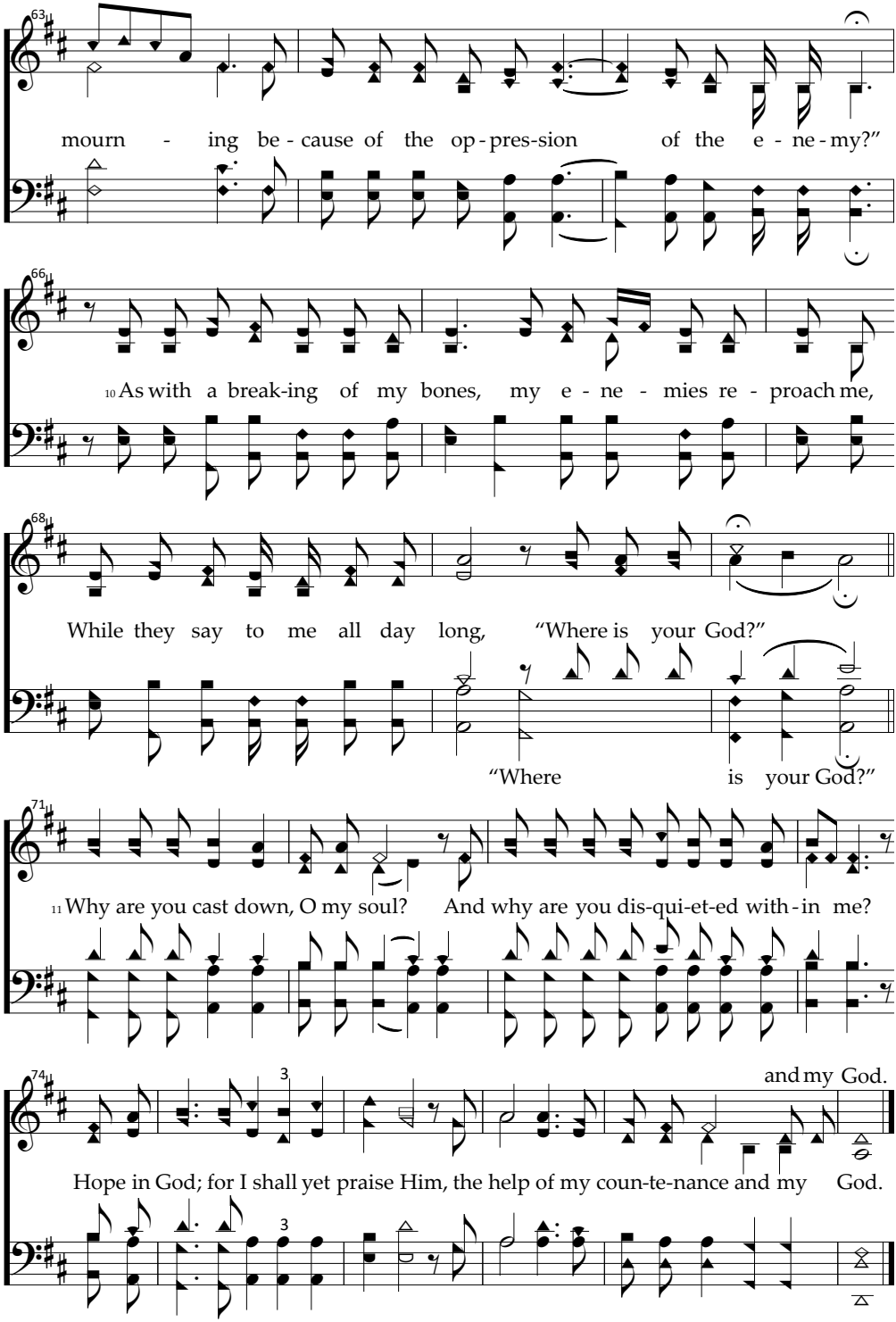
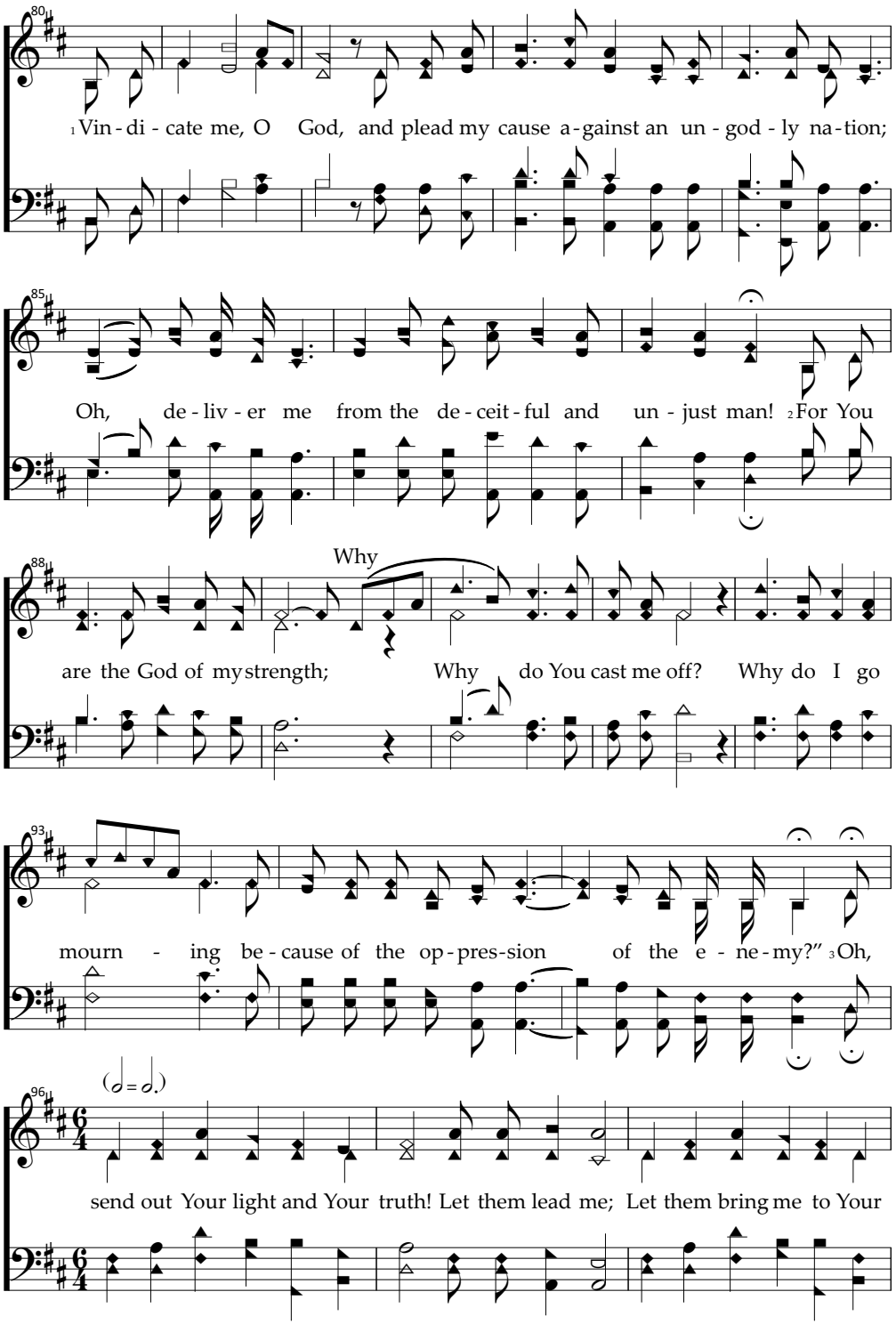
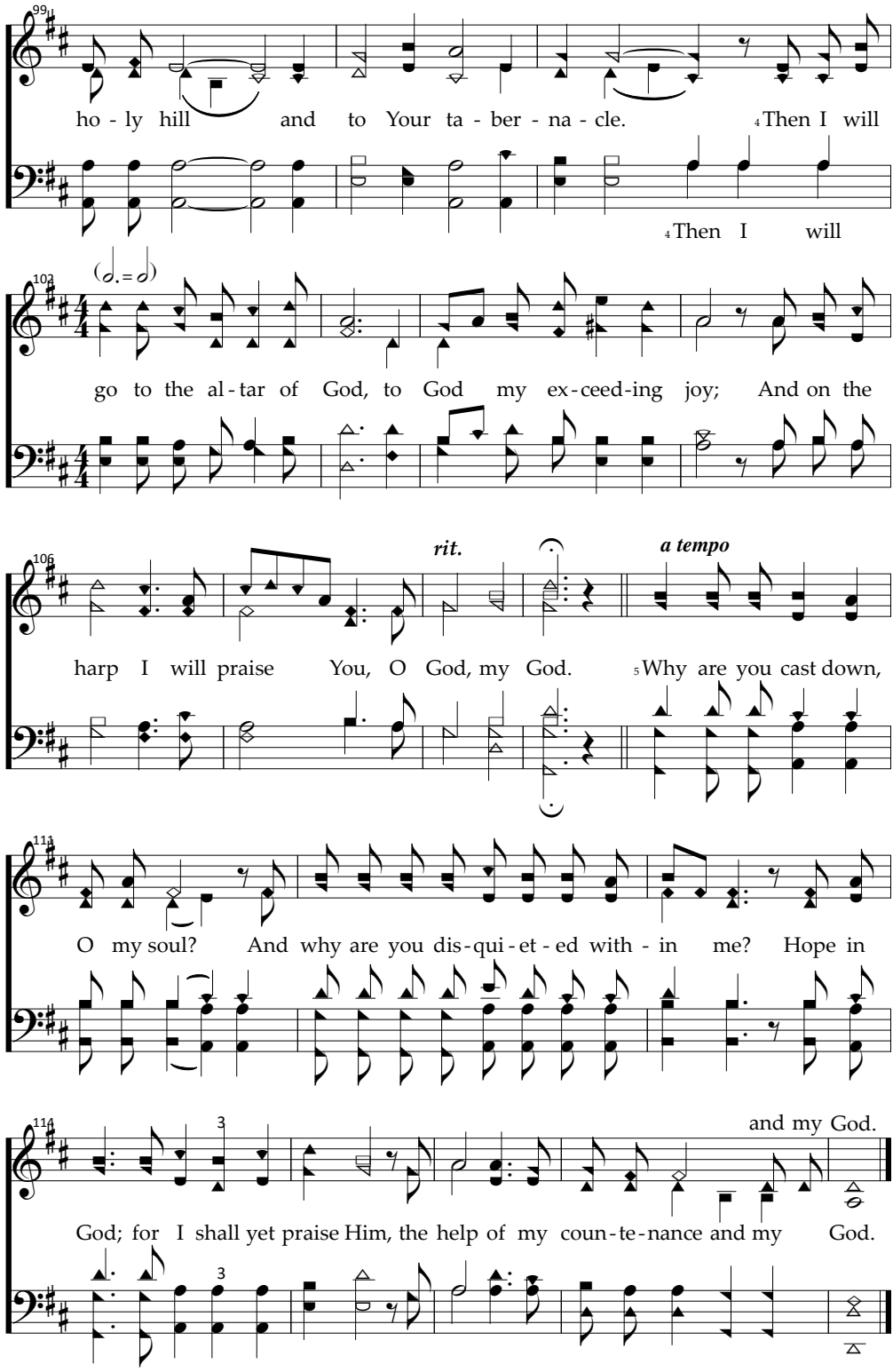



63
mourn - ing be - cause of the op - pres-sion of the e - ne - my?"
66
10 As with a break-ing of my bones, my e - ne - mies re - proach me,
68
While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"
"Where is your God?"
71
11 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you dis-qui-et-ed with - in me?
74
3
and my God.
Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my coun-te-nance and my God.
3

Psalm 43

New King James Version Michael E. Owens, 2002

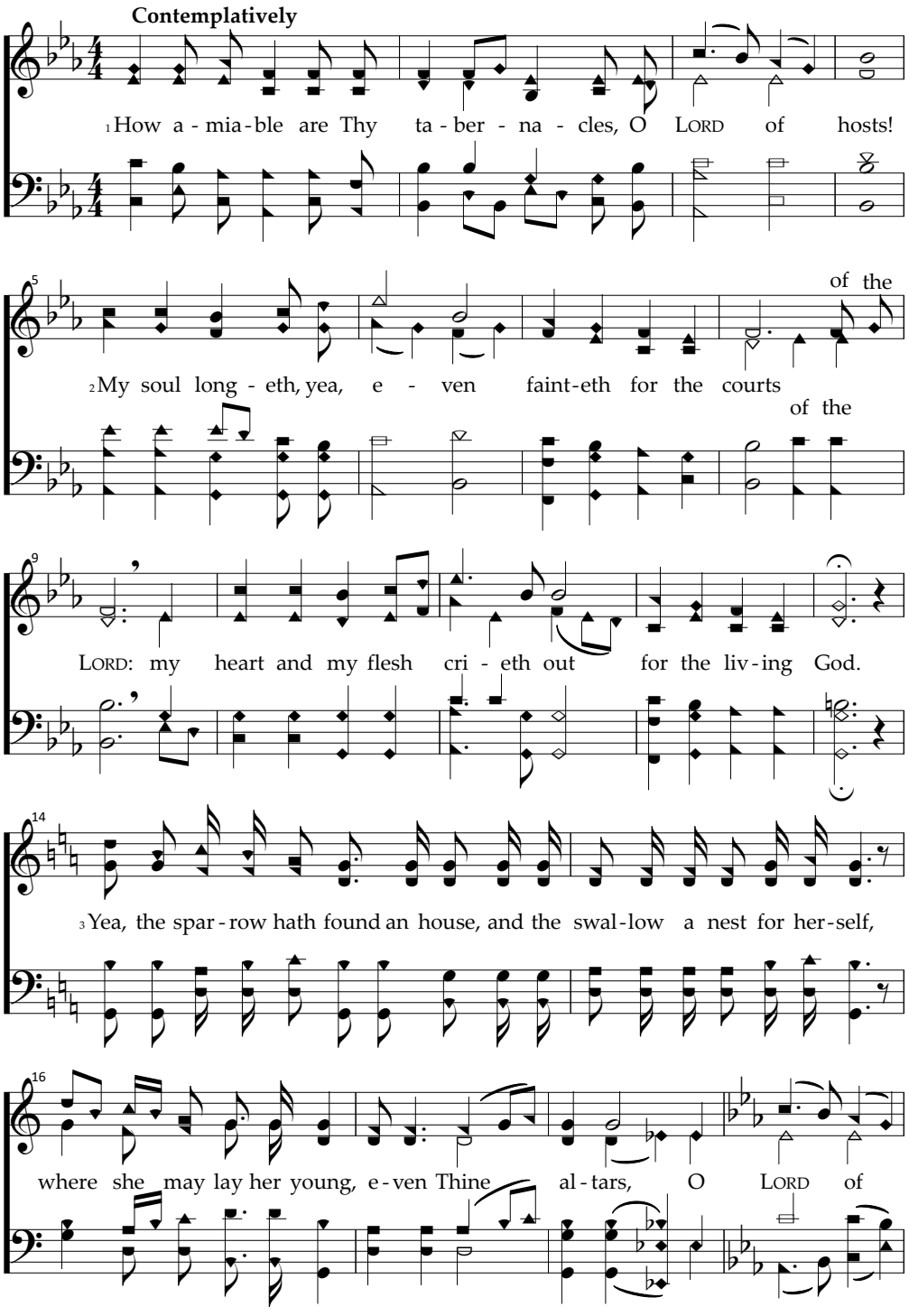


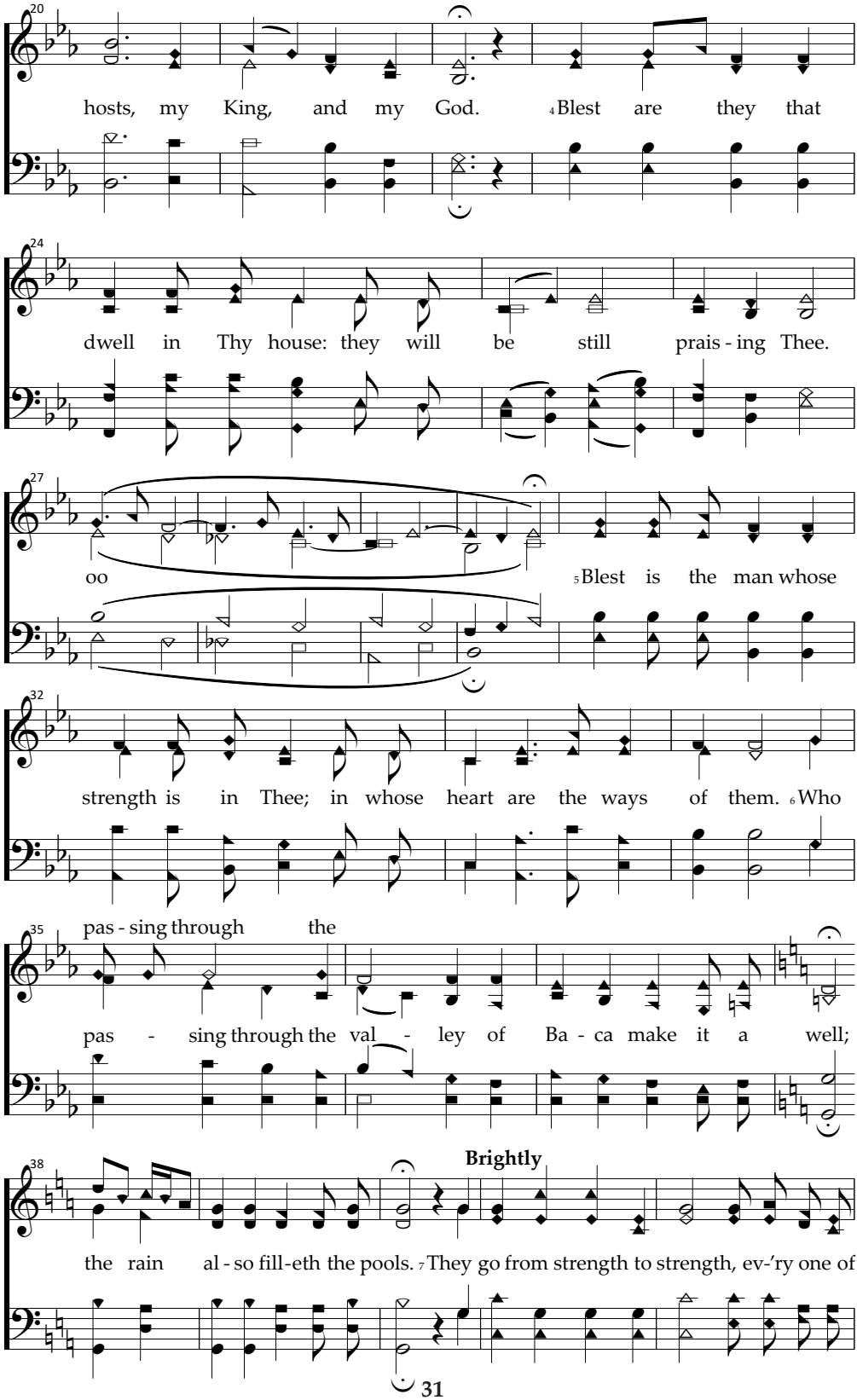

99
ho - ly hill and to Your ta - ber - na - cle. 4 Then I will
4 Then I will
102
go to the al - tar of God, to God my ex - ceed - ing joy; And on the
106
rit.
a tempo
harp I will praise You, O God, my God. 5 Why are you cast down,
111
O my soul? And why are you dis - qui - et - ed with - in me? Hope in
114
3
and my God.
God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my coun - te - nance and my God.
3

Psalm 84

King James Version

Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002




20
hosts, my King, and my God. 4 Blest are they that
24
dwell in Thy house: they will be still prais - ing Thee.
27
oo 5 Blest is the man whose
32
strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. 6 Who
35
pas - sing through the
pas - sing through the val - ley of Ba - ca make it a well;
38
Brightly
the rain al - so fill-eth the pools. 7 They go from strength to strength, ev-'ry one of

Psalm 84

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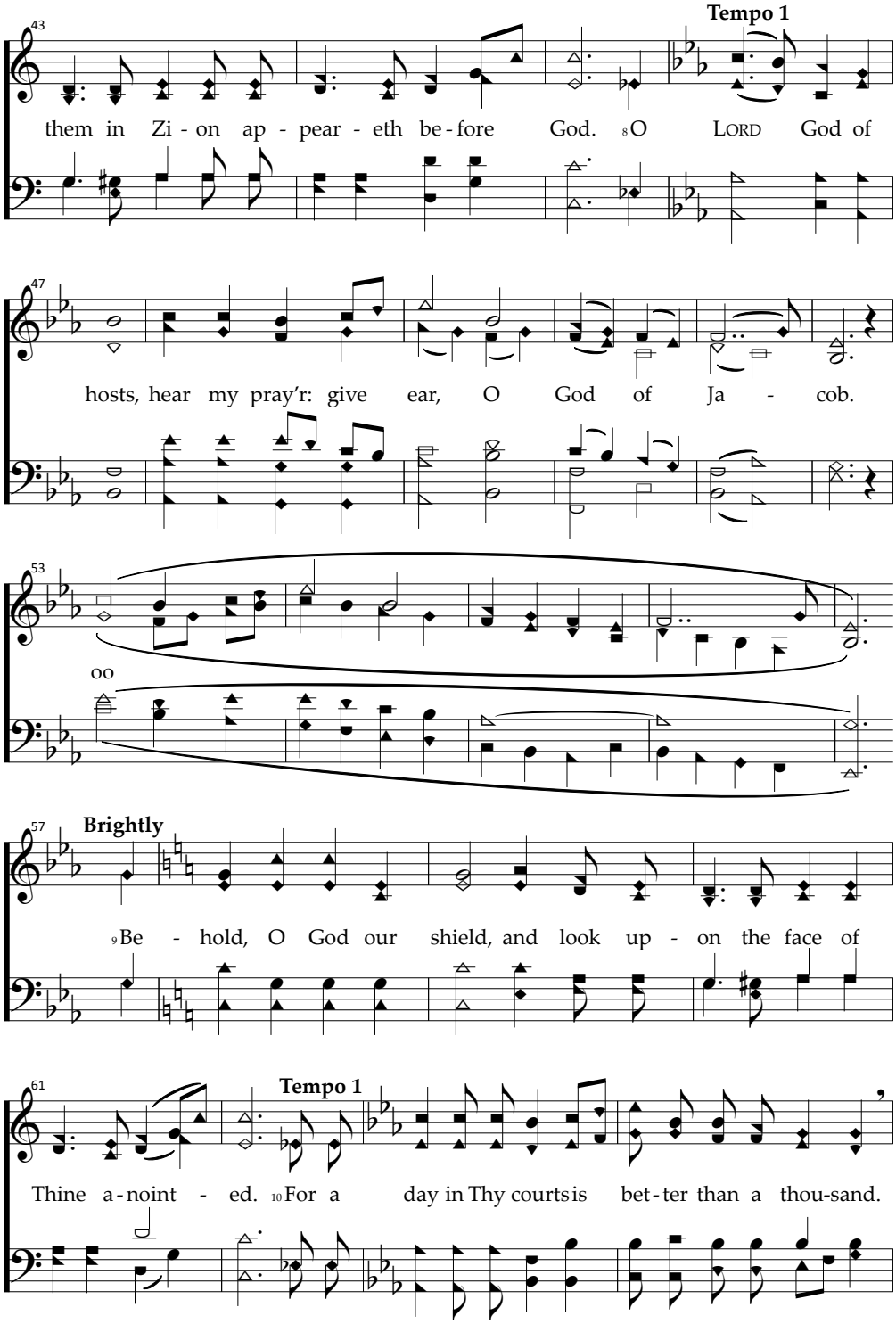
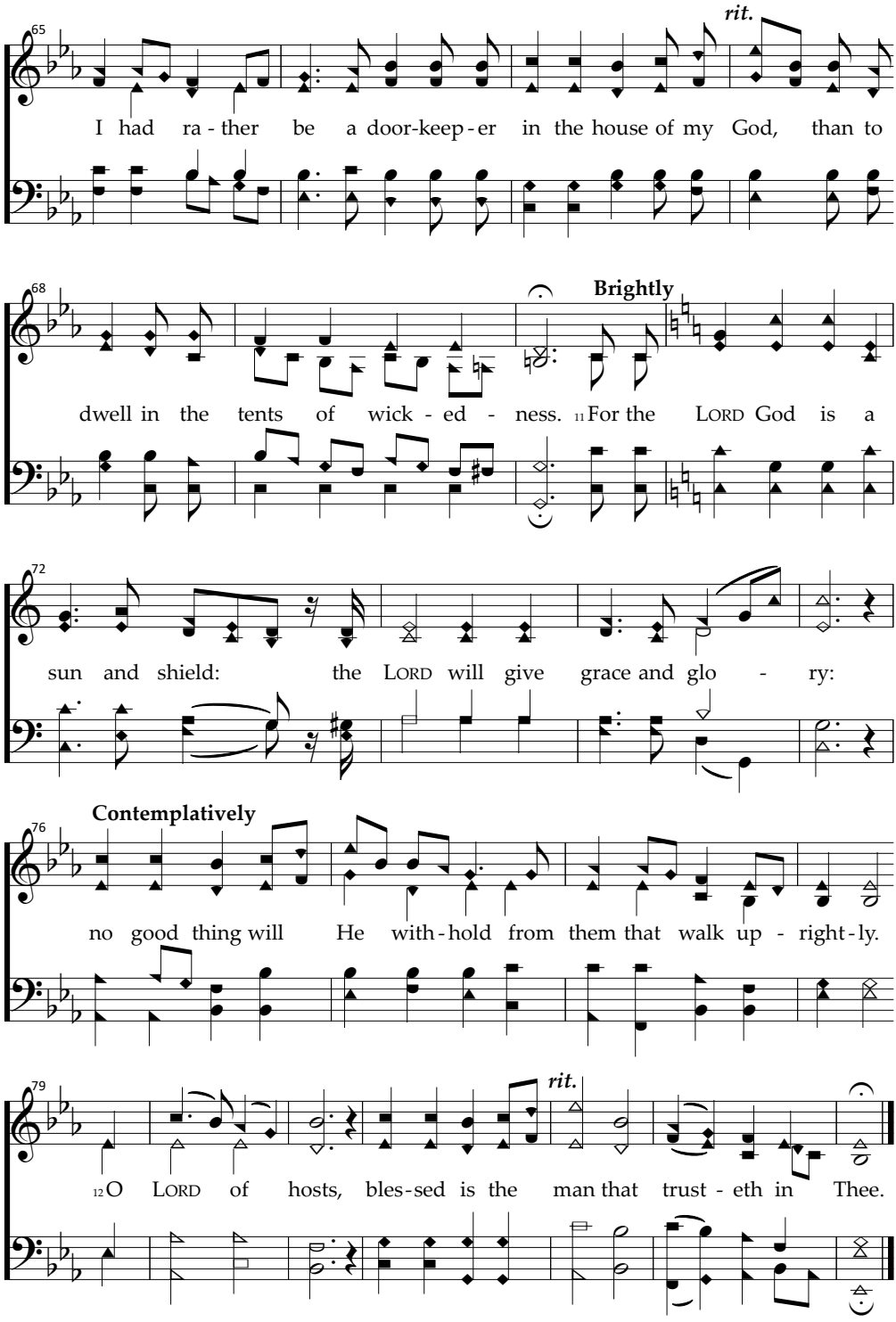


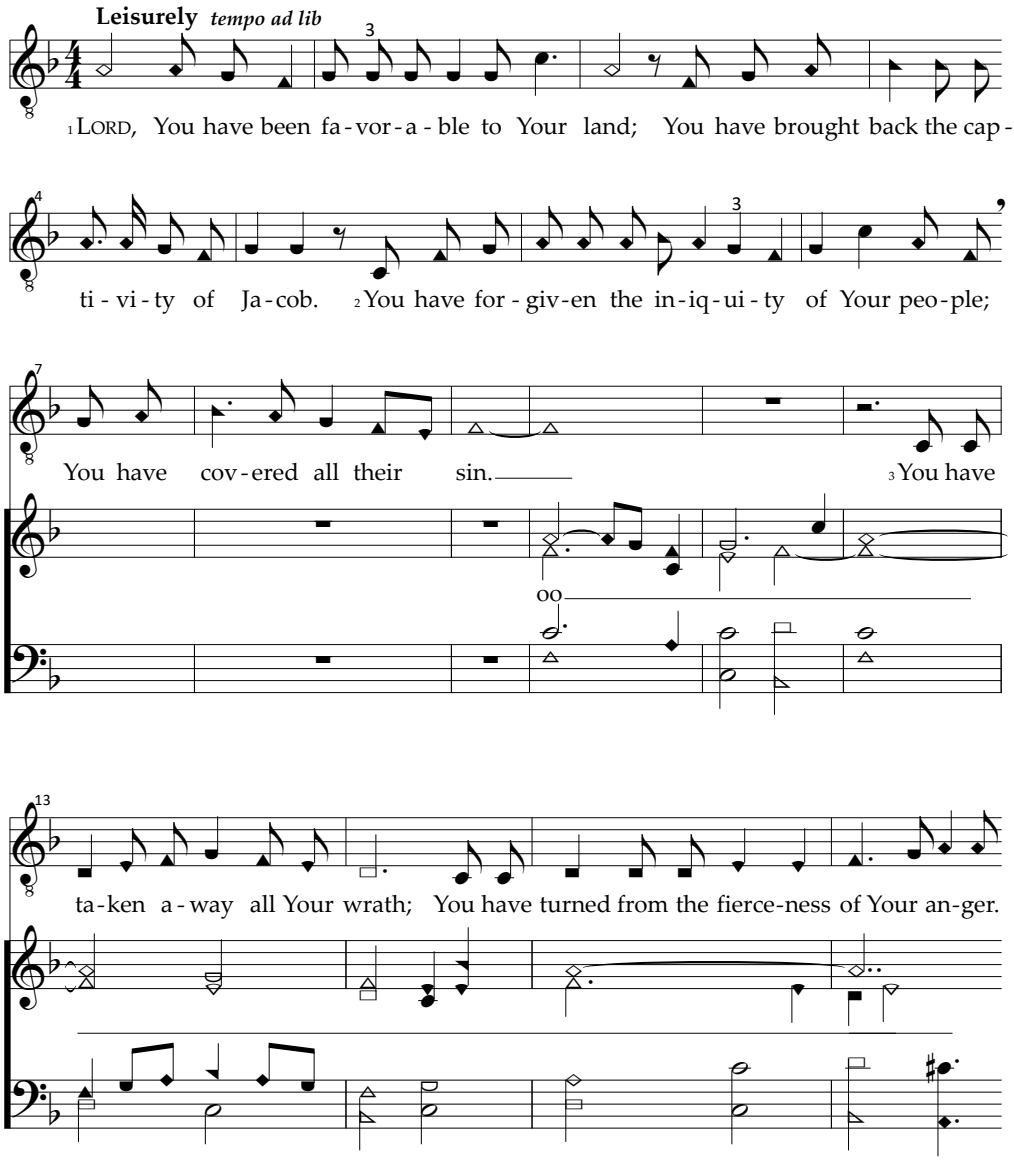

65
rit.
I had ra - ther be a door-keep - er in the house of my God, than to
68
Brightly
dwell in the tents of wick - ed - ness. 11 For the LORD God is a
72
sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glo - ry:
76
Contemplatively
no good thing will He with - hold from them that walk up - right - ly.
79
rit.
12 O LORD of hosts, bles - sed is the man that trust - eth in Thee.

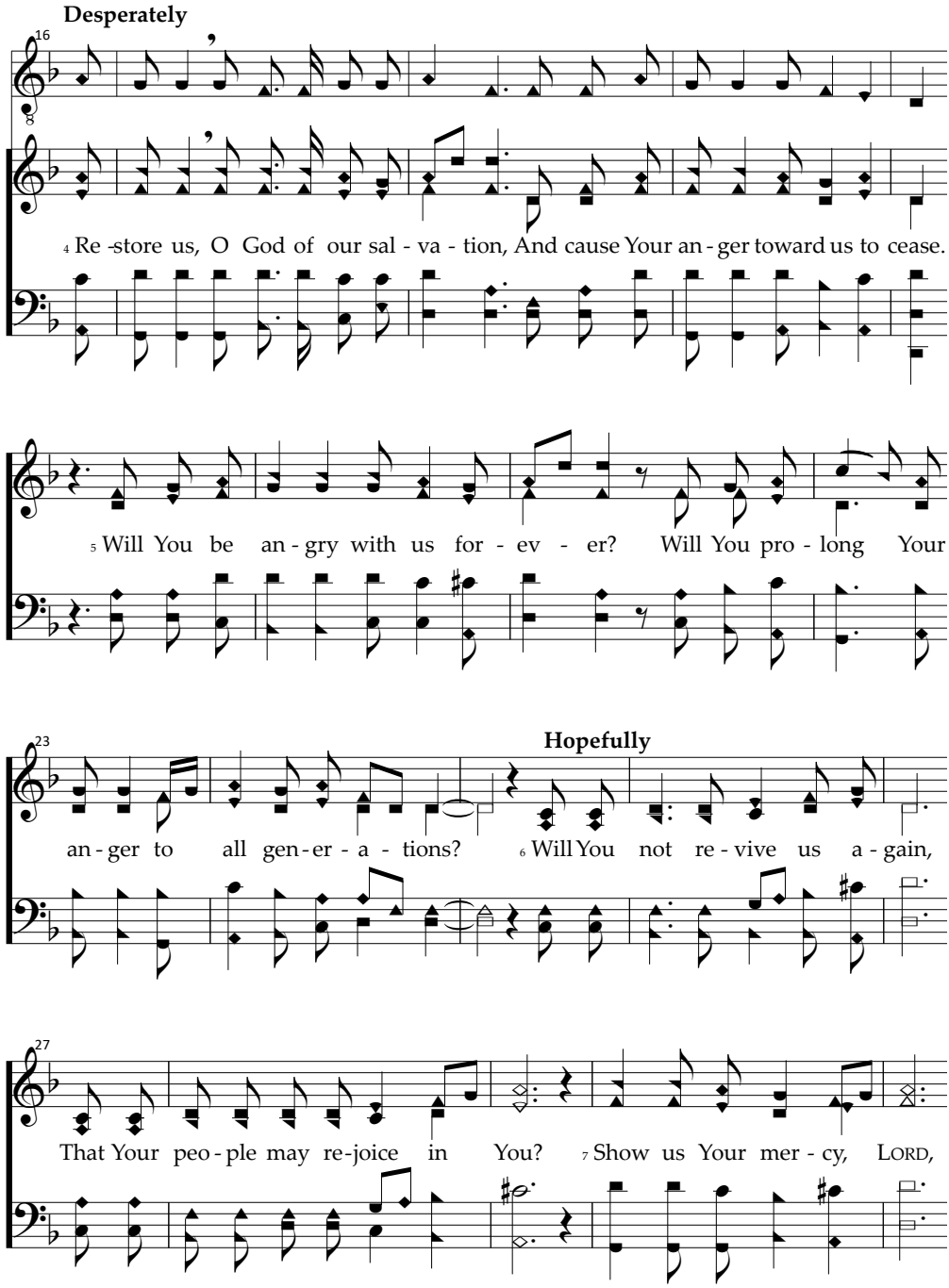
Psalm 85

New King James Version

To the Chief Musician.
A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

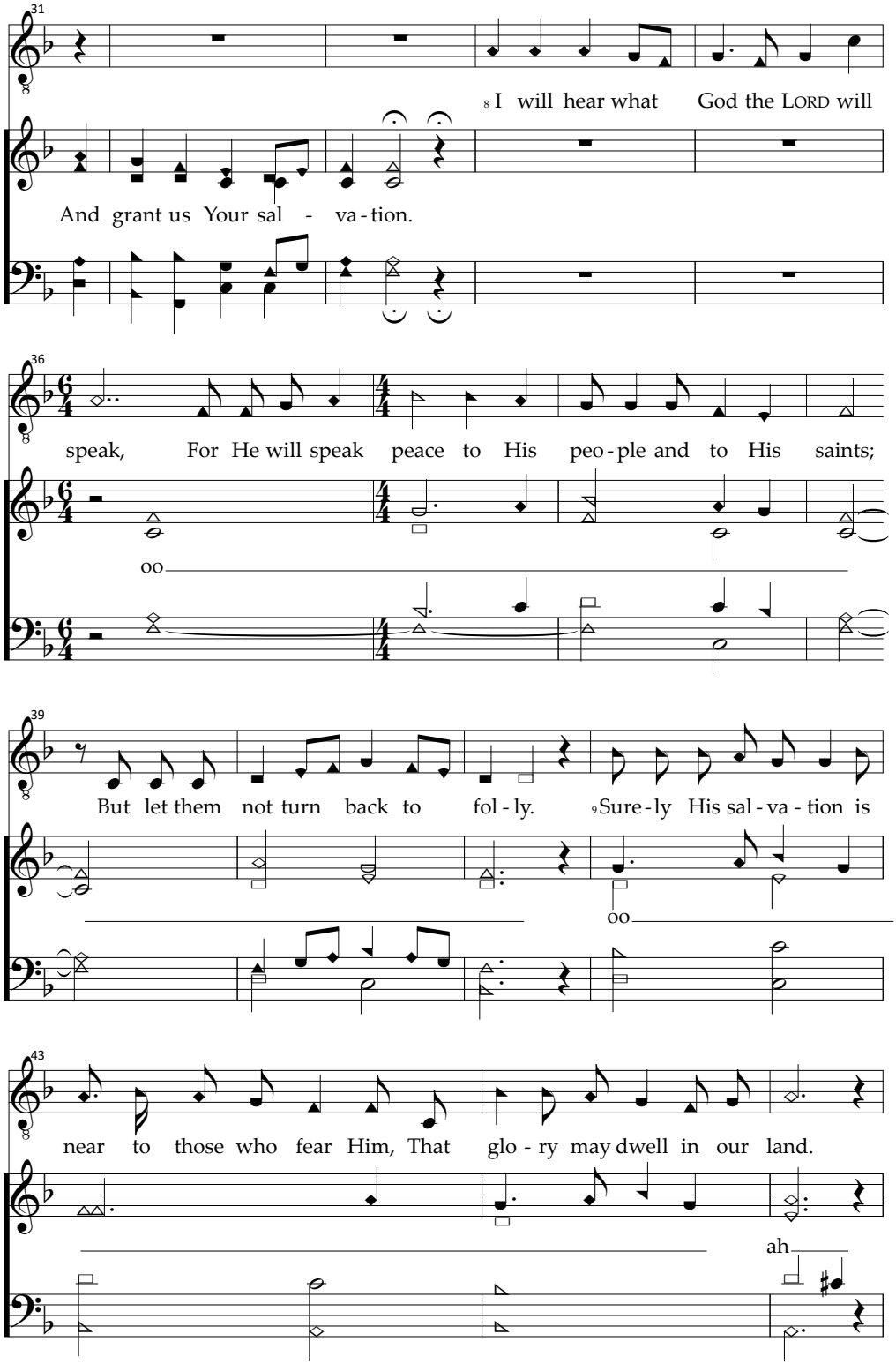
Michael E. Owens, 2002

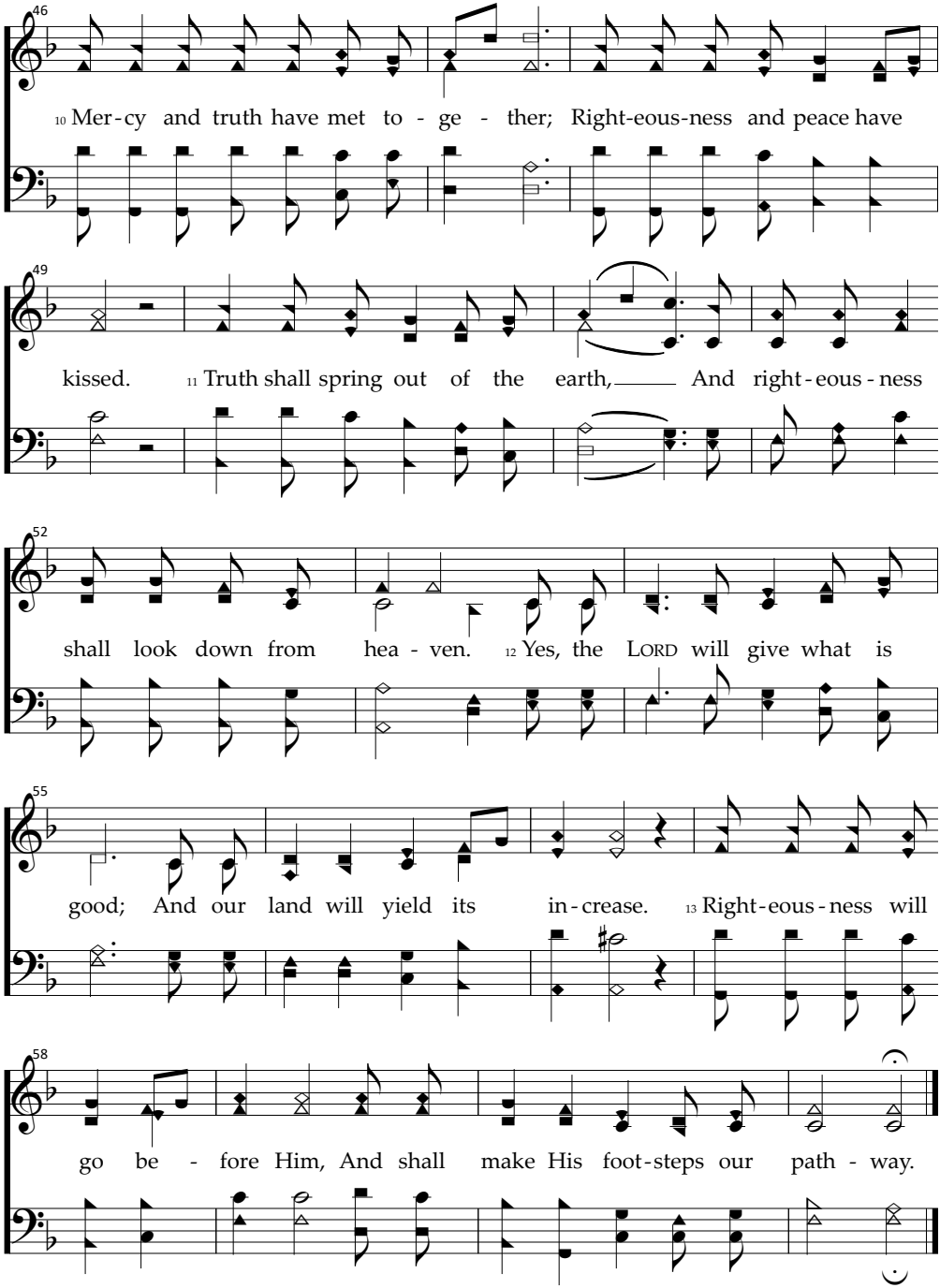



Desperately
16
4 Re -store us, O God of our sal - va - tion, And cause Your an - ger toward us to cease.
5 Will You be an - gry with us for - ev - er? Will You pro - long Your
23
Hopefully
an - ger to all gen - er - a - tions? 6 Will You not re - vive us a - gain,
27
That Your peo - ple may re - joice in You? 7 Show us Your mer - cy, LORD,

Psalm 85

cont'd



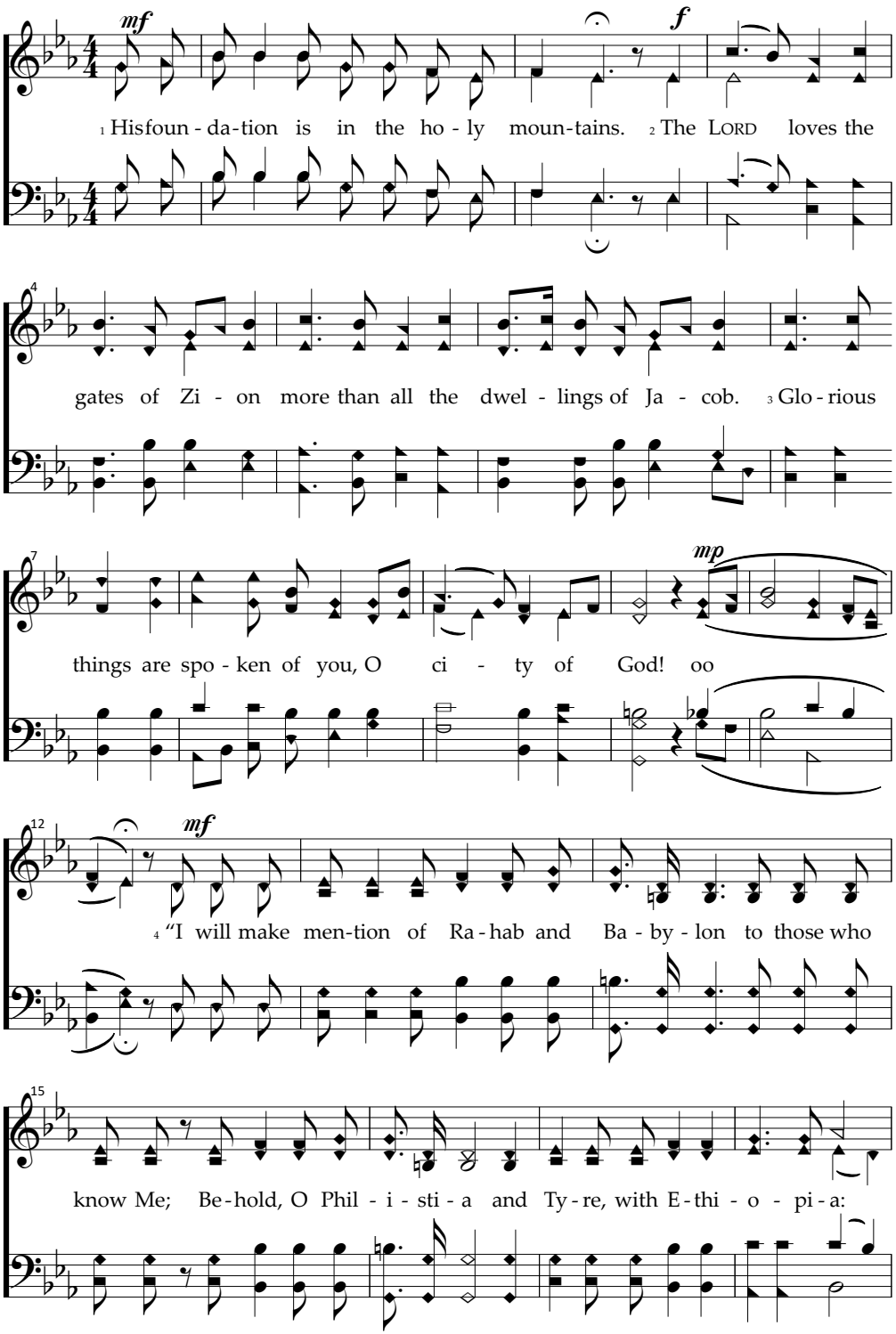

46
10 Mer-cy and truth have met to-ge-ther; Right-eous-ness and peace have
49
kissed. 11 Truth shall spring out of the earth, And right-eous-ness
52
shall look down from hea-ven. 12 Yes, the LORD will give what is
55
good; And our land will yield its in-crease. 13 Right-eous-ness will
58
go be-fore Him, And shall make His foot-steps our path-way.

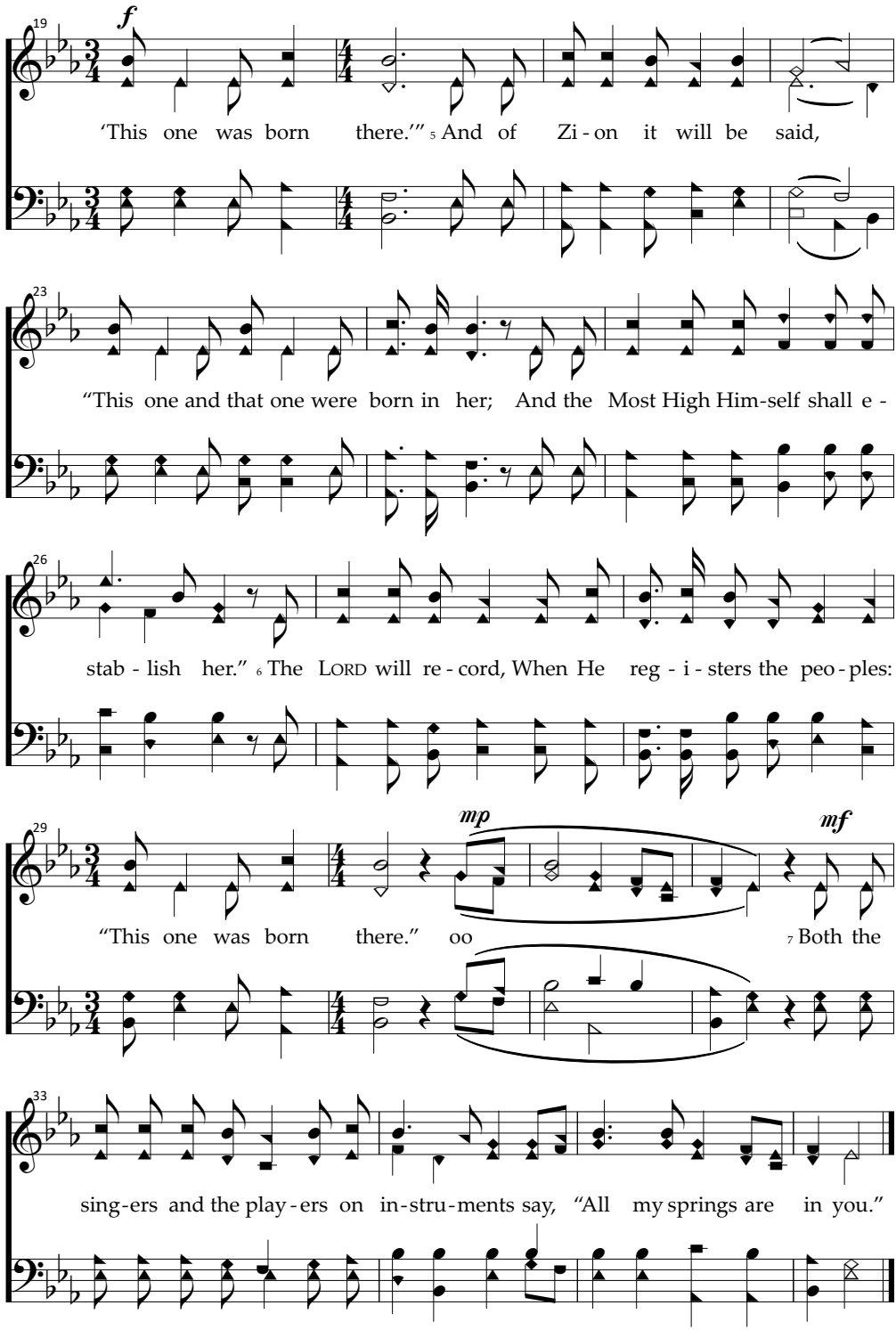
Psalm 87

New King James Version

A Psalm of the sons of Korah.
A song.

Michael E. Owens, 2001

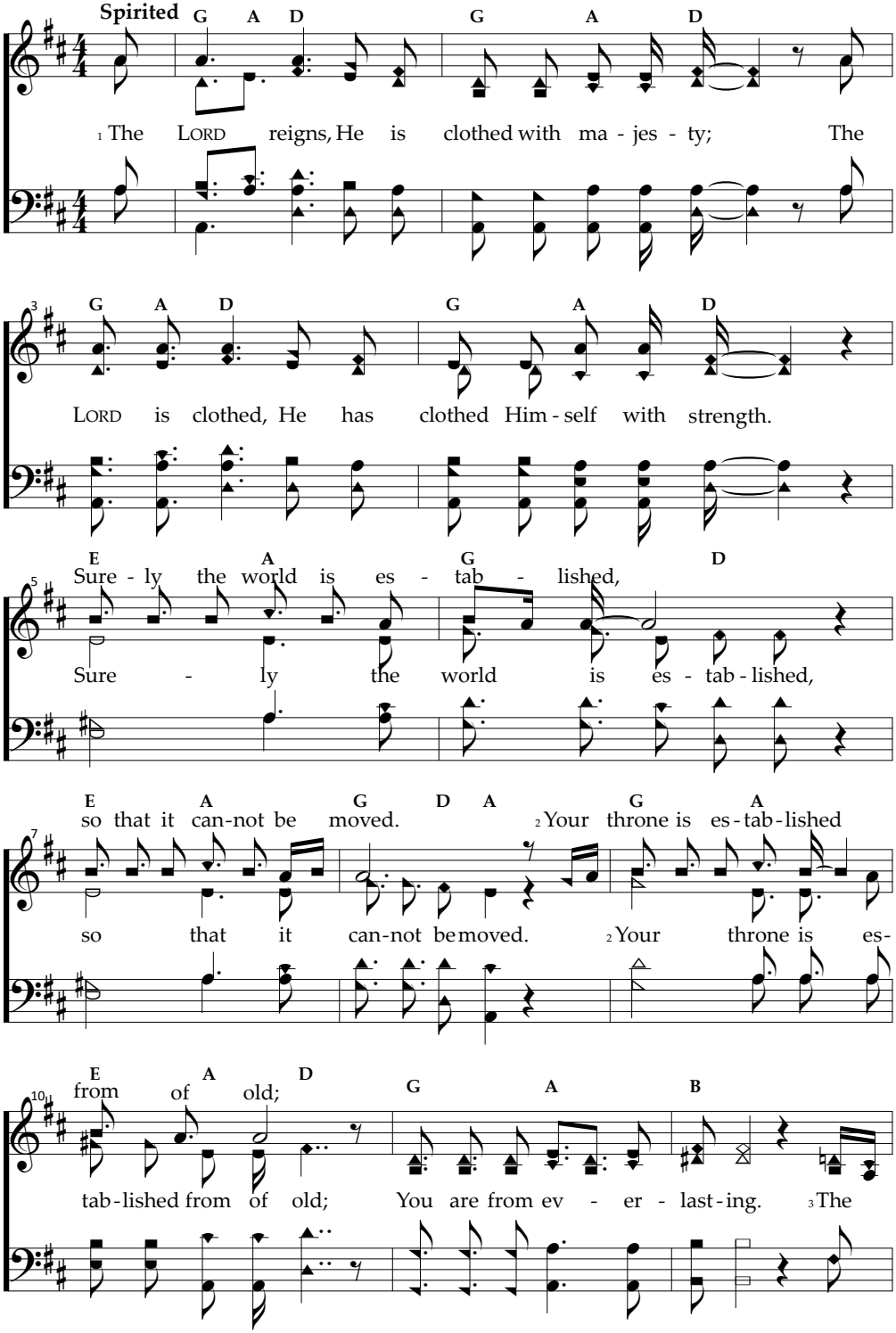


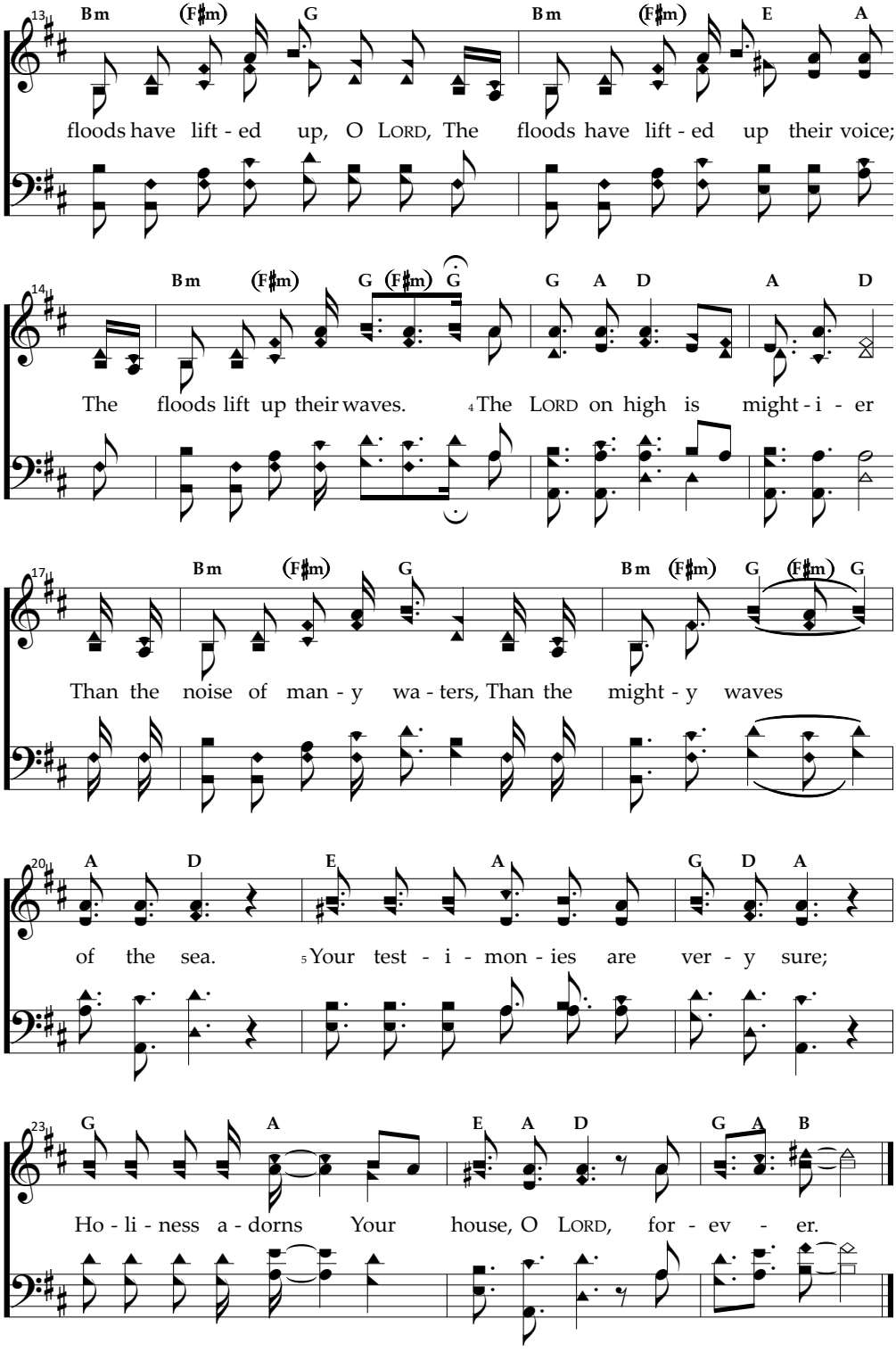

19
f
'This one was born there.'" 5 And of Zi - on it will be said,
23
"This one and that one were born in her; And the Most High Him-self shall e -
26
stab - lish her." 6 The LORD will re - cord, When He reg - i - sters the peo - ples:
29
mp
mf
"This one was born there." oo 7 Both the
33
sing-ers and the play - ers on in-stru-ments say, "All my springs are in you."

New King James Version

Psalm 93

Michael E. Owens, 2002



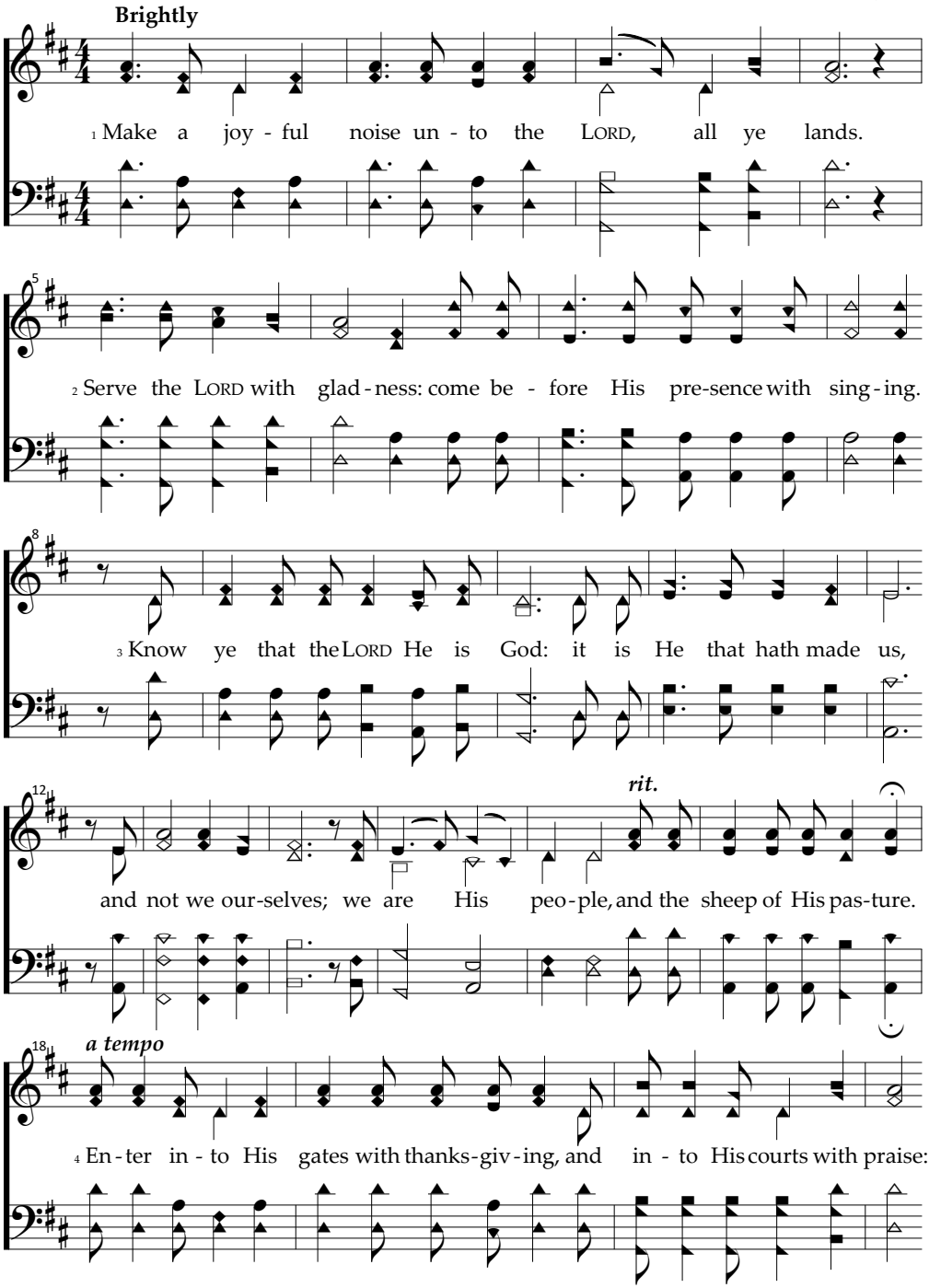

13 Bm (F♯m) G Bm (F♯m) E A
floods have lift - ed up, O LORD, The floods have lift - ed up their voice;
14 Bm (F♯m) G (F♯m) G G A D A D
The floods lift up their waves. 4 The LORD on high is might - i - er
17 Bm (F♯m) G Bm (F♯m) G (F♯m) G
Than the noise of man - y wa - ters, Than the might - y waves
20 A D E A G D A
of the sea. 5 Your test - i - mon - ies are ver - y sure;
23 G A E A D G A B
Ho - li - ness a - dorns Your house, O LORD, for - ev - er.

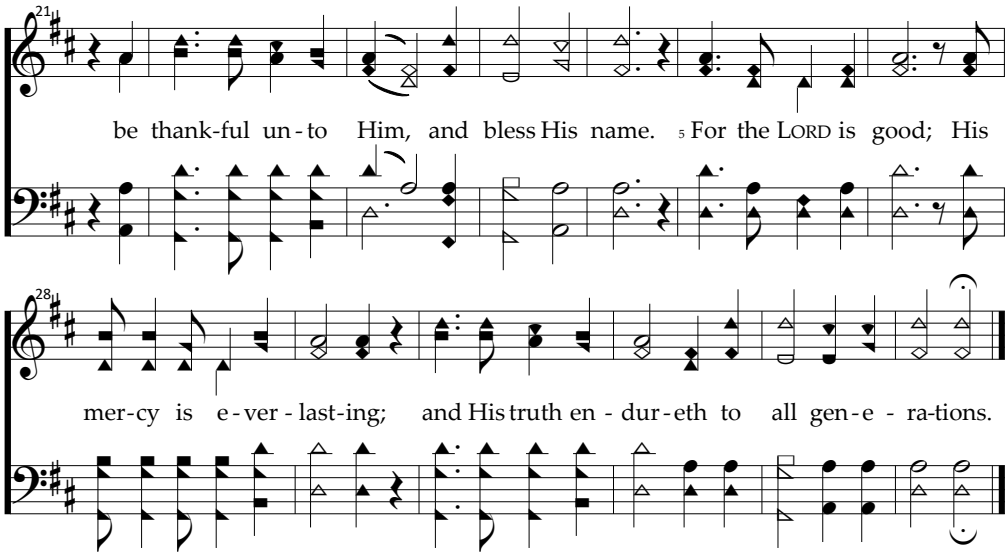
Psalm 100

King James Version

A Psalm of praise.

German folk song
arr. Frederick Steinruck
& Michael E. Owens, 2002



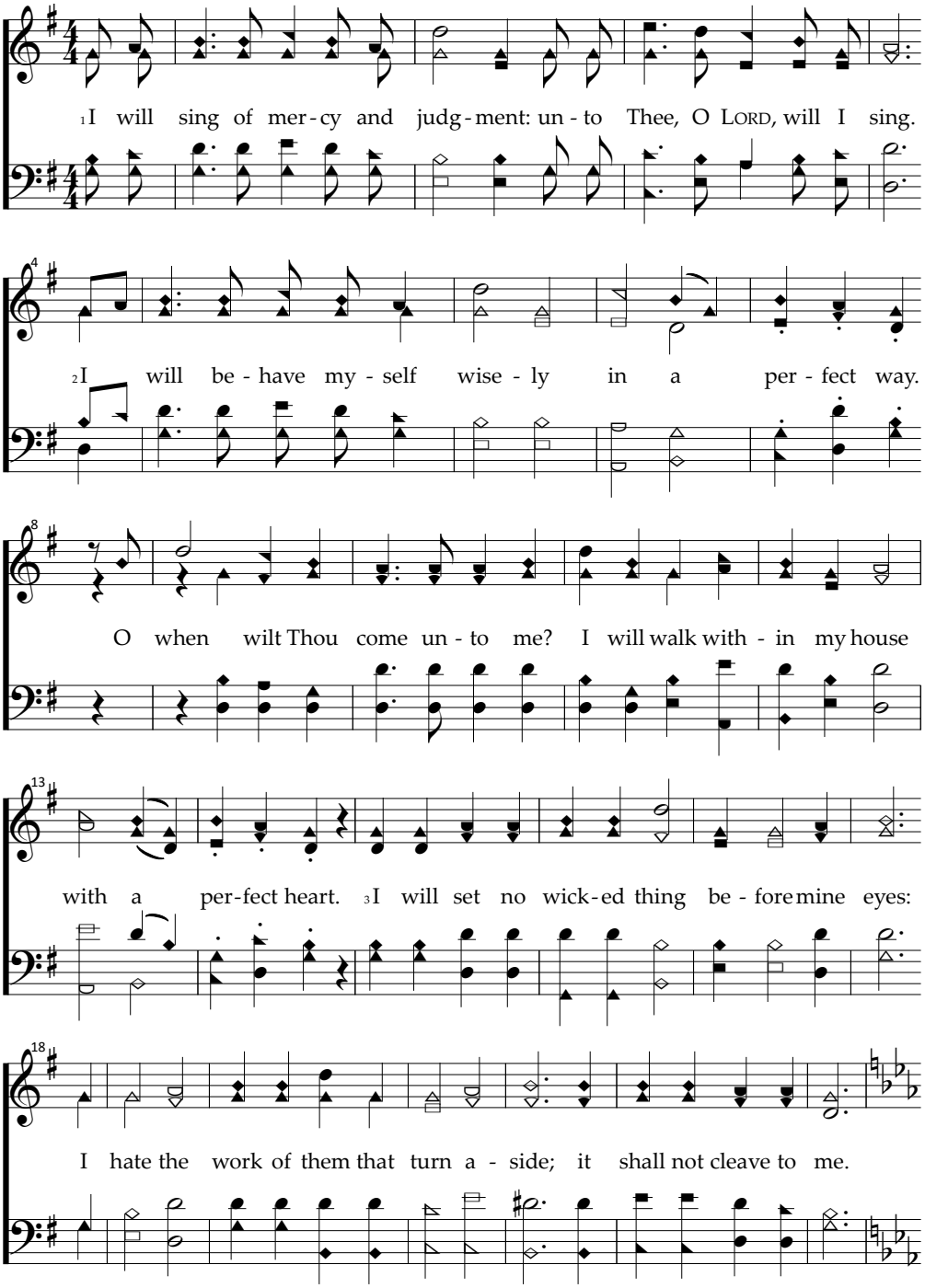

21
be thank-ful un-to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His
28
mer-cy is e-ver-last-ing; and His truth en-dur-eth to all gen-e-ra-tions.

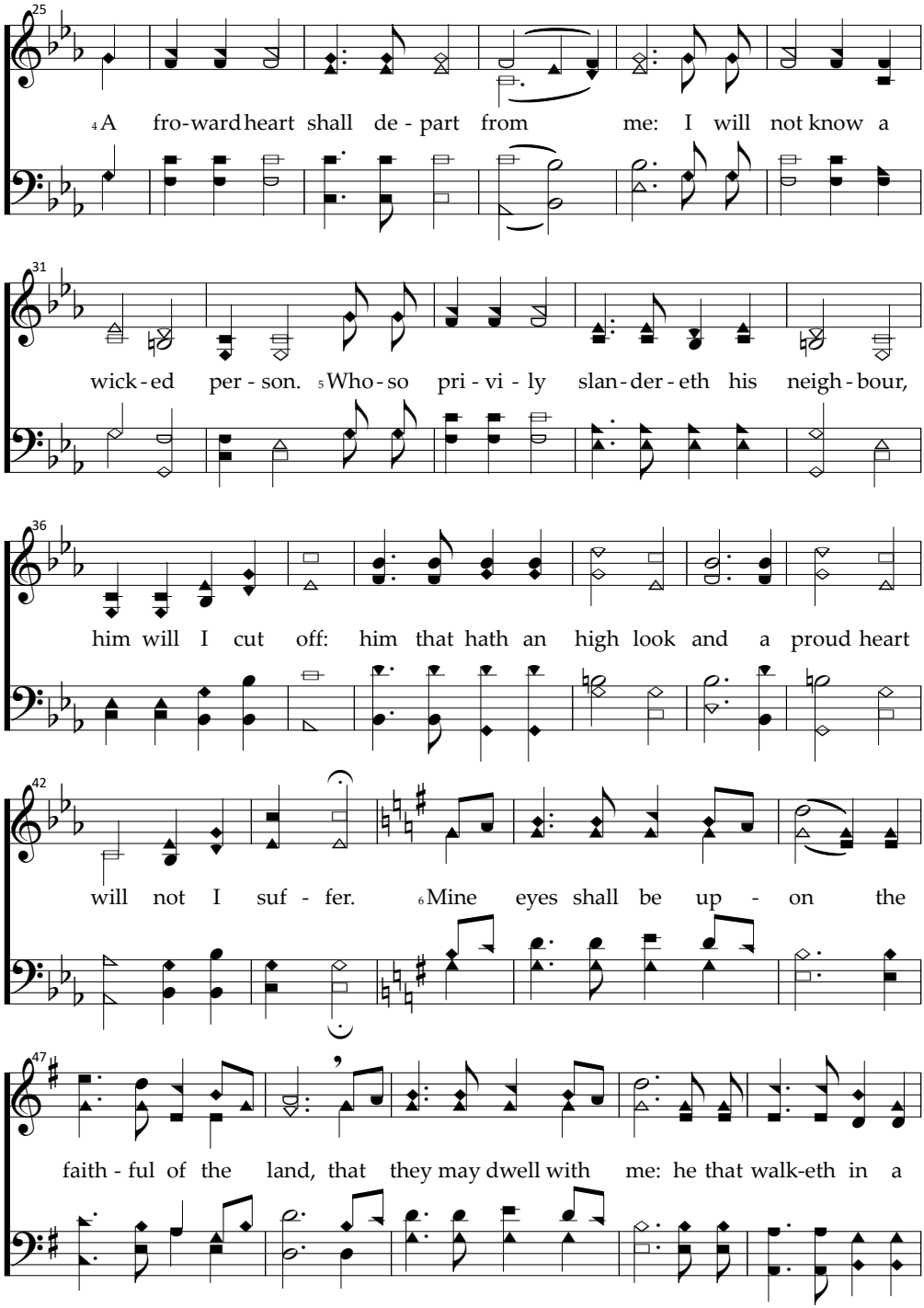
Psalm 101

King James Version

A Psalm of David.

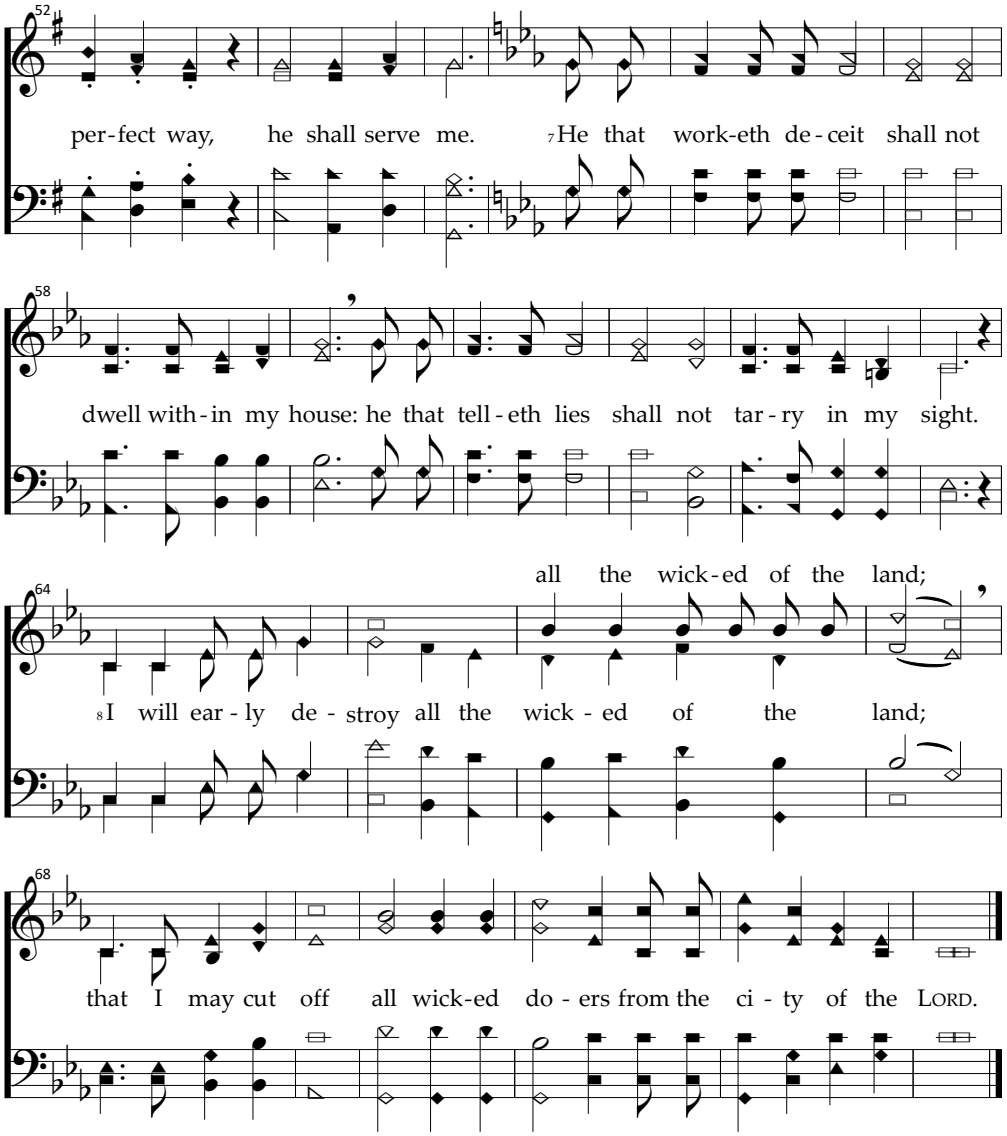
Frederick Steinruck
harm. Michael E. Owens




25
4 A fro-ward heart shall de-part from me: I will not know a
31
wick-ed per-son. 5 Who-so pri-vi-ly slan-der-eth his neigh-bour,
36
him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart
42
will not I suf-fer. 6 Mine eyes shall be up-on the
47
faith-ful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walk-eth in a

Psalm 101

cont'd

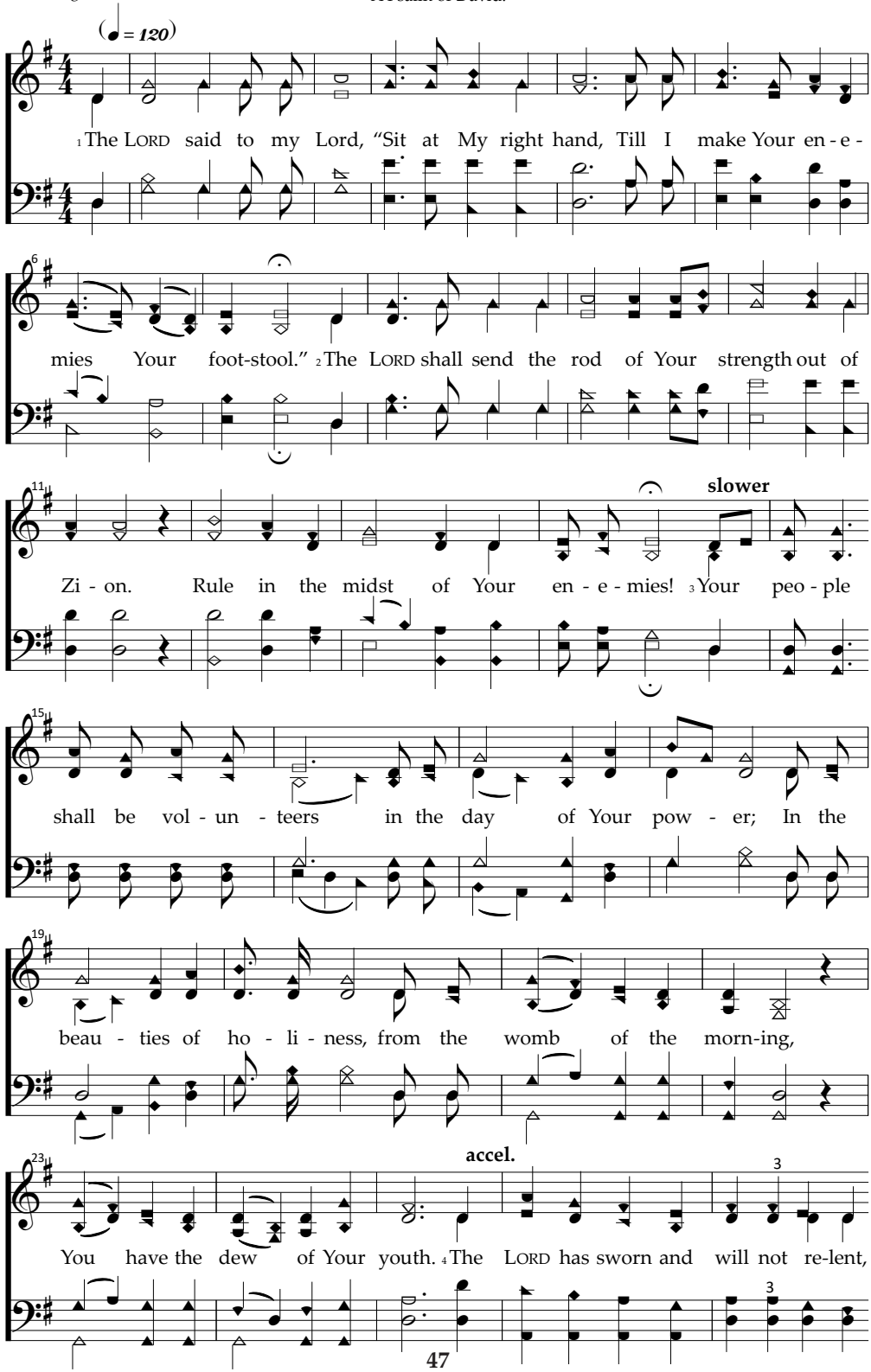


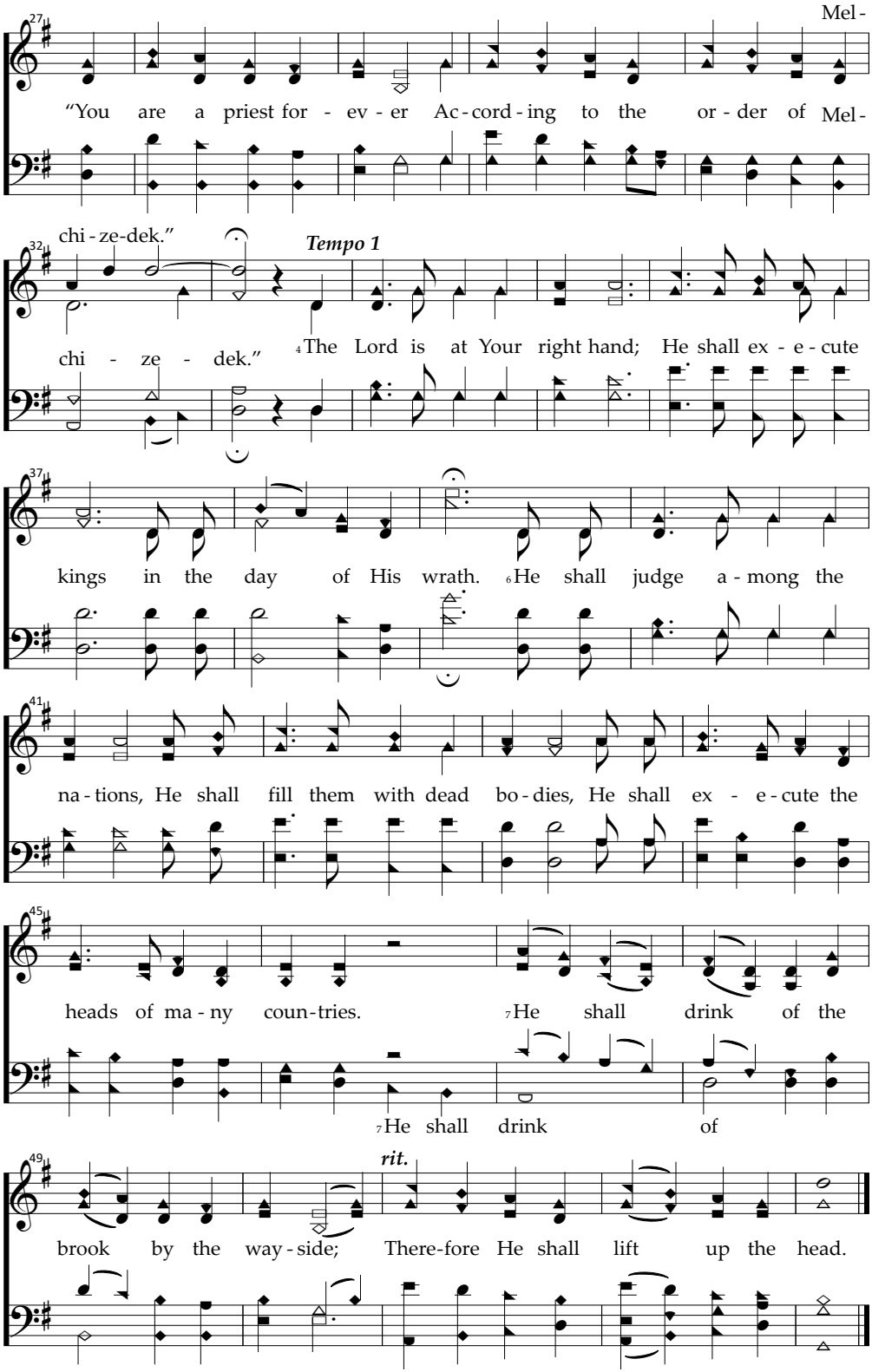
Psalm 110

New King James Version

A Psalm of David.

Michael E. Owens, 2002

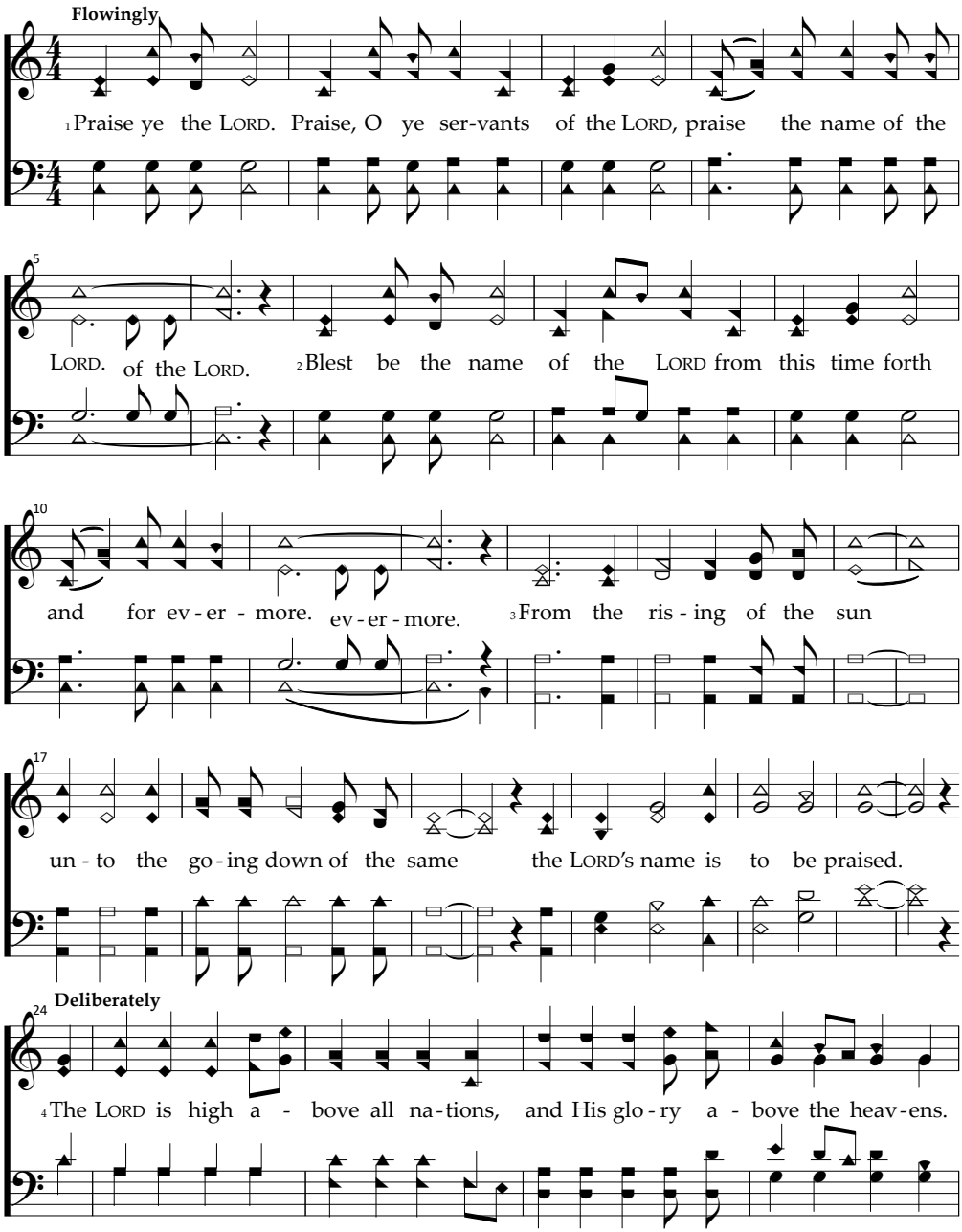


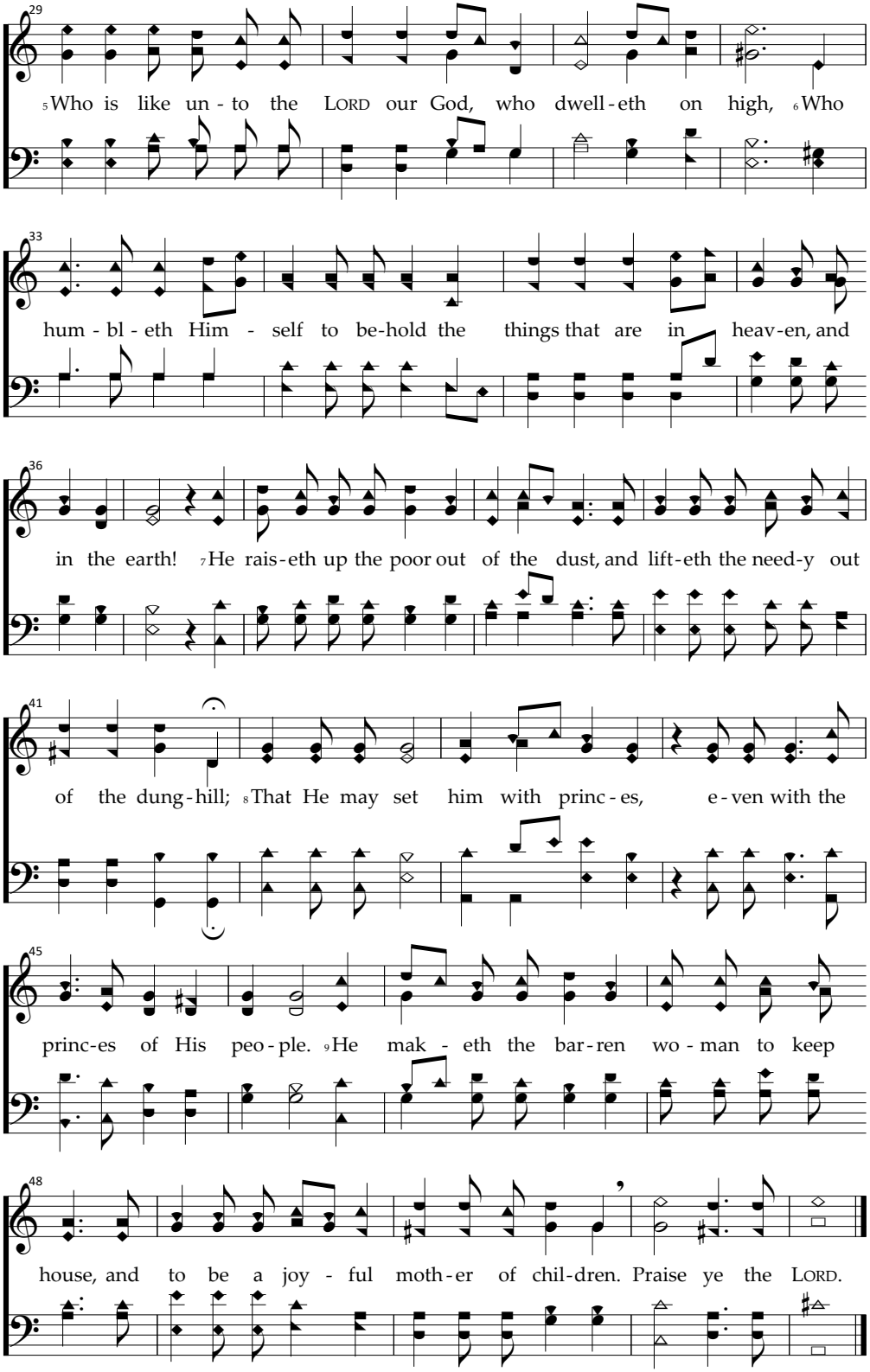

Mel-
"You are a priest for - ev - er Ac - cord - ing to the or - der of Mel-
chi - ze-dek."
Tempo 1
chi - ze - dek."
4 The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall ex - e - cute
kings in the day of His wrath. 6 He shall judge a - mong the
na - tions, He shall fill them with dead bo - dies, He shall ex - e - cute the
heads of ma - ny coun - tries. 7 He shall drink of the
7 He shall drink of
rit.
brook by the way - side; There-fore He shall lift up the head.

Psalm 113

King James Version

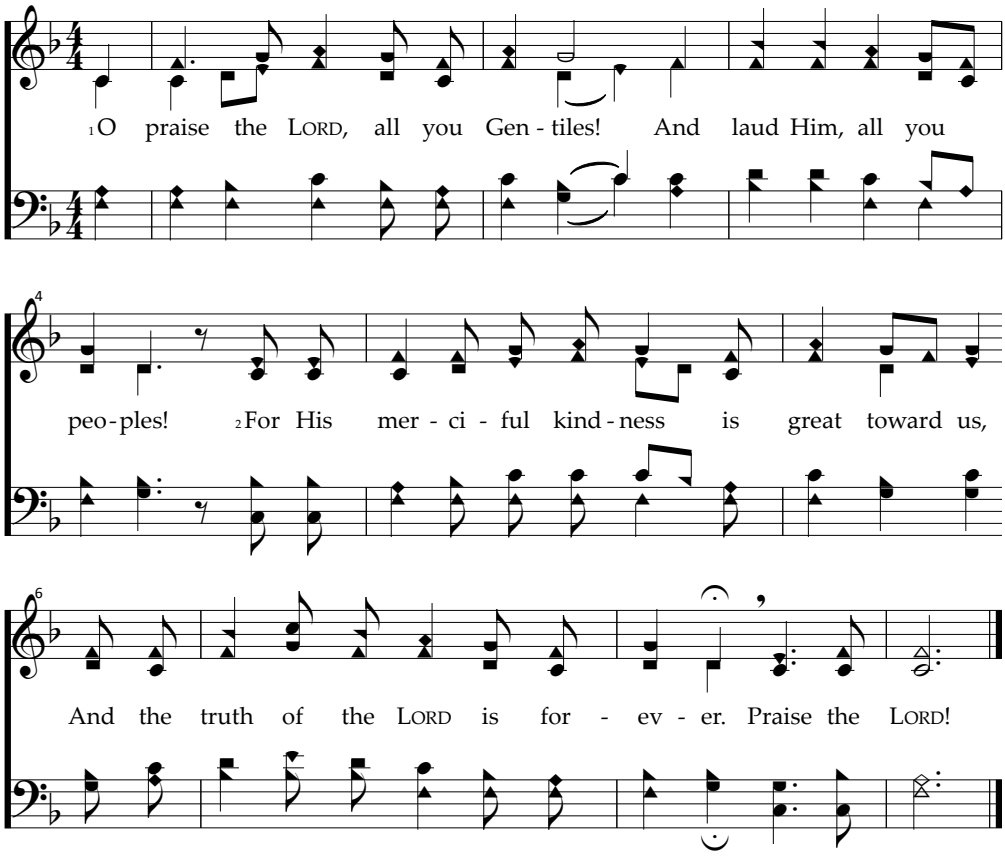
Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002




29
5 Who is like un - to the LORD our God, who dwell - eth on high, 6 Who
33
hum - bl - eth Him - self to be-hold the things that are in heav-en, and
36
in the earth! 7 He rais-eth up the poor out of the dust, and lift-eth the need-y out
41
of the dung-hill; 8 That He may set him with princ - es, e - ven with the
45
princ-es of His peo - ple. 9 He mak - eth the bar-ren wo - man to keep
48
house, and to be a joy - ful moth-er of chil-dren. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 117

New King James Version Michael E. Owens, 2002

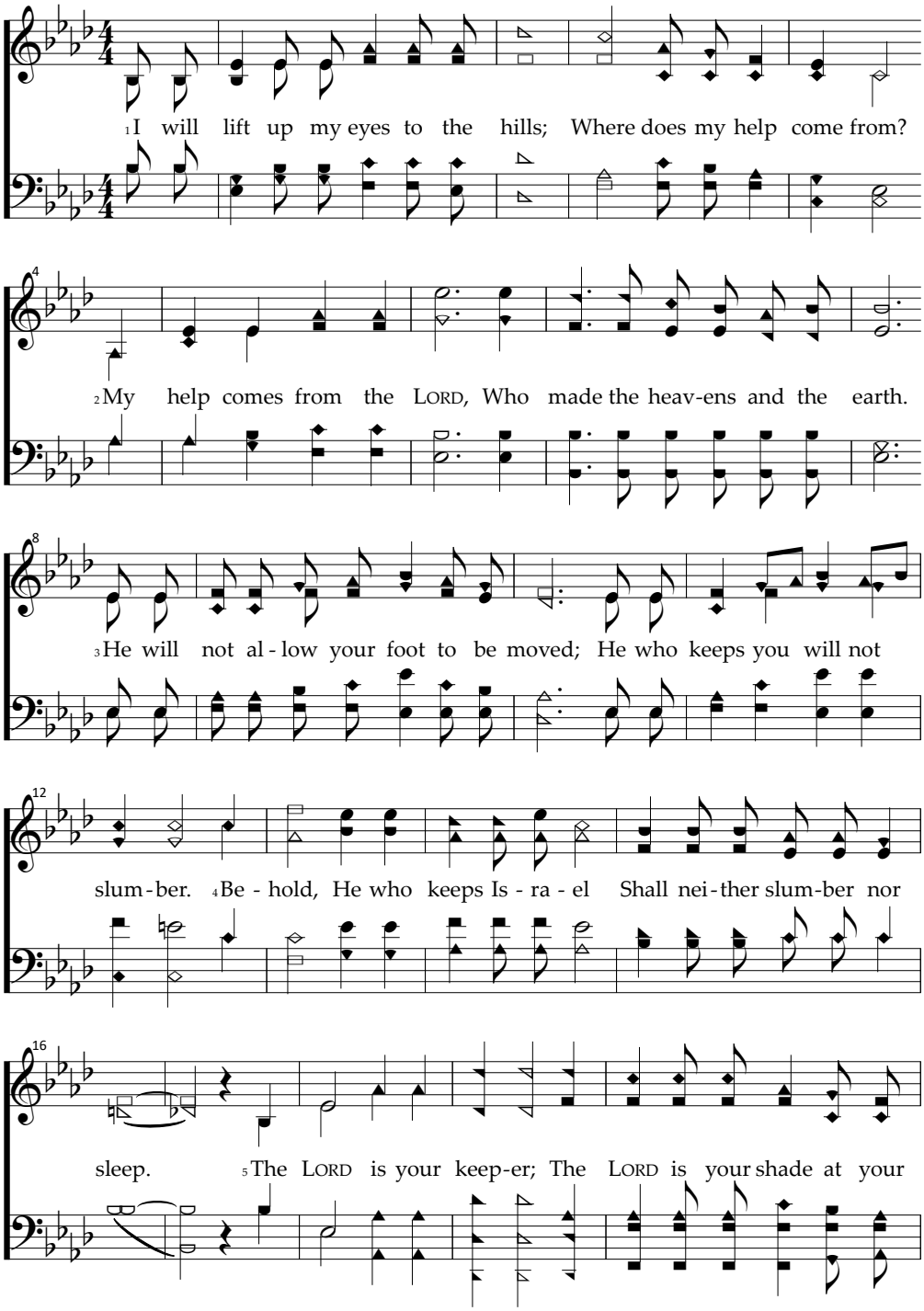


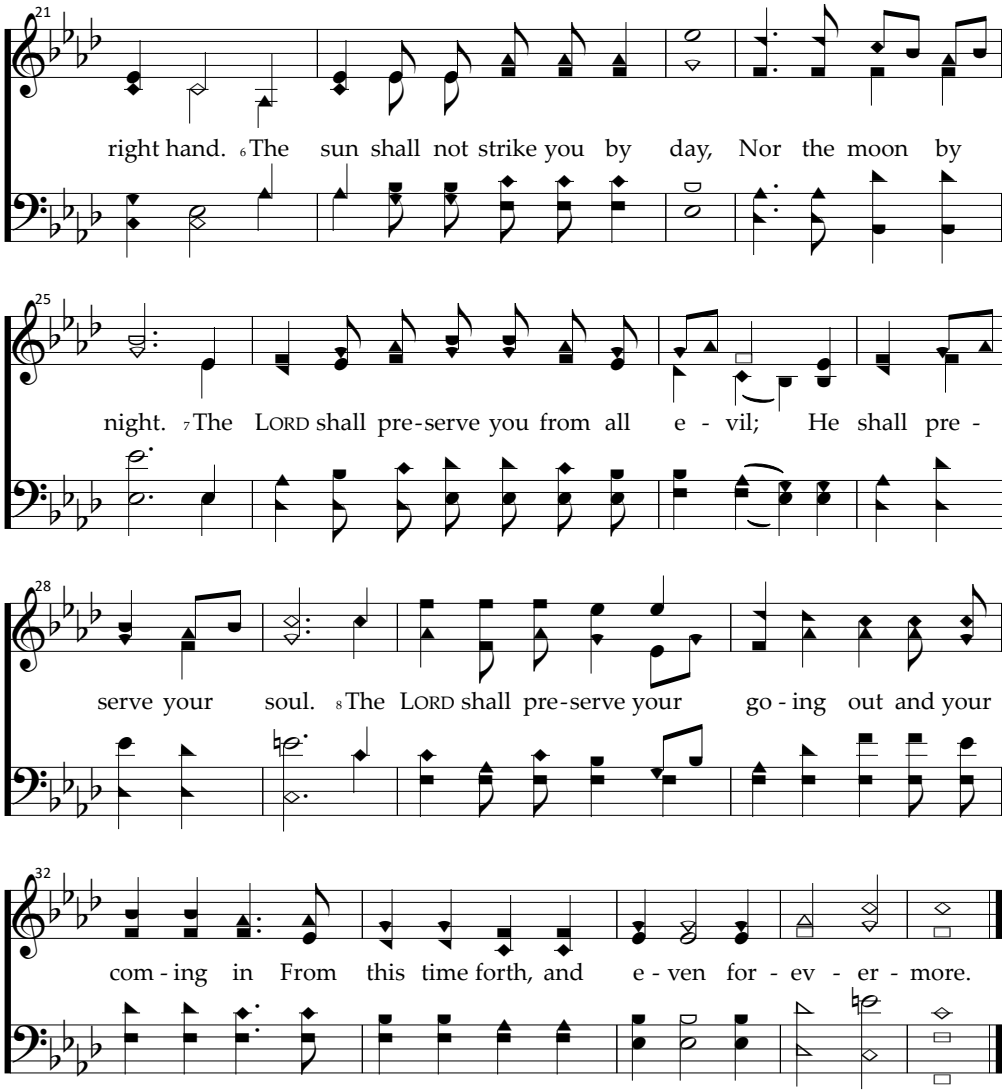
Psalm 121

New King James Version, alt.

A Song of Ascents.

Michael E. Owens, 2002



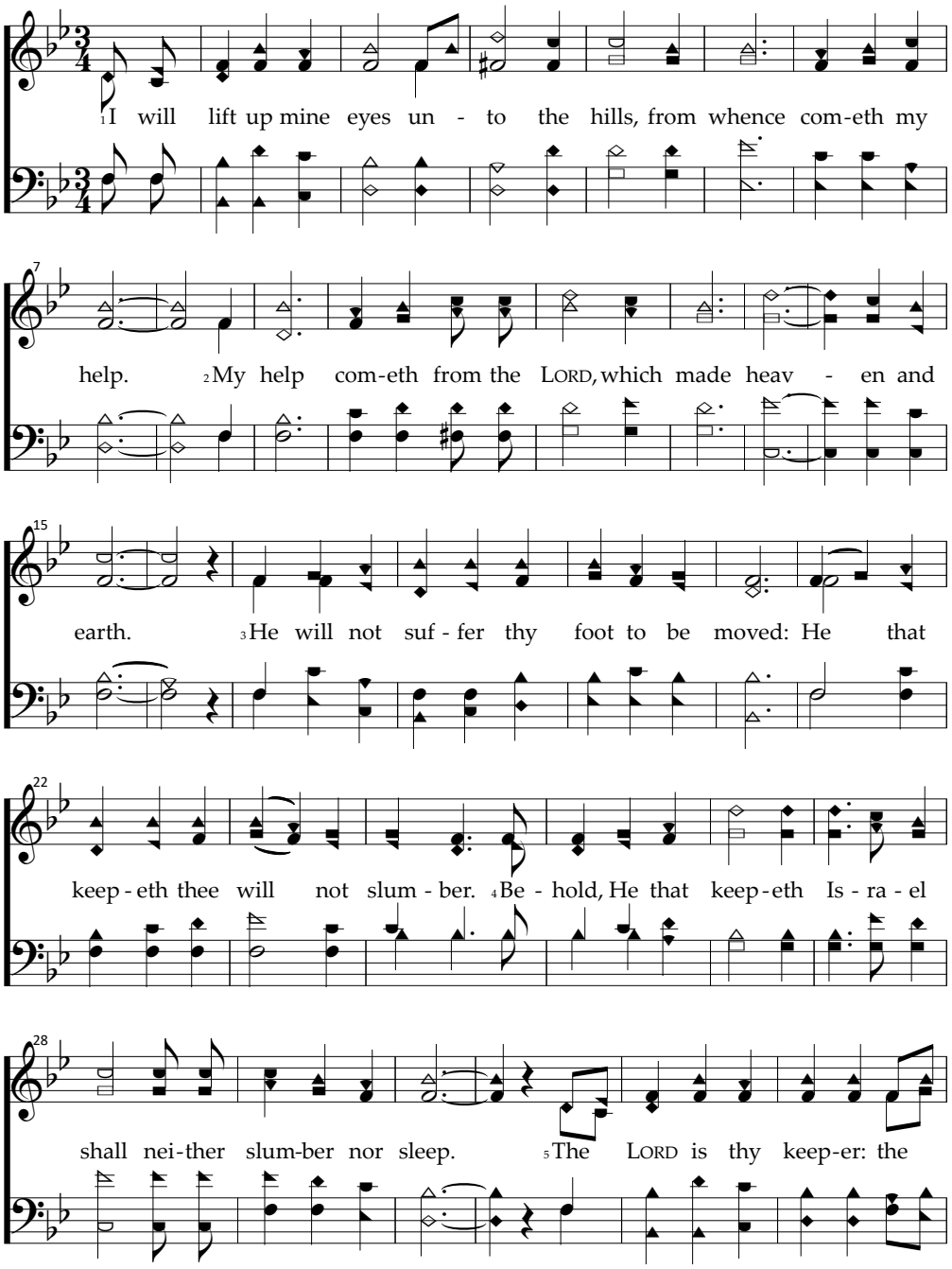

21
right hand. 6 The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by
25
night. 7 The LORD shall pre-serve you from all e - vil; He shall pre -
28
serve your soul. 8 The LORD shall pre-serve your go - ing out and your
32
com - ing in From this time forth, and e - ven for - ev - er - more.

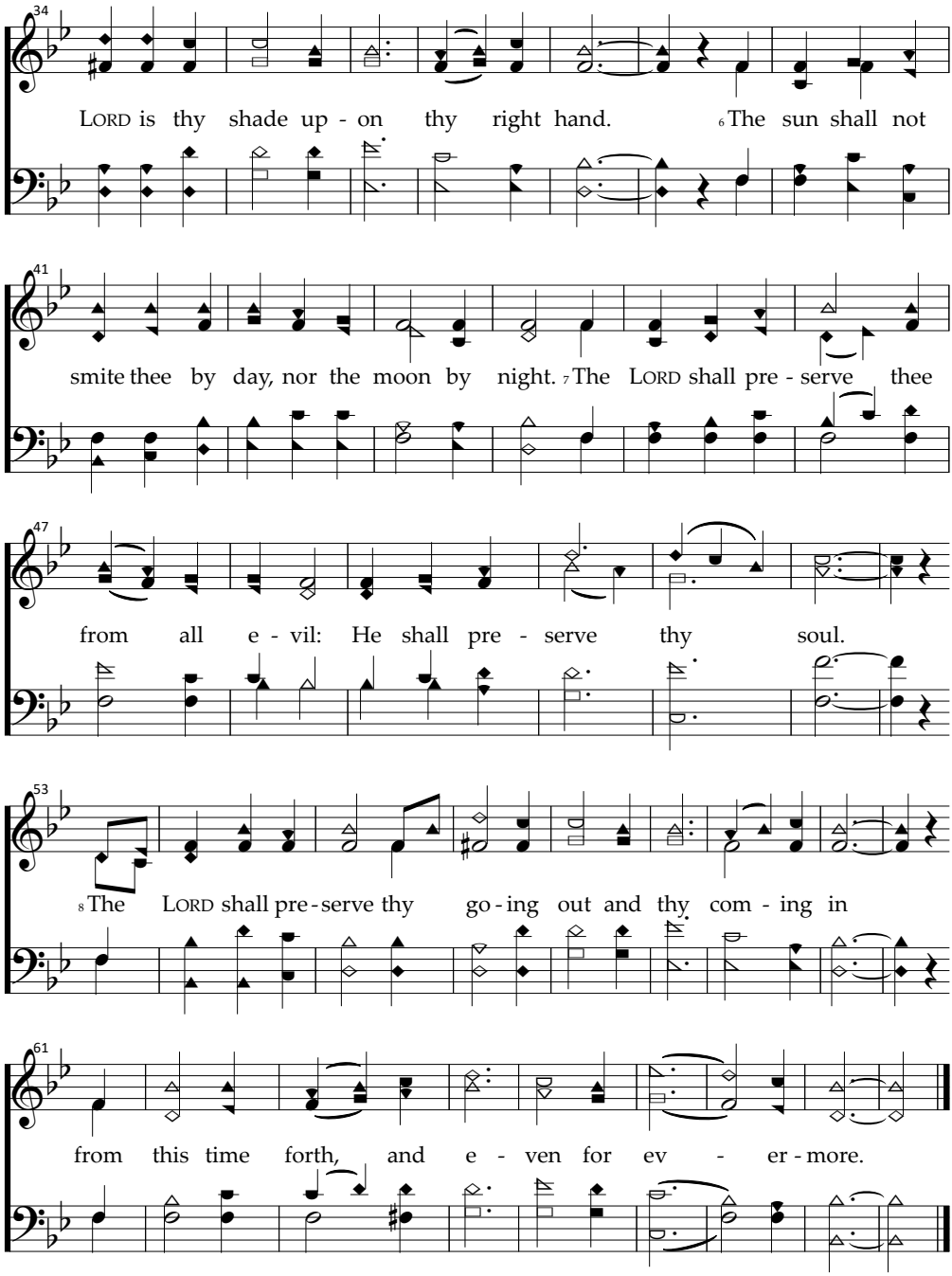
Psalm 121

King James Version

A Song of degrees.

Frederick Steinruck, 2000
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2000

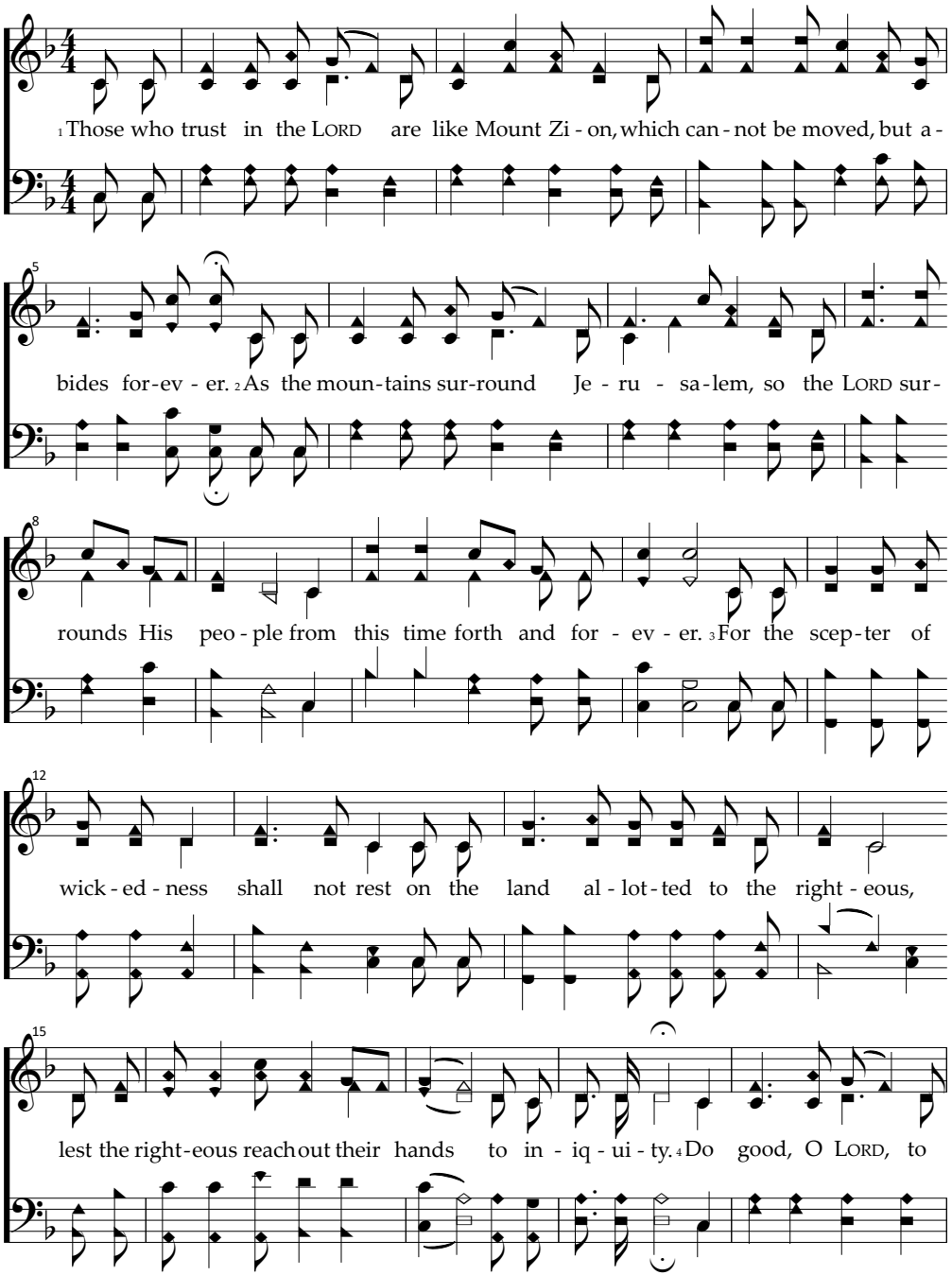


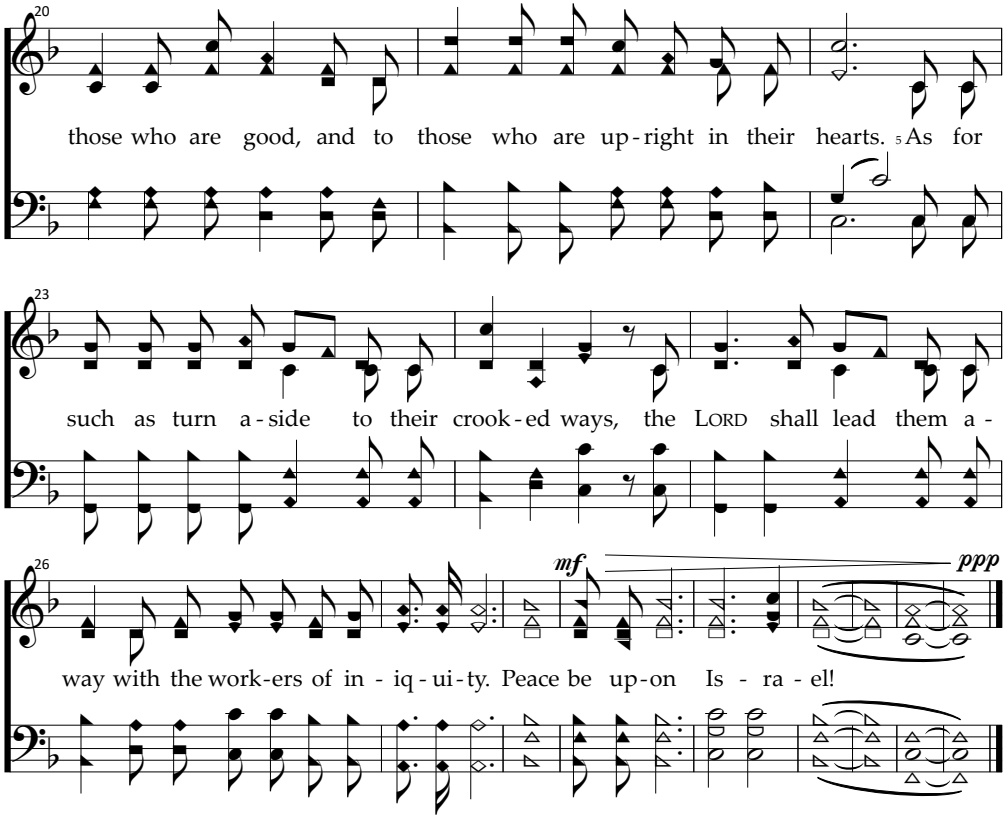

34
LORD is thy shade up - on thy right hand. 6 The sun shall not
41
smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. 7 The LORD shall pre - serve thee
47
from all e - vil: He shall pre - serve thy soul.
53
8 The LORD shall pre - serve thy go - ing out and thy com - ing in
61
from this time forth, and e - ven for ev - er - more.

Psalm 125

New King James Version

Michael E. Owens, 2002



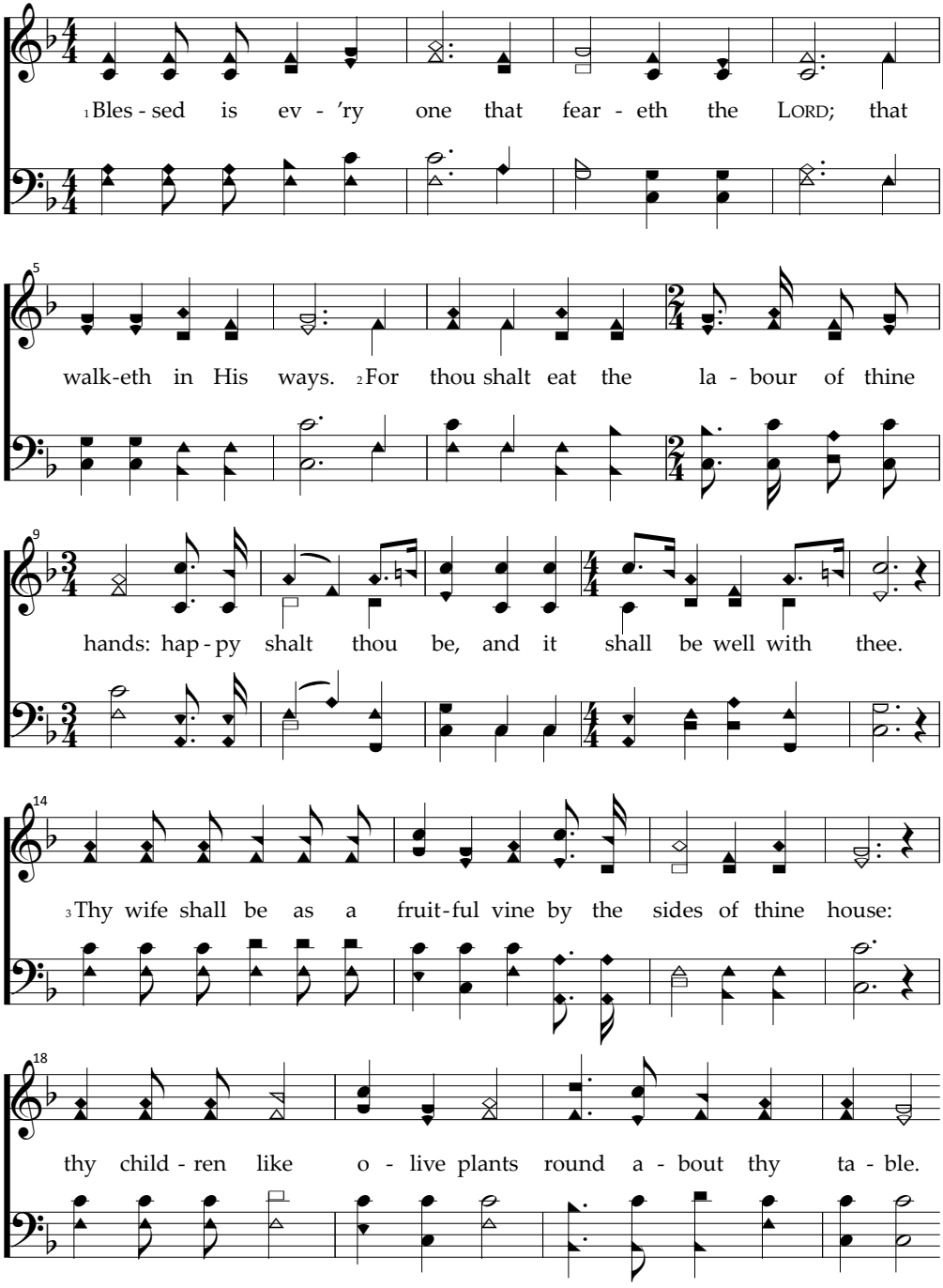

20
those who are good, and to those who are up-right in their hearts. 5 As for
23
such as turn a-side to their crook-ed ways, the LORD shall lead them a-
26
mf
ppp
way with the work-ers of in - iq-ui-ty. Peace be up-on Is - ra - el!

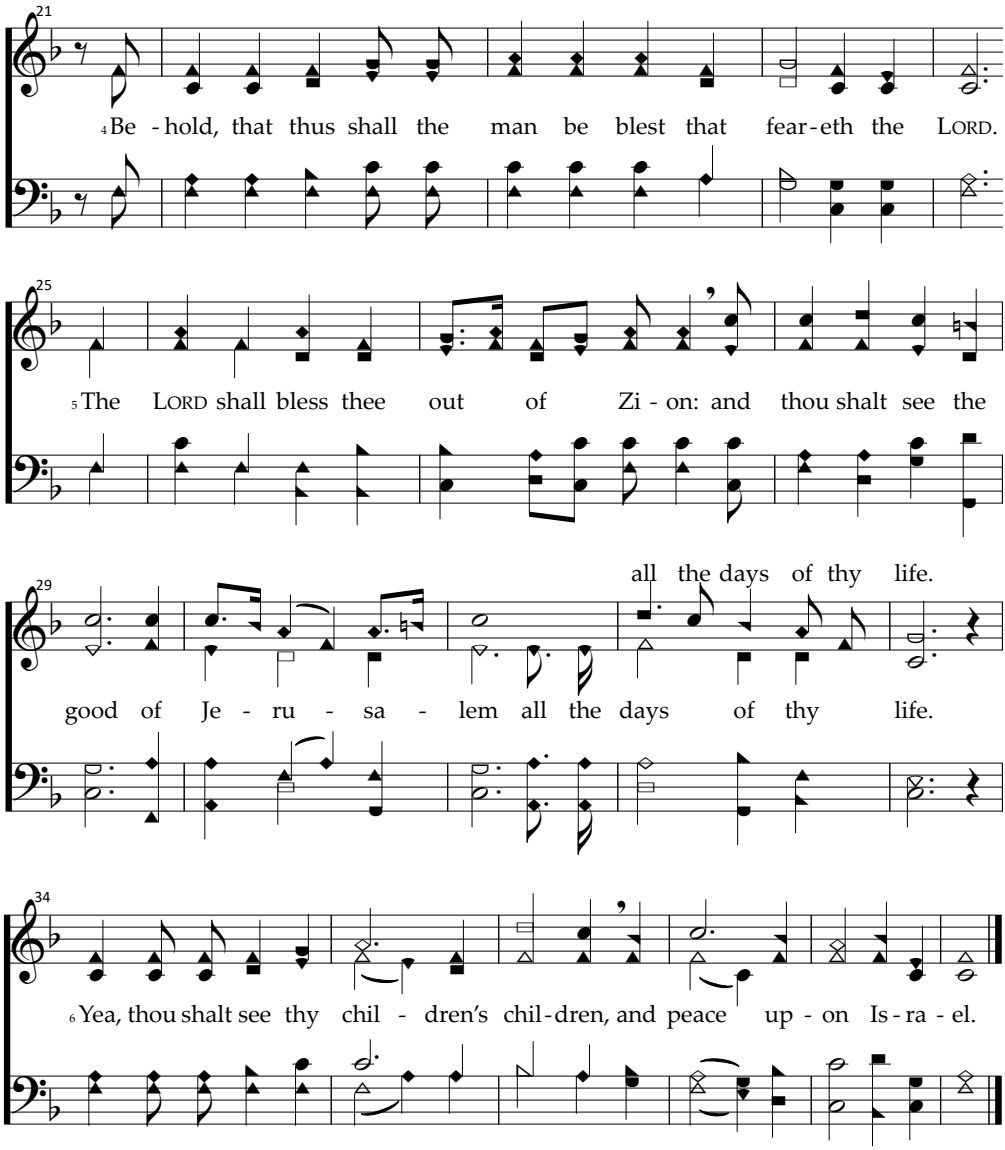
Psalm 128

King James Version

A Song of degrees.

Frederick Steinruck, 2001
harm. Michael E. Owens, 2002




21
4 Be - hold, that thus shall the man be blest that fear - eth the LORD.
25
5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zi - on: and thou shalt see the
all the days of thy life.
29
good of Je - ru - sa - lem all the days of thy life.
34
6 Yea, thou shalt see thy chil - dren's chil - dren, and peace up - on Is - ra - el.