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**John Calvin and  
the Psalmody of  
the Reformed  
Churches**

**Louis Fitzgerald Benson**



## John Calvin and the Psalmody of the Reformed Churches

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**Description:** By the turn of the 20th century, Benson had become a leading authority in Reformed hymnology. His personal library, in fact, eventually contained over 9,000 volumes. In 1907, Benson delivered Princeton Theological Seminary's L.P. Stone Lectures, and his series of talks concerned the topic of congregational singing in the Calvinist tradition. Most of the lectures concern the development of church music in Geneva during John Calvin's lifetime.

Kathleen O'Bannon

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## JOHN CALVIN AND THE PSALMODY OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES:



Being the First of the Lectures upon "The Psalmody of the Reformed Churches," Delivered on the L. P. Stone Foundation, at Princeton Theological Seminary, in February, 1907.

By Louis P. Benson, D. D.



*From an original Painting*

Portrait of John Calvin *From an original Painting*

## I. The Historical Background.

The subject of these lectures is the origin and development of congregational song in the Reformed or Calvinistic branch of the Protestant Churches. We are to study a peculiar type of Protestant Church Song:—which was introduced into public worship at Geneva in connection with the Calvinistic Reformation; which spread, along with the Calvinistic doctrines, into France, the Netherlands and other continental countries; which became, under Genevan influence, the characteristic song of the Reformed Churches of Scotland and England; and which finally was carried across the ocean by immigrants from these various European countries, and took its place as a part of the cultus of American churches, whether Episcopal, Congregational or Presbyterian.

The type of Church Song with which we have to deal consisted in the singing by the congregation itself of metrical versions of the songs of Scripture, preferably “the Psalms of David.” It is therefore conveniently designated as Metrical Psalmody. We need, however, to understand the precise force and significance of both the words composing this designation. There was, of course, no actual novelty in making the singing of Psalms a part of church worship. The practice had obtained from the beginning, having passed into the Christian Church from the Jewish. In the Daily Office of the Latin Church, as contained in the *Breviary*, the Psalter had always held the place of honor. Provision was made in the *Breviary* for the orderly rendering of all the Psalms in the course of each week. But the Psalms were not in the language of the people, the Latin prose version being exclusively used; and they were set to the Gregorian Chant, which could only be rendered by trained officiants. In such a Psalmody the people could take no part, and in actual life they were hardly even in contact with it. The rendering of the Daily Office was practically confined to the choirs of monastic establishments. In the parishes it was accounted sufficient that the priest should recite the Office as his daily meed of private devotion. As over against this historic “Psalmody” of the pre-Reformation Church, the distinction of the Calvinistic Psalmody lay in its congregational character. The Psalms were rendered into the vernacular that the people might understand them, and they were put into metrical form so that they might be set to simple melodies which the people could sing. To mark this distinction the Calvinistic type is designated as *Metrical Psalmody*.

But the metrical form into which the Calvinistic Psalmody was thus cast was not peculiar to itself. Metrical hymns in the vernacular had been composed by Ambrose and given to the people at Milan before the end of the fourth century. Gradually and not without opposition the Metrical Hymn established itself as a fixed element of the Daily Office throughout all Europe, and a great number of such hymns found place in the Breviaries. But in the course of this process the language of the Hymns, as of the Psalms, had become an unintelligible tongue, and the rendition of the Hymnody, along with the Psalmody, was largely relegated to the monasteries. The Hussite movement in Bohemia in the fifteenth



century was marked by a great revival of the composition and use of metrical vernacular hymns, the introduction of the congregational Hymn-Tune and of the popular Hymnal. Following this, and partly based upon it, came the great outburst of popular song in connection with the Lutheran Reformation, in which almost every type of the metrical hymn was made familiar. As over against this Hymnody, whether of the Latin Church or the Hussites or Lutherans, the distinction of the Calvinistic Psalmody lay not in its form but in its authorship and subject-matter. The Hymn was a religious lyric freely composed within the limits of liturgical propriety by anyone who had the gift. The Calvinistic Psalm, on the other hand, was simply the Word of God, translated and versified in hymn-form, so as to be sung by the people. To mark this distinction of the Calvinistic type of Church-Song, it is designated as *Metrical Psalmody*. When the purpose is merely to distinguish the two types of congregational song within the bounds of Protestantism, it will be sufficient to designate the singing of metrical Psalms in the Reformed Churches as Psalmody, as over against the freer Hymnody of Lutheran and other bodies.

The subject presents itself to us as a historic movement having unity and completeness within its own limits. The congregational Psalmody of the Calvinistic Reformation was, of course, an incident of the general movement to establish vernacular worship. Behind the Hussite and Lutheran Hymnody and the Calvinistic Psalmody lay the common motives of arousing and deepening the religious feelings of the people, of teaching them evangelical truth and of giving them the means of expressing their own devotions. But with the Calvinistic Reformation congregational song entered upon a new phase, and made a new beginning. In this, Church usage and Lutheran precedent alike were disregarded. The Scriptures were searched to find Apostolic authority on which to rest the ordinance of praise, and conformity to Scripture became the determining motive. To this supreme test the subject-matter of the songs themselves had to be submitted; and a literal adherence to the very words of Scripture songs, even though of the old dispensation, came to be preferred to any setting forth of gospel facts or truths in words of merely human composition. A system of Psalmody so conceived and ordered was obviously much more than a mere extension of the Lutheran Hymnody; and through all its history, the Psalmody of the Reformed Churches constituted a distinct type of Church Song.

And even less than was the case in the Lutheran Reformation in Germany, did the movement to establish Psalmody in the Reformed Church find any beginnings of popular religious song on which it could build. The movement had no element of spontaneity. It was not even a popular movement, but the conception of one man's mind and the enterprise of one man's will. It was a carefully planned element of that liturgical programme which Calvin prepared to express his ideals of worship, and it was the element of that programme for which he found least sympathy among his colleagues and least preparation among the people.



Least of all did the work of Calvin's great predecessor, Zwingli, afford any foundations upon which congregational Psalmody could be established. It will be remembered that the Reformation in the French-speaking cantons of Switzerland, which began at Geneva, formed the second period of the Swiss Reformation. The earlier period had been confined to the German-speaking cantons, beginning with Zurich. It was Zwingli whose mind dominated this earlier period; which, whether independent of Luther's influence or not, was characterized by marked divergences from the Lutheran model. The ecclesiastical tastes and veneration for tradition which led Luther to conserve the altar and mass, and as much as possible of the Church ritual, his desire to consecrate music and the other arts to divine service, were wanting in Zwingli, or if there at all, were sternly repressed. The stripping from the Zurich churches of their altars and images and decorations, and the covering their frescoes with whitewash, was not actually done by Zwingli. He thought it done prematurely; but the results nevertheless accorded with his mind. The churches became plain auditoriums, and in this they corresponded with Zwingli's conception of the normal attitude of the worshiper as that of an auditor of the Word and prayer. The essential in worship was the inward receptivity and response of faith to the spoken Word. Everything else Zwingli included under "ceremonies." "The Holy Supper," he says, "is itself a ceremony—though one instituted by Christ himself—which is sufficient:"<sup>1</sup> but it should have as few accompanying ceremonies and as little church pomp as possible. The extent to which he was prepared to "yield to human weakness" in the matter of ceremonies appears from his *Order of Administration for the Lord's Supper*, 1525. It includes some responses, and also the Creed, the *Gloria in Excelsis* and the CXIIIth Psalm, all arranged to be recited antiphonally by the minister, men and women of the congregation.<sup>2</sup>

In this service, and in all Zwingli's liturgical programme, music had no place. His position as regards music is to be determined both by what he did and by what he refrained from doing. With church music as he found it—that of choir and organ—he dealt summarily. As early as 1525 he abolished the singing by the choir, and on December 9, 1527, he ordered the organ of the Great Minster broken up, directing similar action in the churches of the city and canton. Bullinger justifies this action with a reference to St. Paul's objection to strange tongues without interpretation and things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp (*I Cor. 14:6-9*).<sup>3</sup> This doubtless was Zwingli's own explanation of his course. In reality it furnishes a motive for abolishing the unintelligible Latin in which the choir sang,

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1 Introduction to "Order of Administration for the Lord's Supper," 1525. Daniel, *Codex Liturgicus*, vol. iii. Tr. Mercersburg Review, vol. ix, pp. 594 ff.

2 The men and women were on opposite sides of the main aisle.

3 Bullinger, *Reformationsgeschichte*, Frauenfeld, 1838-40, vol. i, p. 418; and see Gieseler, *Text Bk. of Church History* (N. Y. ed.), vol. iv, p. 548.



but not for abolishing the choir itself. Zwingli must have been actuated by additional motives. He must have felt that there was no office for the choir to fill in the Reformed Church; or else that it was as a matter of fact so inevitably associated with a ceremonial type of worship that expediency demanded its abolition.

We have also to consider that Zwingli refrained from any steps toward substituting congregational singing for the forms of music thus abolished: a fact less easy of explanation in view of his personal fondness for music and proficiency in it, and his own composition of religious songs which he caused to be set to music. That Zwingli did not share Luther's deep sense of the indispensable functions of congregational song, is obvious enough. The question is rather whether Zwingli deliberately contemplated the permanent establishment in the Reformed Church of the anomaly of a religion without music. His competent biographer, Christoffel, answers confidently in the negative. His explanation is that Zwingli did not introduce music, solely from want of time, in the pressure of affairs, to select fitting hymns, and arrange divine worship for it in a manner consistent with his own views.<sup>4</sup> The explanation is somewhat disingenuous. In other parts of German Switzerland, at the same date, available materials for congregational song were found at hand. Moreover Zwingli did find time to arrange worship according to his views, and in so doing, as has been seen, he omitted music. His views as to music in worship may fairly be gathered from his introduction to the *Order for the Lord's Supper*, and they can hardly be interpreted as implying more than the toleration of congregational song. Singing, to Zwingli's mind, is a ceremony. His words are: "It has not been our design to set aside for other congregations any such ceremonies as have perhaps been promotive of devotion among them, such as singing and some others of the same nature."<sup>5</sup> Here, then, we appear to have the answer to our question. The matter of congregational song had not been postponed by Zwingli for a fuller opportunity, but carefully considered and disposed of. It was a ceremony, and one he declined to introduce at Zurich, but recognizing it as "perhaps promotive of devotion," he had no intention of prohibiting it elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Christoffel, Huldreich Zwingli, Elberfeld, 1857. Tr. by Cochran, Edinburgh, 1858: p. 150, note.

5 Mercersburg Review, vol. ix, p. 595.

6 Zwingli's later biographers appear to go beyond the above statement of his position. Mörikofer reluctantly admits that he shared the opinion of the Anabaptist faction that singing had no rightful place in public worship, and that the singing enjoined in the New Testament was the silent melody of the heart and not vocal and audible praise. (J. C. Mörikofer, Ulrich Zwingli, Leipzig, 1867-69, vol. ii, p. 93.) Stæhelin thinks that several causes may have contributed to exclude congregational song at Zurich, but that the decisive cause was neither Anabaptist opinion nor consideration for Anabaptists' feelings, but Zwingli's distrust of fixed forms of devotion and his judgment that devotion was not furthered by singing but by prayerful consideration of God's Word. (R. Stæhelin, Huldreich Zwingli, Sein Leben und Wirken, Basel, 1895-97, vol. ii, pp. 60, 61.)



So far as Zwingli's influence extended, his attitude in the matter proved practically prohibitive. At Zurich itself the Reformed worship continued without music for seventy years. As the Reformation spread through German-speaking Switzerland, the influence of Luther was more felt and that of Zwingli less. And where congregational singing was introduced before Calvin's time it may be safely said that the impulse came from Lutheranism and that the song was of the Lutheran type.

We have thus before us the historical background against which the work of Calvin is to be set, and we have now to consider the beginnings of the Reformed Psalmody at Geneva.

## II. The Situation at Geneva and Calvin's Proposals.

The movement to evangelize the French-speaking parts of Switzerland was undertaken by the powerful German-speaking canton of Bern. Having considerable dependencies in the French-speaking territory, Bern naturally wished them to follow its lead in adopting the Reformed faith, and sent to them a band of zealous missionaries, of whom William Farel was the chief. In this way the beginnings of reform in French-speaking Switzerland bore the impress of the Zwinglian type that characterized the movement at Bern, and which Bern itself in its turn had received from Zurich. When Calvin came to Geneva, in July, 1536, the Reformation was already acknowledged there. Under Farel's leadership, the mass had been discontinued, all holy days except Sunday abolished, the altars and images, and even the baptismal fonts, removed from the churches. But the work of constructing a Reformed Church on the ground thus cleared for it had hardly begun. In Calvin's own words:<sup>7</sup>

"On my first arrival in this city, the gospel was indeed preached, but things were in the greatest disorder. It was as though Christianity consisted in nothing more than the overturning of images."

Farel was keenly conscious of the situation, and recognized in Calvin the constructive gifts which he himself lacked; and when he had persuaded Calvin to remain at Geneva, the virtual leadership passed at once into Calvin's hands.

Farel had not, however, come to Geneva quite unprepared in the matter of setting up Reformed worship in the French language. He had published at Neuchâtel in 1533 his *La maniere et fasson quon tient en baillant le saint baptesme ... es lieux que Dieu de sa grace a visités*.<sup>8</sup> This was the Order of Worship which Farel introduced at Geneva.<sup>9</sup> The principal Sunday service consisted of a general prayer closing with the Lord's Prayer, and followed by the sermon. After the sermon came the commandments, confession of sins, the Lord's Prayer again, the Apostles' Creed, with a final prayer and benediction. In this Order the most striking feature is the entire absence of church song. This reflected the usage of Zurich and of Bern, but it does not necessarily imply any personal objection on Farel's part to congregational singing. His Order of Worship was nothing more than a diffuse rendering into French of the Order already established at Bern.<sup>10</sup> Its introduction at Geneva involves

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7 Calvin's Farewell Address to the Ministers of Geneva. Th: Beza, Vita Calvini: in Ioannis Calvini Opera, ed. Baum et al., 1863 seq., vol. xxi, col. 167. Cf. Opera, vol. ix, 891.

8 Reprinted by J. W. Baum, Strasburg, 1859. For full title in facsimile see Emile Doumergue, Jean Calvin: les hommes et les choses de son temps. Paris, 1899 seq., vol. ii, 154.

9 A. L. Herminjard, Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française, etc. Geneva and Paris, 1866 seq., vol. iv, p. 191, note.

10 In a letter undated, but before May, 1837, Calvin wrote to Gaspard Megander, a minister at Bern: "We have compared your little liturgical directory (libellum tuum cæronomiale), translated by Merelet at our request, with our own, and we discover no difference except that it is more concise." Opera, vol. xb, 87.

no more than Farel's compliance<sup>11</sup> to that extent with the well-known desire of the Council of Bern to impress its own usages upon all the cantons.<sup>12</sup>

Coincident with the publication at Neuchâtel, in 1533, of Farel's *Manière et fasson*, which was the first Order of Reformed worship in French, there was a movement to provide the French-speaking Swiss with Protestant songs. In the same year and from the same Neuchâtel presses appeared two song-tracts; the one entitled *Chansons nouvelles démontrants plusieurs erreurs et faulsetés*, containing five songs, the other containing nineteen, entitled, *Belles et bonnes chansons que les chrestiens peuvent chanter en grande affection de cuer*.<sup>13</sup> These were followed by a tract of twenty-four songs, entitled simply *Noelz nouveaulx*.<sup>14</sup> There is hardly room to doubt that the same influences were behind the songs and the Order of Worship, and that both alike emanated from Farel and his circle. These songs may not have been introduced into the stated public prayers and preaching at Neuchâtel, but taken in connection with what followed they strengthen the impression that the mind of Farel was predisposed to follow Calvin's leadership rather than Zwingli's in the matter of Church Song.

As to Calvin's own mind we are more fully informed. He had no sympathy with the suppression of congregational praise, whether at Bern or at Geneva. He had already formed that project of introducing congregational singing into the public services which was to become his most distinctive contribution to Reformed worship.

The position Calvin was to take was clearly foreshadowed in the first edition of his *Institutio*, published before coming to Geneva.<sup>15</sup> The third chapter dealt with Prayer. He gives equal recognition to two types of public prayer, the one in which the words are spoken, the other in which they are sung. Neither type has any value unless it proceed from the deep affection of the heart. But, on the other hand, neither is to be condemned so long as it follows the affection of the mind and is subservient to it.<sup>16</sup>

After a few months' observation of the Genevan situation Calvin drew up certain *Articuli de regimine ecclesiae*, setting forth the things most essential to a rightly ordered church. These *Articles* were presented to the "Small Council" by Farel, and, with its approval, came before the "Council of the Two Hundred" on January 16, 1537. This document has the

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11 See Doumergue, op cit., vol. ii, p. 498.

12 See Herminjard, op cit., vol. ii, p. 130.

13 Doumergue, op cit., vol. ii, p. 506.

14 F. Bovet, *Histoire du Psautier des Eglises Réformées*, Neuchâtel, 1872, p. 322, (but cf. Doumergue, ut supra). For specimens of these early songs, see O. Douen, *Clément Marot et le Psautier Huguenot*, Paris, 1878, 1879, vol. i, pp. 274-277.

15 Basle, March, 1536.

16 Opera, vol. i, 88.

special interest of revealing the reforms Calvin had most at heart. It constitutes also the fundamental documentary source for the history of Psalmody in the Reformed Churches.

The earlier part of the *Articles* deals with the Holy Supper of our Lord and with the establishment of such discipline as should safeguard its purity. The *Articles* then proceed:

“The other part concerns the psalms, which we desire to be sung in the church, after the example of the ancient Church, and according to St. Paul’s testimony, who said that it was a good thing to sing in the assembly with mouth and heart. We cannot conceive the improvement and edification which will come from this until after we have tried it. In our present practice, certainly, the prayers of the faithful are so cold as to reflect much discredit and confusion. The psalms would move us to lift up our hearts to God, and excite us to fervor in invoking him and in exalting by our praises the glory of his name. By this means, moreover, men would discover of what benefit and what consolation the pope and his partisans have deprived the Church, in that they have appropriated the psalms, which ought to be true spiritual songs, to be mumbled between them without any understanding of them.”<sup>17</sup>

Calvin had thought out the most practicable method of proceeding toward an end so desirable. The succeeding paragraph of the *Articles* suggested that a beginning should be made with the children. They were to be trained in some sober ecclesiastical song, and were to sing it loudly and distinctly while the people listened, following it in their hearts, until little by little they should grow accustomed to sing together as a congregation.

The entire unpreparedness of the people thus becomes evident, and we are made to feel how radical, then and there, the simple proposal to sing Psalms really was.

The “Council of the Two Hundred” expressed a general approval of the *Articles*, but it is unlikely that Calvin was allowed to proceed in his Psalmody project. His influence was being undermined by Caroli’s charges of heresy, and his own views and methods rapidly produced discontent and strife, and brought him into strained relations with both the people and the government.

Moreover the institution of Psalm singing at Geneva would involve, as has been said, a definite departure from the Bernese model of Reformed worship; and for that the time was unfavorable. Bern, which had aided Geneva to gain her independence, was anxious to bring the city within the scope of her own authority, and as a step to closer political union, sought to bring the Genevan church into closer conformity. While Calvin wished to develop the worship of the Genevan church on its own lines, the Council of Bern and a large party of sympathizers within Geneva urgently pressed the importance of uniformity of worship in both churches. The issue was framed in a demand of Bern that Geneva should join with all

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17 Opera, vol. xa, 12.

the French-speaking cantons in conforming to certain liturgical usages which prevailed at Bern, but which the somewhat more radical reformation by Farel at Geneva had rejected.<sup>18</sup>

In the end the Council of Geneva resolved (March 11, 1538) to introduce the usages of Bern into the Genevan church. The step was taken without even consulting Calvin or Farel, and left them in a difficult position. To accept the liturgical usages imposed by the Council involved their assent to the proposition that the Church had no voice in the regulation of its own ritual, but must accept it from the hands of the civil authorities. For this the reformers were not ready, and their refusal to conform immediately was made the occasion of banishing both from Geneva (April 23, 1538), whose people found the yoke of their strict discipline intolerable, and welcomed an opportunity to rid themselves of the disciplinarians.

Calvin and Farel appealed their case to the Synod which met at Zurich on April 29, 1538, and presented a paper drawn up by Calvin, under fourteen heads, of the terms upon which they were willing to return to Geneva.<sup>19</sup> In the matter of ecclesiastical discipline they were not prepared to yield very much. But the matter of the liturgical usages of Bern was more indifferent. The use of the font in baptism, the use of unleavened bread and the observance of festival days might be conceded, but on two points they stood firm: First, that the Holy Supper should be administered more frequently; second, that the singing of Psalms should be made a part of public worship.<sup>20</sup>

The second of these provisos in such a connection is surely noteworthy. We have to remember that liturgical uniformity had only just been attained; that Psalm-singing had so far no precedent in French-speaking churches; and that the way for making it practicable had not been cleared, the materials for employing it were not at hand. It excites a certain surprise that Calvin should refer to his project at all under such circumstances of personal humiliation. But that at such a crisis in church affairs he should make the inauguration of Psalmody the *sine qua non* of his return to Geneva and the resumption of his work of up-building the Reformed Church there—this reveals unmistakably that congregational Psalmody, which to Zwingli was a mere ceremony at the best to be winked at, was in the judgment of Calvin an ordinance essential to the right ordering of the Church of Christ. The earnestness of this conviction in Calvin's mind was the foundation of the Psalmody of the Reformed Churches, and in spite of all difficulties he at once proceeded to build upon it.



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18 The usages in question were, the use of fonts, placed at the entrance of churches, in baptism; the use of unleavened bread in the Holy Supper; and the observance annually of four festival days. Herminjard, vol. iv, p. 413.

19 Opera, vol. xb, 190-192.

20 "Alterum ut ad publicas orationes psalmodum cantio adhibeatur."

### III. Inauguration Of The Calvinistic Psalmody At Strassburg.

Banished from Geneva, Calvin went to Strassburg early in September, 1538, and found congregational singing an established ordinance among the German churches. Becoming pastor of the congregation of French refugees in that city, Calvin was now quite free to inaugurate the singing of Psalms among his own countrymen. The great difficulty in the way was the practical one of finding material suitable for the purpose. But within two months of his arrival he had his congregation singing French Psalms after some fashion, as appears from a letter of Zwick, dated November 9, 1538:

“A church has been given to the French at Strassburg in which they hear sermons from Calvin four times a week, but also celebrate the Lord’s Supper, and sing psalms in their own tongue.”<sup>21</sup>

The printed material then available for such a purpose was of the slightest.<sup>22</sup> Two or three songs based on Psalms were included in the earlier Neuchâtel *Noelz nouveaulx*, but if Calvin employed them, such use has left no traces. He had begun to gather together such manuscript Psalm versions as he could find, and, because he was much pleased with the tunes sung by the German congregations in Strassburg, he set about composing French Psalms in metres adapted to these tunes.<sup>23</sup>

It is possible that the actual effect upon Calvin of the congregational singing at Strassburg may have been to convince him that to make congregational Psalm singing practicable and effective required not only a translation into the vernacular but also into metrical form; and that his original thought had been merely to have the prose version of the Psalter set to the simpler Gregorian chants. This is consistent with the language of the *Articles* of January 16, 1537, and would explain Calvin’s proposal to start congregational singing at Geneva at a time when metrical Psalms hardly existed. It may be added that prose as well as metrical pieces were included in the first issue of Calvin’s Psalm book when it appeared. From this point, in any case, Calvin’s project is that of metrical Psalmody, and contemplates a complete version of the Psalter.

By the end of December, 1538, Calvin’s manuscript materials had sufficiently accumulated to justify his announcing to Farel, then at Neuchâtel, his purpose of printing them forthwith for the use of his congregation.<sup>24</sup> The actual date at which this purpose was accomplished, marking as it would the appearance of the first Calvinistic Psalter, was for long an object of interested inquiry. The available data were these: On June 28, 1539, Pierre

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21 Opera, vol. xb, 288.

22 As to Psalms in French already existing, see Herminjard, vol. iv, p. 163, n.; but compare Bovet, pp. 15, 16.

23 “Quia majis arridebat melodia germanica”: Calvin to Farel, 29 December, 1538. Opera, vol. xb, 438.

24 Opera, xb, 438. “Statuimus enim brevi publicare.” For the correct date (December 29, 1538) see Herminjard, v, 452, n.

Toussain, pastor at Montbeliard, wrote to Calvin: "I pray you to send me the French Psalms."<sup>25</sup> There was also this passage in a letter of Calvin himself to Farel on October 27 of the same year:

"I have not been able just now to write to Michael. Do you, however, urge him to write by the first messenger what has been done about the psalms. I had given orders that a hundred copies should be sent to Geneva. Now for the first time I am made to understand that this has not been attended to. It was certainly very negligent to delay so long to inform me."<sup>26</sup>

The question was whether these (with one or two later) references implied the appearance in that year, 1539, of a printed Psalter. Herminjard maintained that they did.<sup>27</sup> The learned editors of Calvin's works had doubted it, thinking that the hundred copies were to be made by hand from Calvin's draft.<sup>28</sup> Bovet also held that the Psalms were not yet in print.<sup>29</sup> The question was settled finally by the discovery in the Royal Library of Munich of a copy of the long-lost Psalm book.<sup>30</sup> It is a little book of sixty-three pages, without name of editor or printer, with the title: *Aulcuns pseaulmes et cantiques mys en chant. A Strasburg. 1539.* "Here is the first Reformed Psalter: let us greet it," says Calvin's enthusiastic biographer, "with the respect it deserves;"<sup>31</sup> and he quotes appropriately a remark of Zahn:<sup>32</sup>

"This novel book is the source from which the whole literature of the [metrical] psalms has issued; those psalms which for four centuries have resounded in all the world."

The book contains twenty-one pieces in all, each having its melody printed with the first verse. Eighteen are Psalms; seventeen in verse, one in prose. There are also the *Nunc Dimittis* and the Commandments in verse, and the Apostles' Creed in prose. The melodies are some of those used by the German congregations of Strassburg, with which Calvin had been so much pleased. Of the metrical Psalm versions, two we know to be the work of Calvin's own hand, from his own testimony.<sup>33</sup> Three others, as well as the *Nunc Dimittis*

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25 Opera, vol. xb, 357.

26 Opera, vol. xb, 426.

27 Op. cit., vol. v., p. 452, n.

28 Opera, vol. vi, prolegomena, xxi.

29 Op. cit., p. 15.

30 For an account of the discovery and full description of the book, see Douen, vol. i, pp. 301-303: for the title page in facsimile, see Doumergue, vol. ii, p. 511.

31 Doumergue, vol. ii, p. 511.

32 Ad. Zahn, "Calvin als Dichter": Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft, 1889, vol. vi, pp. 315-319.

33 "Two Psalms, xlvi and xxv, are my first attempts; the others I added afterwards." Calvin to Farel, December 29, 1538. Opera, xb, 438.



### *III. Inauguration Of The Calvinistic Psalmody At Strassburg.*

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and Commandments, are in all probability his.<sup>34</sup> The twelve Psalms remaining are the work of Clement Marot, the most accomplished French poet of his time.

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<sup>34</sup> See Bovet, "Sur les Psaumes de Calvin," op. cit., pp. 211-224. For the text of all the verse attributed to Calvin, see Opera, vi, 211-224.

#### IV. Clement Marot And The Court Psalmody.

Marot was to play a great part in Reformed Psalmody; a part best explained by saying that Providence raises up its own instruments for its own ends. His whole career was that of a *pensionnaire* of the great and a free lance in religion and in letters. Beginning as page to a nobleman, he sought through courtly verse to win the patronage of the house of Valois. In 1518 he gained a place in the household of Marguerite, duchesse d'Alençon, patroness of the new learning and sister of Francis I. He followed Francis to Italy in the campaigns of 1520 and 1525, was wounded and taken prisoner. Returning to France in the following year, his free speech and satirical gift brought upon him the suspicion of being a Protestant. Marot denied the charge, but was imprisoned for heresy. Francis secured his release in 1527, and gave him a post in his household. He gained a wide popularity upon the publication of his collected poems in 1532. But his enemies also were watching him and waiting for a turn in the political situation that would encourage a new attack upon him. In 1535 the Parliament of Paris summoned him to appear and answer the charge of heresy. He fled from France and for a while found refuge with the duchess Renee of Ferrara, where he did considerable poetic work.

Marot was permitted to return to France in 1536, and was established under the direct patronage of Francis in a residence in the suburbs of Paris. Here he at once entered upon the project of a translation of the Psalter into French verse. He had made his poetical reputation neither by sustained power nor by sounding depths of feeling, but by vivacious, witty and graceful lyrics and ballads, rondeaux, epigrams, satires and the like—light-hearted and decidedly free in their morals. What turned Marot to the Psalms can only be surmised. The contrast between his offensive epigrams and his Psalms gives a certain plausibility to the opinion that both alike were poetical exercises of a facile pen which worked as readily at the one class of themes as at the other. According to Florimond de Raemond, Marot's project was rather born of the spirit of the new learning than so active, and took its impulse from his contact with the scholars of the Royal University lately established in Paris by the king. The learned Vatable there expounded the Hebrew Scriptures, and according to De Raemond, engaged Marot to translate the Psalter, furnishing him with a corrected text.<sup>35</sup>

Marot's gay spirit and free ways have caused hesitation in giving credit to a religious motive from within. But he had room in his heart for genuine religious feeling. He loved the new gospel, as well as the new learning, and he had already suffered for his faith. He must have entered upon the translation of the Psalms well aware, to say the least, that the private interpretation of Scripture and the spread of vernacular translations among the people was an enterprise sure to excite suspicion and likely to involve personal danger.

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35 Bayle, Dictionary, art. "Marot."



It is not necessary to assume that Marot was a secret Huguenot or that he aimed at a direct contribution to the Reformed cultus.<sup>36</sup> There is more ground for holding that he designed to make Psalm singing fashionable by producing versions that would be welcomed as songs. It is certain that he used his position to introduce them at court, putting autograph copies of the Psalms, as he composed them, into the hands of king and queen, courtiers and fair ladies, in the hope that they might replace the frivolous and often objectionable songs then in vogue. In this he succeeded, largely through the delight which his Psalms afforded the Dauphin, afterwards Henry II. Villemadon has left a graphic account<sup>37</sup> of the enthusiasm of the Court over the new Psalmody. The Dauphin sang Marot's Psalms, and gathered musicians to accompany them on the lute and viol. Those about him felt or feigned a share in his delight, and, to please him, begged him to choose for each a Psalm. This he did, until each member of the court had his or her own special Psalm. The Dauphin kept the CXXVIIIth to himself and composed a tune for it. Generally the Psalms seem to have been set to light melodies from the vaudevilles. The Psalms having thus become fashionable, were in the position most favorable to a wider distribution and adoption.

It was the echoes of this Court Psalmody which reached Calvin at Strassburg; and through some one of the doubtless numerous channels of distribution, twelve of these Psalms of Marot reached him in time to be included in his first Psalm book of 1539. At that date Marot had put none of his Psalms into print, other than his early version of Psalm VI, appearing in his *Le miroir de treschrestienne princesse Marguerite de France* (Paris, 1533). And there is no reason to believe that he furnished Calvin with manuscript copies of the twelve Psalms. Their text in Calvin's book of 1539 does not agree with Marot's own text when he soon afterwards printed them, but it does agree with an altered text which Pierre Alexandra made and printed in a Psalm book published by him at Antwerp in 1541: *Psalmes de Daudid, translatez de plusieurs autheurs, et principalement de Cle. Marot. Veu recongneu at corrigé par les theologiens*.<sup>38</sup> It was presumably Alexandre who furnished Calvin with copies of the twelve Psalms for his first Psalm book.<sup>39</sup>

36 But compare Douen, i, 283.

37 Villemadon's letter to Catherine de Médicis is in Douen, vol. i, p. 284-287, and in Bayle, art. "Marot." Florimond de Raemond, in his *Histoire de la naissance, progrèz, et décadence de l'hérésie de ce siècle* (Paris, 1610), used the same data to show the unchurchly origins of Reformed Psalmody.

38 See Bovet, op. cit., bibliographie, No. 2.

39 There is evidence that soon after Calvin left Geneva Jean Gérard, a printer there, printed some of Marot's Psalms from copies which had come into his hands. (Douen, vol. ii, pp. 645-647.) This lost publication was perhaps Alexandre's source.

Marot in his home at Paris had gone forward in his work of translation with the approval of the king, and when Charles V came to Paris in 1540, Marot by the king's desire, presented to Charles the thirty Psalms which he had up to that time translated. Charles

“received the said translation graciously, highly valued it, and presented him with two hundred Spanish pistoles, and also encouraged him to finish the said work by translating the rest of the said Psalms, and desired him to send him, as soon as he could, the Psalm *Confitemini Domino, quoniam bonus*, because he particularly loved it.”<sup>40</sup>

Under such favor, soon to prove fickle enough, Marot printed at Paris, in 1541,<sup>41</sup> his *Trente Pseaulmes de David, mis en francoys par Clement Marot, valet de chambre du Roy*, with a courtier-like dedication to the king and a “priuilege” granted after seeing the “certification of three doctors in theology” that the book contained nothing contrary to the faith, the Scriptures or the usage of the Church.<sup>42</sup> A certain air of levity which Marot had thrown upon his enterprise so far may have successfully veiled his deeper meaning from the king. It was not so with Marot's old enemies, the Faculty of the Sorbonne, who at once condemned the book in spite of the certification of the “three doctors.” The Parliament of Paris issued a writ for Marot's arrest. Francis after some hesitation determined to join in the repression of heresy, and withdrew his protection from Marot. No course was open to Marot except flight; he left France, and toward the close of 1542 found a refuge in Geneva.

In this work of translating the Psalms, however heretical, Marot had acted up to this point quite independently of the leaders of the Reformed churches, with whom he was not even in correspondence. But his Psalms, on the face of them, were intended to be sung. And his completion of the *Trente Pseaulmes* afforded an opportunity to enlarge the slim Reformed Psalter which was utilized even before they were actually in print.

Their first appearance in this way was in the Psalter of Pierre Alexandre, already referred to as printed at Antwerp in 1541, and which represented an effort to extend the new Psalmody among the French-speaking people of the Low Countries.<sup>43</sup> Alexandre's position at the Hungarian court no doubt put him in the way of securing an early manuscript copy. His freedom in altering the text proves that he was acting without the knowledge of Marot himself.

It was again through Alexandre that the new instalment of Marot's Psalms came into Calvin's hands, and probably not until after he had left Strassburg. Their next appearance, so far as now known, was in an Order of Worship and Psalter purporting to be printed at

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40 Letter of Villemadon, ut supra.

41 O. S. Early in 1542, N. S. See Douen, vol. i, p. 290.

42 Bovet, op. cit., bibliographie, No. 1.

43 The book contained no tunes, but in the case of some Psalms, the name of an air was mentioned, to which the Psalm might be sung.

Rome,<sup>44</sup> February 15, 1542, by order of the Pope, with the following title: *La manyere de faire prieres aux eglises francoyses, tant deuant la predication comme apres, ensemble pseaulmes et canticques francoys quon chante aus dictes eglises*, etc.<sup>45</sup> The pretended “privilege,” which might seem to be a mere jest, was in fact a device of the printer, by which he hoped to delay sequestration of his wares until they could be marketed.<sup>46</sup> The book was in reality printed at Strassburg, and was a new edition of Calvin’s Psalter of 1539, with the new Psalms of Marot and four by other translators, taken from Alexandre’s Antwerp Psalter. It did not appear until after Calvin had left Strassburg. It opens with a short preface in justification of Psalmody. The preface is in Calvin’s manner and probably by his hand. It leaves an impression of having originally appeared as the preface to an earlier edition of Calvin’s service-book and Psalter, in 1540 or 1541, but now lost.

As things are this edition of 1542 is the earliest we have of the Order of Worship introduced by Calvin into the French church at Strassburg. It is substantially a translation of the German Order of Worship observed at Strassburg when Calvin came there, as framed by Bucer;<sup>47</sup> but it bears marks of Calvin’s personality, and probably better represents his liturgical views than the modified form of it he afterwards introduced at Geneva.

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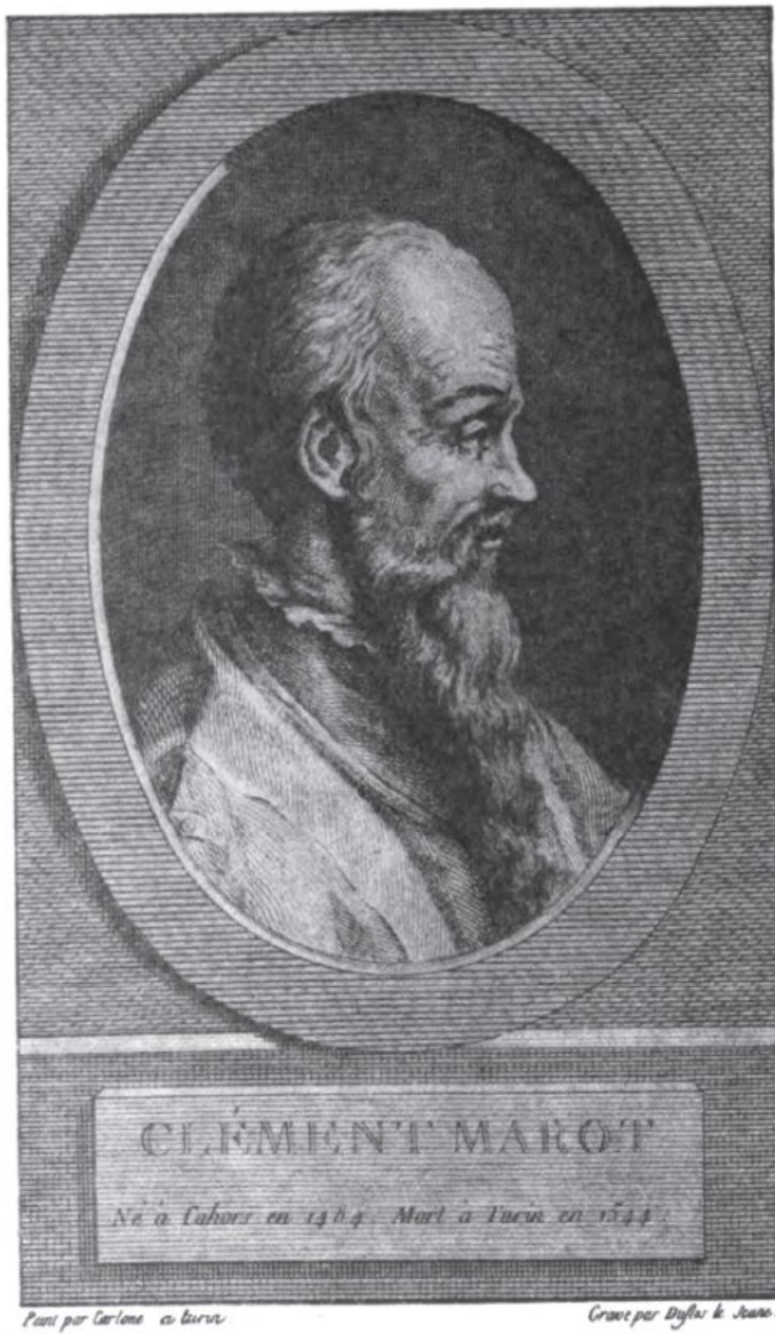
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44 Hence known as the “Pseudo-Roman Edition.”

45 Bovet, op. cit., bibliographie, No. 4. For full contents, etc., see Douen, ii, 333-347.

46 Opera, vol. vi, prolegomena, xv.

47 The subject is fully elucidated by Alfred Erichson, *Die Calvinische und die Altstrassburgische Gottesdienstardnung*, Strassburg, 1894. Calvin’s principal Sunday service in full is in Douen, vol. i, pp. 335-339. See also Doumergne, vol. ii, pp. 488-497.



Portrait of Clement Marot

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### V. Inauguration Of Psalmody At Geneva.

The date of Calvin's return to Geneva, upon being recalled from his exile, was September 13, 1541. In the church reorganization that ensued, he was now the dominating influence, and he gave immediate attention to the public worship, which during his absence had continued unchanged on the lines originally established by Farel. Calvin brought with him his little Strassburg Psalm book and the Order of Worship he had there observed. In adapting the latter to Genevan use he made numerous modifications. Of these the most important were the omission of the declaration of absolution following the confession of sins and a loosening of the rubrics so as to encourage free prayer. These modifications are not necessarily indicative of change in Calvin's own liturgical views. Some were plainly concessions to the somewhat extreme notions of liturgical simplicity prevailing at Geneva.<sup>48</sup> But, nevertheless, the Order of Worship as established at Geneva rather than that established at Strassburg was henceforth regarded as representatively Calvinian. Under the authority of his name it became the general model of Reformed worship, and it largely determined the worship of all branches of English-speaking Presbyterians.

While thus willing to accommodate himself to local conditions in all matters not regarded by him as essential, Calvin abated nothing of his earlier insistence upon the establishment of congregational Psalmody. Two months after his arrival he obtained permission from the Council to introduce Psalm singing into the public worship.<sup>49</sup> This was on November 20, 1541. At that time he had apparently no materials for the purpose except his own scanty collection. But in February, 1542, or very soon after, he received the enlarged edition of the Strassburg Psalter published in that month. He at once availed himself of its contents, and published later in the year the first Genevan edition of his Psalter as *La forme des prieres et chantz ecclesiastiques, avec la maniere d'administrer les Sacremens, & consacrer le Mariage, selon la coustume de l'Eglise ancienne*.<sup>50</sup> The volume opened with an unsigned "Epistre au lecteur," which, with additions made in 1543, remains the fullest presentation of Calvin's view on Psalmody.<sup>51</sup> Besides the Form of Prayers, etc., now commonly known as "Calvin's Liturgy," this edition contained all the thirty Psalms of Marot, the five Psalms and two canticles of Calvin himself, with Marot's metrical Lord's Prayer and Creed. The text of

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48 See, contra, Douen, op. cit., vol. i, p. 350. But compare Doumergue, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 502, note; and, more fully, the same author's *Essai sur l'histoire du culte réformé*, Paris, 1890, pp. 101 ff.

49 Douen, op. cit., vol. i, p. 347. See also pp. 354, 355.

50 One copy survives, found by Wackernagel in the library of Stuttgart. The services are printed in full in *Calvini Opera*, vol. vi, 161-210, with some of the Psalms; for a full description see Douen, vol. i, pp. 347-351.

51 The full text of Calvin's preface as printed in 1542 is in Ph. Wackernagel, *Bibliographie sur Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenliedes im. XVI. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt, 1855, pp. 575, 576; and with the additions of 1543, in *Opera*, vi, 165-172. Wackernagel's description of this edition (from the copy which he discovered) now requires

Marot's Psalms is that of Alexandre's Antwerp Psalter, showing that Calvin had not yet seen Marot's own publication of the *Trente Pseaulmes*, for, when he did see it, he greatly preferred Marot's original text. Calvin, very likely, had not seen even the Antwerp Psalter. He took his material directly from the Strassburg edition of February, 1542, of which, excepting the omission of five versions there copied from the Antwerp Psalter, and the substitution of the metrical for the prose Creed, Calvin's first Genevan edition is a reproduction. The musical contents of this edition are more distinctive, the Strassburg melodies, where here employed, having been subjected to revision, and twenty-two melodies added, which here first appear.

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modification. For a translation of the greater part of Calvin's preface, see J. W. Macmeekin, *History of the Scottish Metrical Psalms*, Glasgow, 1872, pp. 98-100.



### VI. The Genevan Psalter: Calvin, Marot And Beza.

The singing of Psalms had established its place in the public worship of Geneva when Marot arrived, toward the end of 1542, but to him and the other French refugees it was a novelty indeed. The sight of the great congregation gathered in St. Peter's, with their little Psalm books in their own hands, the great volume of voices praising God in the familiar French, the grave melodies carrying holy words, the fervor of the singing and the spiritual uplift of the singers,—all of these moved deeply the emotions of the French exiles now first in contact with them, and, most of all, Marot, for he recognized the songs the congregation sang as being his own. His work of Psalm translation thus gained a new meaning, and he was more easily persuaded by Calvin and his associates to proceed in it with a view of putting the complete Psalter before the congregation.

This work involved the personal coöperation of Calvin and Marot. Marot would object to the changes Alexandre had introduced in the text of his Psalms as sung at Geneva; Calvin would insist upon certain amendments in the old work and the new in the interests of fidelity to Scripture. Altogether during the period of his sojourn at Geneva, Marot added nineteen to the number of his versions of Psalms. These, together with an improved text of his earlier versions, he printed at Geneva in August, 1543, as *Cinquante Pseaumes*<sup>52</sup> *en francoys par Clement Marot*, introduced by his famous "Epistle to the Ladies of France." This publication was literary, and not liturgical, the Psalms not being set to music. There can hardly be a question that Calvin at once proceeded to have this done, and that in 1543 or 1544 he printed a new edition of his Psalter containing the forty-nine Psalms; but no copy of such edition has come to light.<sup>53</sup>

This coöperation of Calvin and Marot at Geneva is one of the most curious episodes in the history of Psalmody. All that is known of it argues a spirit of accommodation and devotion to a common cause which redounds to the credit of both men. The familiar charge of cruel treatment on Calvin's part, and gross misconduct on Marot's, may be alike dismissed as unsupported. It is especially to Calvin's credit that he recognized so frankly the superiority of Marot's work, that he accepted the poet's own text as against that previously adopted, in spite of the practical inconvenience of such a change, and that he suppressed his own Psalm versions, and substituted Marot's, because better. Anxious for the completion of the Psalter,

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52 In reality forty-nine, the Nunc Dimittis counting as the fiftieth.

53 The Ecclesiastical Registers of Geneva, 16 June, 1543, show the publication of another lost edition of "The Psalms of David, with the Prayers of the Church," to which the date affixed to Calvin's preface (10 June, 1543) corresponds. But that edition could hardly have had Calvin's supervision or approval, as the printer inserted in it the Ave Maria, which canticle, when seen by the consistory, was ordered to be expunged. There seems to have been another edition that summer, for which Calvin prepared the enlarged preface of 10 June, 1543. This must have been a reprint of the Psalms already in use. See Douen, vol. i, p. 448.

he requested the Council to make a grant to Marot, that he might stay and proceed in his work. This was refused.<sup>54</sup> Soon after, Marot quitted Geneva, and died at Turin in August, 1544. The action of the Council no doubt disappointed him; and Beza is formally correct in saying that Marot “had been bred up in a very bad school, and could not submit his life to the reformation of the Gospel;”<sup>55</sup> but justice demands that the reformation of the Gospel referred to should be explained as meaning the Calvinistic discipline as then imposed upon Geneva.

The refusal of the Council to engage Marot to complete the Psalter, whether caused by prejudice or parsimony, was a blow to Calvin as well as to the poet; and Marot’s death quenched any reasonable expectation of completing the Psalter on the same level of poetic excellence. Marot’s success raised up a number of imitators, but so far as the Calvinistic Psalter was concerned, his death arrested its progress for several years.

In the autumn of 1548, four years after Marot’s death, Theodore Beza arrived at Geneva in the enthusiasm of his new faith. Out of the old life of prosperous gayety which he renounced he brought with him a considerable equipment of Renaissance scholarship and literary accomplishment. On attending the public worship for the first time, he heard Marot’s XCIst Psalm sung by the congregation, and, as he himself has told us,<sup>56</sup> received an impression so deep that it remained with him all his life. It is likely that Beza, with his literary instincts and confirmed habit of verse making, felt a disposition to try his hand at Psalm translation. It is certain that Calvin, who had been seeking some one capable of assuming Marot’s unfinished work,<sup>57</sup> believed that he had found him in the person of Beza. Beza informs us that he undertook the work at Calvin’s instigation,<sup>58</sup> but he did not begin it until after going to Lausanne as professor of Greek at the end of 1549.

Beza’s progress was not rapid enough for Calvin, who wrote Viret on January 24, 1551: “If he has any of the Psalms ready, they need not be kept waiting for company. Ask him to send at least some of them by the first messenger.”<sup>59</sup>

Beza quickly responded. On March 24, 1551, he obtained permission of the Council to print the remainder of the Psalms with musical notes,<sup>60</sup> and during that year the first instal-

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54 Registres du Conseil, 14 Octobre, 1543: cited Bovet, op. cit., p. 20.

55 *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, Antwerp, 1580, vol. i, p. 33 (quoted in H. Morley, *Clement Marot and other Studies*, London, 1871, vol. ii, p. 62). For Beza’s relation to this book, see H. M. Baird, *Theodore Beza*, N. Y., 1899, pp. 310 ff.

56 Note to Latin Paraphrase of 91st Psalm: *Psalmorum Davidis et aliorum Prophetarum Libri Quinque*; ed. London, 1586, p. 412.

57 Calvin to Viret, 15 March, 1545: *Opera*, vol. xii, 47.

58 In the dedication of his Latin Psalms, quoted in Bovet, p. 25, note.

59 *Opera*, vol. xiv, 27, 28.

60 *Douen*, vol. i, p. 552.

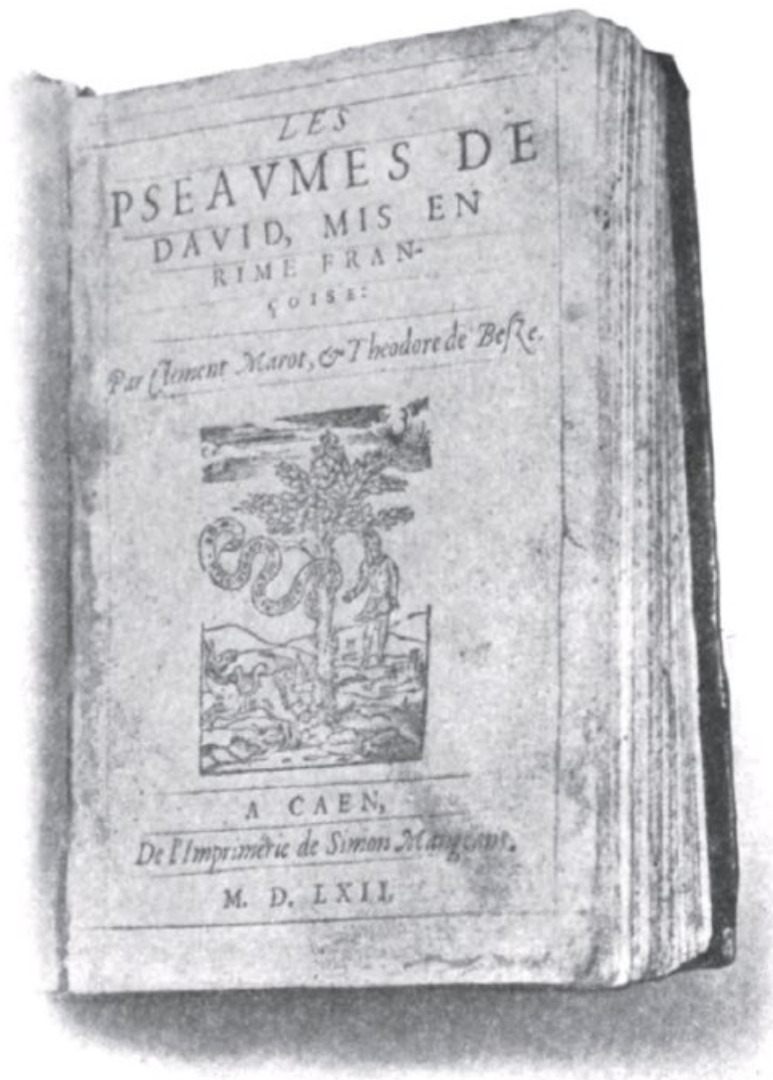
ment appeared from the Genevan press of his friend, John Crespin, as *Trente-quatre pseumes de Daud, nouvellement mis en rime francoise au plus pres de l'hebreu, par Th. de Besze de Vezelay en Bourgogne*. In this the Psalms were introduced by a lengthy “Epistle to the Church of our Lord,” evidently designed to replace Marot’s “Epistle to the Ladies of France” with deeper notes of encouragement to the “little flock” under persecution, and which long continued to be reprinted as an introduction to the Psalters.

Calvin was entirely satisfied with the new Psalm versions of Beza, whom he had come to hold in the deepest affection. He sent a copy of them to Madame de Cany early in 1552, that she might see for herself what Beza was doing for the Church, and be led to intercede for his relief against the pecuniary pressure of his enemies; in order “that he may follow out this work, and better things beside.”<sup>61</sup> These other demands evidently diverted Beza’s hand from Psalm translation. His thirty-four Psalms and Marot’s forty-nine were gathered together and printed at Geneva in 1552 as *Pseaumes octante-trois de Daud*, but no new material was added till the reprint of 1554, under the same title but appending six new versions of Beza. One more appeared in an edition of 1554 or 1555. It was not until 1562, sixteen years after Marot’s death, and twenty-three years after the publication of Calvin’s first collection, that the complete Psalter appeared at Geneva, under the designation afterwards so familiar: *Les Pseaumes mis en rime francoise par Clement Marot et Theodore de Beze* (Geneue, Antoine Dauodeau et Lucas de Mortiere, pour Antoine Vincent.)



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61 Opera, vol. xiv, 451-454.



THE GENEVAN PSALTER.

Facsimile of Title Page of one of the complete editions of 1562.

(Douen, bibliographie, No. 106, bis.)

Size of original page, 5-5/8 x 3-5/8 inches.

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## VII. The Melodies of the Genevan Psalter.

An essential part of the *Genevan Psalter* was the melodies to which the Psalms were set. From its beginnings in 1539 the Psalter was not a book of poetry, but a song book in which every piece had its proper tune.

As has already appeared, the singing of Marot's Psalms began, not among the Huguenots, but at the French court, which set the fashion of adapting them to popular airs. The Psalms, says Florimond de Raemond,<sup>62</sup> "were not then set to music, as they are now, to be sung in churches; but everyone gave them such a tune as he thought fit, and commonly that of a ballad." These tunes, Raemond says, were popular because they were pleasant and easy to learn. The example of the court was followed by Pierre Alexandre in preparing his Antwerp Psalter of 1541. It contained no tunes, but a number of the Psalms were preceded by the opening words of some familiar song, as indicating the melody to which they were adapted.<sup>63</sup>

Calvin's course was different. He held pronounced views as to the character of music which was suitable to the house of God. In his preface of 1543 he said:

"It has always to be seen to that the singing be not light and frivolous, but that it have weight and majesty, as Saint Augustine says: so that the music made to amuse people at dinners and at home differs widely from the Psalms sung in church in presence of God and the angels."

In order to carry out these views Calvin from the beginning supervised the music of his Psalter with the same zeal and pains he gave to its literary upbuilding. The melodies he heard in the German congregations at Strassburg became his starting point; he preferred them, as he wrote Farel,<sup>64</sup> to the French tunes. Some of them he adapted to the manuscript Psalms in his possession, and to make others available he made Psalm versions of his own, as we have already seen. These melodies, embodied in Calvin's Strassburg Psalter of 1539, became the basis of the Genevan music. Eleven of them<sup>65</sup> (though with one exception modified more or less by musical editing) retained their places through all the subsequent development of the Genevan Psalter. One of them (the XXXVith), in connection with Beza's version of the LXVIIIth Psalm, to which it was afterwards set, was destined to have a great career as the "Huguenot Battle-Psalm."<sup>66</sup>

When Calvin secured the introduction of Psalm singing at Geneva in November, 1541, the first step was to familiarize the people with the tunes; and his original proposal to begin

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62 *Histoire de l'hérésie*; quoted by Bayle, *Dictionary*, art. "Marot."

63 See Bovet, p. 249.

64 December 29, 1538. *Opera*, vol. xb, 438.

65 Psalms, 1, 2, 15, 36, 91, 103, 104, 114, 130, 137, 143. The original melodies of 1539 may be recovered by means of chapter xxi of M. Douen's work.

66 For the history of Psalm and tune see Doumergue, vol. ii, appendice viii, "La Psaume des Batailles."

with the children was now carried out by the Council. William Franc, a refugee from Rouen, who in June of that year had been licensed to establish a singing school, was appointed to teach the children “to sing the Psalms of David,” with a salary of ten florins,<sup>67</sup> and on June 6, 1542, was made precentor at St. Peter’s. On April 16, 1543, the Council resolved that:

“Whereas the Psalms of David are being completed, and whereas it is very necessary to compose a pleasing melody to them, and Master Guillaume, the precentor, is very fit to teach the children, he shall give them instruction for an hour daily; and that Master Calvin be conferred with concerning his salary.”<sup>68</sup>

The salary of fifty florins proposed by the Council was raised through Calvin’s urgency to one hundred. Franc retained his position till 1545, when he informed the Council that he could not live at Geneva on a hundred florins, and, upon their refusal to augment his salary,<sup>69</sup> he resigned and went to Lausanne.

It does not appear that Franc had any part in the musical editing of the *Genevan Psalter* of 1542. The Order of Council just quoted contains no intimation that he was employed to compose as well as to teach the new tunes. The persistent claim that Franc composed and arranged these melodies is not supported by the evidence. It rests upon a letter of David Constant, professor at Lausanne at the end of the seventeenth century, which Bayle published in his *Dictionary*.<sup>70</sup> Constant wrote that he had seen a testimonial signed by Beza, dated November 2, 1552, declaring that it was Franc who set the Psalms to the melodies sung in the churches, and that he (Constant) owned a copy of the Psalms printed at Geneva under Franc’s name, and also a magistrate’s license of 1564 in which Franc is named as the composer of the tunes. Constant’s statements were investigated by Léonard Baulacre, who reported in the *Journal Helvétique*,<sup>71</sup> in 1745, that he could find no reference to the composition of tunes in Beza’s testimonial of 1552, and that the Psalter seen by Constant, although printed at Geneva, was not the *Genevan Psalter*, but an independent one prepared by Franc for use at Lausanne.

Franc established himself at Lausanne in 1545, and was made precentor in the cathedral. He found Marot’s Psalms in use there, but the melodies were not those he had been accustomed to at Geneva. In this little matter of the tunes, Lausanne had pleased itself by asserting its independence of Geneva. On July 21, 1542, Viret wrote Calvin: “We have resolved to sing at once the music of the Psalms composed by Gindron,” a canon of the cathedral,

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67 Douen, vol. i, p. 608.

68 Douen, vol. i, p. 608.

69 29 May, 1545. Doumergue, vol. ii, p. 513.

70 Art. “Marot.”

71 Recherches sur les psaumes de Marot et de Bèze, reprinted in Œuvres de Baulacre, Geneva, 1857, vol. i, p. 410; quoted in Douen, vol. i, pp. 609, 610.

“which is easier and more agreeable than yours.”<sup>72</sup> Franc’s coming to Lausanne, with none too kindly recollections of Geneva, doubtless acted as an encouragement to prepare a complete Psalter on the same musically independent lines. In 1552 the minister of Lausanne applied to the Council of Geneva for permission to print the Psalms with the Lausanne tunes, there being no printers at Lausanne.<sup>73</sup> The Council saw no objection and granted a license. No Psalter of that date has been discovered, but in 1565, three years after the appearance of the complete *Genevan Psalter*, there was published at Geneva the complete Psalter edited by Franc, under the title, *Les psaumes mis en rime françoise par Clement Marot et Theodore de Beze, avec le chant de l’Eglise de Lausanne*.<sup>74</sup> This Psalter itself, and the “privilège” of the Genevan authorities to print it, dated December 1, 1564, were those seen by Constant, and account for the error into which he was led as to Franc’s connection with the *Genevan Psalter*. In the preface<sup>75</sup> to his Psalter Franc disclaims any rivalry of “those who have done their work faithfully” or any wish “to correct what they have done so well”; but he neither intimates nor implies that his own hand had shared in their work. Franc’s Psalter contains some twenty-seven compositions or adaptations of his own. He explains that these were called for to accompany recent translations of Psalms to which hitherto no proper tunes had been set. As for the rest, he claims the right to choose the best of those already in use in Lausanne or other Reformed churches.



72 Opera, vol. xi, 412.

73 Douen, vol. i, p. 612.

74 Douen, vol. i, p. 610.

75 Reprinted in Bovet, note v, and Douen, vol. i, p. 611.

An opening of the GENEVAN PSALTER, 1562.

The melody at the right is that commonly called “The Old Hundredth.”

Franc’s tunes in the Lausanne Psalter are of small merit,<sup>76</sup> and were soon superseded even in Lausanne itself. Their present interest lies in the internal evidence they afford that the man who wrote them could not also have been the composer of the Genevan melodies; for the particular distinction of the Genevan tunes lies in their unsurpassed excellence. They were composed, to quote Robert Bridges,<sup>77</sup> by an “extraordinary genius” in that grave type of melody best adapted to congregational praise.

There is no reasonable doubt that they were the work of another French musician, for fifteen years a resident of Geneva, Louis Bourgeois. He had come there in 1541, with Calvin or soon after him, and probably by his invitation. Calvin recognized his ability, at once engaged him as musical editor of the 1542 edition of his Psalter, and became his sponsor and advocate before the Council. In 1545 the Council divided Franc’s office and emoluments between Bourgeois<sup>78</sup> and William Fabri. In 1574 they granted him the freedom of the city, “because he is a good man and willing to teach the children,” and exempted him from guard duty that he might give himself more closely to his studies. In the license of 1552 to print the Lausanne Psalter, which has been already referred to, it is distinctly stated that it was Bourgeois who had arranged the melodies of the earlier editions of the Genevan Psalter, and who had set to music the Psalms of Beza more lately added to it.<sup>79</sup>

In return for this service, which after events were to prove so great, the Council treated Bourgeois with ill-judged parsimony and worse. In 1551, at the very height of his best work, they cut his salary in half. Then followed a series of petitions from Bourgeois, who “desired to live and die in their service,” and asked only enough to live on. Calvin intervened, and pleaded the musician’s poverty, but in vain; the Council would “speak no more of money.” Meantime Bourgeois was constantly at work to perfect the music of the Psalms, and the Council, wearied of his petitions, made this an occasion of silencing him. On December 3, 1551, they arrested and imprisoned him, because without their permission he had made alterations in certain of the melodies of the earlier printed editions of the Psalter, thus causing confusion in public worship. Calvin again intervened and secured his release after

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76 Specimens are given by M. Douen.

77 “A Practical Discourse on some Principles of Hymn Singing”: *Journal of Theological Studies*, October, 1899, p. 55; and separately, Oxford, 1901, p. 29.

78 The *Registres du Conseil* are the source of our knowledge of Bourgeois’ career. As such they were explored and reported upon by M. Th. Dufour in the *Revue critique*, 1881. The important entries are in Bovet, pp. 60, 61; Douen, vol. i, pp. 615, 616, and Doumergue, vol. ii, pp. 514 ff.

79 The license is reprinted in Douen, vol. i, p. 612, and Grove, *Dictionary of Music*, art. “Franc,” note.



twenty-four hours. Calvin had more difficulty in recommending the alterations to the Council, but in the end they were allowed to stand.<sup>80</sup>

The limits of Bourgeois' work in preparing melodies for the Genevan Psalter include the editions from 1542 to 1551. The whole number of melodies from his hand is eighty-three, set to the original thirty Psalms of Marot, nineteen later Psalms of Marot and thirty-four of Beza.<sup>81</sup> Most, possibly all, of these are constructions from melodic material already extant, even to the adaptation of current secular melodies.<sup>82</sup> Bourgeois left Geneva and returned to Paris in 1557. The melodies of the additional Psalms of Beza incorporated in the edition of 1562 were undoubtedly by another hand whose identity has not been established, but which has proved to be an inferior one both in practice and in the judgment of musicians.

Claude Goudimel has been confidently proclaimed as the composer of the Genevan melodies in whole or in part by De Thou, Florimond de Raemond, and even by John Quick in his *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata*.<sup>83</sup> But Goudimel never came to Geneva, and remained in the Roman Church until after the *Genevan Psalter* was well advanced.<sup>84</sup> His work upon the Psalms began with the recently recovered *Premier livre, contenant huict Pseaulmes de David, traduitz par Clement Marot et mis en musique au long (en forme de mottetz) par Claude Goudimel*, published at Paris in 1551.<sup>85</sup> Goudimel's work ultimately covered the entire Psalter, but it consisted then and later in furnishing harmonies to the already existing melodies. The beauty and wide diffusion of his settings attached his name to the Genevan Psalter and gave ground for the tradition that it was he who composed the melodies.



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80 See a full account of this incident, so suggestive of Calvin's concern for the music and musician, in Doumergue, vol. ii, pp. 514, 515.

81 Douen, vol. i, p. 649; but compare Doumergue, vol. ii, p. 516, note 7.

82 Donen, chap. xxii, "Origines des mélodies du Psautier."

83 London, 1692, vol. i, p. v.

84 See Doumergue, vol. ii, appendice ix.

85 See Grove, Dictionary of Music, art. "Goudimel," vol. i, new edition, 1906. At that date Goudimel was still in the old Church, whose members then felt free to use the Genevan melodies.

### VIII. Spread of the Genevan Psalmody in France.

The practice of congregational Psalmody, begun at Geneva in 1542, had spread rapidly among the Swiss churches. In Lausanne it was introduced almost simultaneously;<sup>86</sup> at Grandson, in the Pays de Vaud, not until 1549.<sup>87</sup> In 1553, according to Garnier of Strassburg, the Psalms were sung in all the French speaking evangelical churches.<sup>88</sup>

In France, as we have seen, Marot had originally surrounded Psalmody with an air of grace and charm. It had spread from court to people irrespective of Protestant affiliations, and there remained many within the Church who saw no harm in it. But since the condemnation of Marot's *Trente Pseaulmes*, the singing of Psalms in the vernacular had been generally regarded by the authorities as an act of defiance and a sufficient evidence of heresy. Soon after Henry II had set up "la Chambre ardente," the edict of Fontainebleau<sup>89</sup> put the stamp of heresy upon the printing of books dealing with Holy Scripture, the importation of any books not first approved by the Theological Faculty of Paris, and even the possession of books which had been condemned. The edict of Chateaubriand, June 27, 1551,<sup>90</sup> was particularly aimed at the growing influence of Geneva. Intercourse with the refugees there, and importation of books printed there, were especially prohibited. The provisions of the edict for searching all packages from abroad, for an inspection thrice in a year of the great fairs at Lyons, and notably the prohibition of the sale by peddlers of any sort of books, serve to reveal the methods by which Psalm books and other Genevan publications were scattered through France.

The Protestants of France were not long wholly dependent upon Geneva for their Psalm books. Several reprints of Marot's Psalms had appeared both at Paris and at Lyons before the edict of 1547. But in 1549, at Lyons, which was conveniently remote from the eyes of the Paris theologians,<sup>91</sup> there appeared an edition which included the melodies, evidently printed with a view of competing with Geneva for the Protestant market,<sup>92</sup> constantly enlarging through the formation of new congregations.

The many printings of Marot's Psalms in varied form in these and the following years imply a wide diffusion of them among the Protestants and those more or less in sympathy with them. The Protestants did not confine their Psalm singing to the congregational

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86 Viret to Calvin, 21 July, 1542. Opera, vol. xi, 412.

87 A. Ruchat, *Histoire de la Réformation de la Suisse*. Genève, 1727 seq., vol. vi, p. 452. For an error in the date as given in Vulliemin's later ed. see Bovet, p. 47, note.

88 Douen, vol. i, p. 557; vol. ii, p. 514 (bibliographie No. 47).

89 December 11, 1547. See H. M. Baird, *The Rise of the Huguenots of France*, N. Y., ed. 1896, vol. i, p. 275.

90 Baird, op. cit., vol. i, p. 279-281.

91 G. H. Putnam, *Books and their makers in the Middle Ages*, vol. ii, N. Y., 1897, pp. 8, 9.

92 Ibid, pp. 93, 94.

meetings and the privacy of their homes. They sang in the streets and in other public places. At Bourges in the spring of 1559 it became the daily custom for a large company to assemble in the evening on the green and sing Psalms; the people thronging about them to listen and often to participate in the Psalmody. In spite of repeated proclamations by the town-crier, this continued through all the summer, the singers gathering about a gallows erected on the green to warn them of their impending fate.<sup>93</sup> The situation is even more clearly revealed by a well-authenticated incident occurring in the heart of Paris itself in the spring of 1558.<sup>94</sup>

A throng of the better classes of Paris was enjoying its customary promenade at the "Pré-aux-Clercs," an open ground adjoining the university, when some voice, with whatever motive, happened to start the melody of one of the Genevan Psalms. At once other voices took it up, until the whole body of promenaders, students, ladies and gentlemen, and some exalted personages, were united in continuing the Psalm. The singular demonstration was repeated during the afternoons following, until the matter was taken notice of by the faculty of the neighboring college of the Sorbonne, officially investigated by the Parliament, and ordered to cease.

Such incidents show how great a part the Genevan Psalmody was playing in spreading the Genevan doctrines in France. The popular sympathy it awakened in the stress of the persecutions under Henry II did much toward developing the party of reform and toleration within the Church itself. In some places the ancient order of the Church worship was seriously threatened, as in the churches of Bas-Poitou, where for a time the old ritual and the popular Psalmody were intermingled.<sup>95</sup> The *Chronique du Langon* relates how the curé Moquet accommodated the services to the new taste for congregational Psalm-singing;<sup>96</sup> and at Valence, the bishop, Montluc, whose heart was perhaps with the Protestants, was accused of allowing them to sing their Psalms in the nave, even while he was saying mass in the choir.<sup>97</sup> It was he who at the Assembly of Notables at Fontainebleau in 1560, supported the plea for toleration made by the Protestants, henceforward to be known as Huguenots.<sup>98</sup> He demanded that the ban upon Psalm-singing be lifted, and that the singing of Psalms and daily preaching of the Word be introduced into the king's palace as an example to the whole nation. "To prohibit the singing of Psalms, which the Fathers extol," Montluc urged, "would be to give the seditious a good pretext for saying that the war was waged not against men, but against

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93 Bulletin de la Soc. de l'Histoire du Protest., vol. v, p. 90: See Bovet, pp. 53, 54.

94 Histoire Ecclésiastique, vol. i, p. 90: quoted by Bayle, Dictionary (art. "Marot"): and see Baird, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 314, 315.

95 Bovet, p. 55.

96 Ibid, pp. 55, 56.

97 Ibid, p. 56, note.

98 W. Moeller, History of the Christian Church, Eng. tr., vol. iii, p. 193.

God, inasmuch as the publication and the hearing of His praises were not tolerated.”<sup>99</sup> The spirit of concession advanced so far in this particular direction that the young king Charles IX and the Queen Mother, with other officers of Church and State, united in a memorial praying that the singing of Psalms in the vulgar tongue be introduced into all the churches of France, and this they placed in the hands of the Cardinal of Lorraine for presentation to the Council of Trent.<sup>100</sup>

In reality no compromise of any sort between the Church and the Protestants was at all practicable. This became evident at the Colloquy of Poissy in the autumn of 1561, where Beza, who had been recalled to France, appeared as the leader and spokesman of the Huguenot delegation. But it became also evident, in view of the number of the Protestants and the friends they had gained at court, that there must be for a time some cessation of the hitherto relentless policy of repression and extermination. The Reformed cause had won a temporary footing in France. Beza had now finished his translation of the Psalms, and took advantage of the situation to secure on October 16, 1561, its approbation by the examiners.<sup>101</sup> The royal “privilège” for the publication of “*tous les Pseaumes du Prophete David, traduits à la verité Hebraique, & mis en rime Françoisse & bonne Musique,*” was executed on October 29th, and issued on December 26, 1561.<sup>102</sup> It vested the sole right to print the Psalms for a term of ten years in Antoine Vincent, a publisher of Lyons who had embraced the Reformed faith.

The long-pent-up eagerness of many to read and to own the Psalms at once expressed itself in a demand for the new Psalter that must have been unprecedented in the annals of French printing, and which is very striking even now. Vincent farmed out his right among numerous applicants, and “a veritable avalanche of Psalters” covered France, Switzerland and the Pays-Bas. Twenty-five editions are known to have appeared within 1562, the year of first publication. In Geneva itself there were nine editions, or rather issues, bearing the imprint of six different printing houses; seven editions at Paris, three at Lyons, one at St. Loo, and five that bear no indication of the place of issue. Fifteen editions of 1563 are known, eleven of 1564 and thirteen of 1565: a total of sixty-four issues within four years of publication.<sup>103</sup>

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99 Baird, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 418, 419.

100 Douen, vol. i, p. 571.

101 Douen, vol. i, p. 564.

102 Certificate in edition of 1564.

103 The fullest list is in Douen, vol. ii, bibliographie: a few issues then unknown have since turned up. The first edition of the completed Psalter seems to have been that printed at Geneva for Antoine Vincent, whose title has already been given. No doubt the numerous Genevan editions of 1562 were issued mainly to meet the demand from France. There is some variance in the title of the 1562 editions; a few appearing as *Les Pseaumes*

### IX. The Psalmody of the Reformed Churches of France.

The *Genevan Psalter*, words and tunes, became the authorized praise book of “The Reformed Churches of France.” With the organization of French Protestants into congregations with regular worship and administration of sacraments, the singing of Psalms was everywhere a recognized feature of the cultus. In 1559 these congregations ventured to hold a general synod at Paris, adopting a confession of faith of the Genevan type, and effecting their church organization under the Presbyterian form. The order of worship adopted was that of Calvin’s *La forme des prieres*. In the church discipline formulated at the first and subsequent synods, Psalmody was given constitutional recognition. Of chapter x, “of Religious Exercises performed in the Assemblies of the Faithful,” canon ii reads:

“Singing of God’s praises being a divine Ordinance, and to be performed in the Congregations of the Faithful, and for that by the use of *Psalms* their hearts be comforted and strengthened; Every one shall be advertised to bring with them their Psalm-Books unto those Assemblies, and such as through contempt of this holy Ordinance do forbear the having of them, shall be censured, as also those, who in time of singing, both before and after sermon, are not uncovered, as also when the Holy Sacraments are Celebrated.”<sup>104</sup>

The gesture of outward respect and the individual Psalm books here inculcated became characteristic of the Reformed Psalmody in general. The little books containing the words and notes, brought forth from his garments by every member of the congregation at the announcement of the Psalm, were remarked as a striking feature by more than one observer of the early Reformed worship; the token of each believer’s active part in the exercises.<sup>105</sup>

The singing by the congregation, led by a precentor, was without instrumental accompaniment. The Psalms were sung in their order, and the practice was to sing right through the Psalter from beginning to end, without selection or omission, within a given period. Before leaving Geneva Bourgeois devised a table distributing the Psalms into suitable portions, and from which the Psalm or Psalms appointed for the day could be determined. For this he was rewarded by the Council, and printed copies of the table were ordered to be posted in the churches.<sup>106</sup> Such tables of distribution of the Psalms came frequently to be printed in the Psalm books, and where the end of the daily portion came before the ending of the Psalm itself, the point of division was indicated by the word “PAUSE.” No thought of any

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de Daud; a few more as Les cent et cinquante (or CL.) Pseaumes de Daud. The names of Marot and Beza appear in all.

104 Quick, *Synodicon*, vol. i, p. xliii.

105 See Doumergue, vol. ii, p. 490, and Dickinson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, N. Y., 1902, p. 361.

106 See Doumergue, vol. ii, p. 515.

discrimination in the use of the Psalms was in the minds of either the framers or the early users of the French Psalter, or was required by the robust faith of the sixteenth century.

To the early French Protestants the Psalm book was a unit—the Word of God in the personal possession of the humblest, the symbol as well as the vehicle of their new privilege of personal communion with God. To know the Psalms became a primary duty; and the singing of Psalms became the Reformed cultus, the characteristic note distinguishing its worship from that of the Roman Catholic Church.

The familiar use of Psalms in worship only emphasized the power of their appeal to the individual experience, and made Psalmody as much a part of the daily life as of public worship. The family in the home, men and women at their daily tasks, were recognized as Huguenots because they were heard singing Psalms. The Psalter became to them the manual of the spiritual life. It ingrained its own characteristics deep in the Huguenot character, and had a great part in making it what it was. A character nourished and fed by Old Testament ideals must inevitably have the defects of its qualities. But to the Huguenot, called to fight and suffer for his principles, the habit of Psalm singing was a providential preparation. The Psalms were his confidence and strength in quiet and solitude, his refuge from oppression; in the wars of religion they became the songs of the camp and the march, the inspiration of the battle and the consolation in death, whether on the field or at the martyr's stake. It is not possible to conceive of the history of the Reformation in France in such a way that Psalm singing should not have a great place in it.<sup>107</sup>

Under such conditions the inextinguishable hatred of the Genevan Psalter felt by the enemies of the Reformation is easily understood; and the peculiar vindictiveness with which Psalm singing was proscribed and hunted out and punished<sup>108</sup> becomes natural to the point of view. The Roman Catholic position was that Psalms inspired by the Holy Ghost and committed to the church, were not to be rashly put forth for promiscuous use by the people in connection with secular surroundings and thoughts. They should be reserved for the holy offices and congenial surroundings of the established worship, and confined to the utterance of holy persons thereto appointed. It is worthy of note that even to a contemporary skeptic, Montaigne, this position seemed not only reasonable but profitable. He says:

“It is not without very good reason, in my opinion, that the church interdicts the promiscuous indiscreet, and irreverent use of the holy and divine psalms, with which the Holy Ghost inspired King David. We ought not to mix God in our actions, but with the highest reverence and caution; that poesy is too holy to be put to no other use than to exercise

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107 For ample illustration of this phase of the subject consult Douen, chap. i, “Rôle du Psautier dans l'église réformée”; Bovet, chaps, vi, ix; and R. E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life*, London and New York, 1903, chaps. vii, viii, “The Huguenots.”

108 Consult Bovet, pp. 126 ff, and note viii, “Arrêts contre le chant des Psaumes.”

the lungs and to delight our ears; it ought to come from the conscience and not from the tongue. It is not fit that a prentice in his shop, among his vain and frivolous thoughts, should be permitted to pass away his time and divert himself with such sacred things. Neither is it decent to see the Holy Book of the holy mysteries of our belief tumbled up and down a hall or a kitchen; they were formerly mysteries, but are now become sports and recreations.”<sup>109</sup>

To these objections against Psalm singing in private life Church writers alleged others equally strong against congregational Psalmody. They fouled the memory of Marot as its author, and ridiculed the Psalm tunes as carnal songs; they accused the young men and maidens of singing to each other rather than to God, and contended that the efforts of an ordinary congregation were not endurable as a musical performance. In spite of the atmosphere of contempt thus thrown around Psalmody by its opponents, and in spite of continued legislation, penalty, persecution and death visited upon the singers by the church authorities, the new Psalmody covered France, spread from country to country, and was transplanted into the new world as an established institute of Reformed worship.



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109 Essays, book i, chap. lvi, tr. by Cotton.

### **X. Calvin: His Relations to Metrical Psalmody and Church Music.**

Behind this whole movement—the establishment of Psalm singing in French Switzerland, its spread through France and the other countries in Europe—stands the great figure of John Calvin. There is no more difficulty in assigning the leadership to him than in assigning to Luther the leadership in establishing hymn singing in Germany and its spread from there into other Lutheran countries. From this point, indeed, the two figures stand as independent sources, from which flow two parallel streams of Protestant church song—the Lutheran Hymnody on the one hand and the Reformed Metrical Psalmody on the other. And the streams were not to be fully united till after two centuries had passed. They are not in fact merged into unity even to-day, when the Calvinistic precedent of Psalm singing still furnishes the ground for maintaining denominational integrity among exclusive Psalm singers.

Calvin's work thus becomes of great import to Psalmody, and marks an epoch in the history of the Hymn. Calvin did not, of course, invent or even introduce the metrical Psalm. Metrical Psalms were by no means excluded from Lutheran Hymnody. But the Lutheran Psalm was in motive a hymn rather than a version of Scripture. It might be literal, and, on the other hand, might give merely a suggestion of the subject or manner of some canonical Psalm. But the Calvinistic Psalm took its authority and its appropriateness from its divine inspiration. It must be Holy Scripture, first of all; and then it became metrical merely to facilitate its congregational rendering. Calvin had determined to make the Psalter the praise book of the Reformed Church, and to that end never rested till the praise book was complete. The excellence of that praise book, both literary and musical, carried Metrical Psalmody through France by its own impulse; and the Genevan tunes spread Metrical Psalmody more widely through Europe. Calvin's great authority made Geneva the center of the Reformed world, and the Genevan Psalmody became the inspiration and the model for the Reformed Churches in England and Scotland. In this process of extension the practice of singing metrical Psalms hardened into the rigidity of an established custom. The Calvinistic precedent became the Calvinistic principle; the metrical Psalm became the norm and rule of praise throughout the whole Reformed Church, to the virtual exclusion of all hymns of human composition.

It becomes, therefore, of interest to discover just what were Calvin's own views as to the proper subject-matter of praise. And these should be taken from his own words. Calvin's choice of the canonical Psalms, and his ignoring of the Latin hymns of the church, was, of course, in accord with his views of the supremacy of Scripture in worship and his complete indifference to such liturgical stores as the church had accumulated since primitive times. He wished to get back to primitive simplicity, and his establishment of congregational singing rested upon his conviction that it was an apostolic institute of which the people had been unjustly deprived;<sup>110</sup> the Latin hymn indeed being the very instrument by which the

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110 *Institutio*, Bk. iii, chap, xx, § 32.



deprivation had been effected. At the same time Calvin is not to be counted among those who before and after him maintained the exclusive right of the Psalms or the hymns of Scripture as the only divinely authorized subject-matter of praise. Such a view demands the interpretation of the “Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” in Ephesians, 5:19, and [Colossians 3:16](#), as being merely different names for canonical Psalms. Calvin’s exegesis is quite different. In his *Commentary on Colossians* he holds that under these terms St. Paul includes “all kinds of song,” and adds the word “spiritual” to indicate that he would have Christian songs to be of that character, and not made up of frivolities and worthless trifles. The choice, then, before the church is very wide, and why from among all these songs Calvin himself chose the Psalms for his church at Geneva clearly appears from his preface of 1542-43. After referring to the need of songs that are pure and holy, and the need of receiving from God Himself power to write songs worthy of Him, he adds:

“Wherefore, when we have sought on every side, searching here and there, we shall find no songs better and more suitable for our purpose than the Psalms of David, dictated to him and made for him by the Holy Spirit. But singing them ourselves we feel as certain that God put the words into our mouths as if He Himself were singing within us to exalt His glory.” And again: “Only let the world be well-advised, that instead of the songs partly vain and frivolous, partly dull and foolish, partly filthy and vile, and consequently wicked and hurtful, which it has hitherto used, it should accustom itself hereafter to sing these divine and heavenly songs with good King David.”<sup>111</sup>

Calvin here offers his Psalter to the church, and commends it to the world on account of its divine excellency. His words convey no implication of any divine prescription, and might have been uttered by any Psalm-loving Lutheran. It was, moreover, quite foreign to Calvin’s mind to set up a formula of praise, or to find any efficacy in the use of it as prescribed. “Neither words nor singing,” he said in his *Institutio*,<sup>112</sup> “are of the least consequence or avail one iota with God unless they proceed from deep feeling in the heart.”

It was not merely the example of Calvin, but also the conditions of the time, that kept the Reformed Churches to the Psalter. They found in it a well opened in the desert, from which they drew consolation under persecution, strength to resist valiantly the enemies of their faith; with the assured conviction that God was fighting for them, and also (it must be added) would be revenged against their foes. There was at the same time an inevitable narrowing and loss involved in the drying up of those springs of spiritual song which come from within the heart itself; and a greater loss in so far as the lyrics of an earlier dispensation hindered the fullness of Gospel song from reaching the heart. Even in Calvin’s time there

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111 Opera, vi, 171, 172.

112 Book iii, chap. xx, § 31.

was criticism that Marot and Beza's Psalms did not recognize the fulfillment of prophetic Psalmody in Christ.

Both the spirit and the method of Calvin's work in Psalmody have been greatly disparaged by modern students, and it is worth while to inquire if they have accorded deliberate justice. M. Douen, in his *Clément Marot et le Psautier Huguenot*, has done more than anyone else to elucidate the origins of the Calvinistic Psalmody; and yet he brings to his researches a rigid preconception of Calvin's personality to which all that he discovers in the record, and much besides, not discernible there, is forced to contribute. To M. Douen, Marot not unjustly represents the modern spirit and Bourgeois the art of music. Opposed to them stands Calvin as "the type of dogmatism imposed by authority, antiliberal, antiartistic, antihumane and antichristian."<sup>113</sup>

According to M. Douen, Calvin made use of the poet and musician as long as they consented to work in subjection to his despotic will. But when the poet failed in entire conformity to Calvin's rule of life, and the musician ventured to arrange harmonies to the Psalm melodies in disregard of Calvin's wishes, Calvin turned against both. He regarded "their independence as a revolt against God himself,"<sup>114</sup> disregarded their unique services and treated them with negligent disdain,<sup>115</sup> until they were compelled to leave Geneva, the victims of Calvin's "rancour."<sup>116</sup> It can hardly be claimed that this alleged hostility of Calvin to his collaborators rests on any sure basis of evidence. Several instances of Calvin's kindly regard for them and his intervention in their behalf have already been cited. It may be noted that in Bourgeois' case Calvin's interventions continued for several years subsequent to the date of his publication in 1547 of the *Psalms à quatre parties*; to which publication Calvin had in all probability no objection, the harmonies not being designed for use in church services. M. Douen's charges, which color his whole work, are to be regarded rather as hypothetical; as what must inevitably have happened when his preconceived Calvin was confronted with the modern spirit and the feeling for art. Even were they true in whole or in part they would not change or even affect the results of Calvin's work for congregational song. They would only cause regret that a work so successful and wide-reaching could have been prosecuted in a spirit so malevolent.

But the side of Calvin's work which has subjected it to the most widespread criticism and even condemnation is the musical side. This criticism has been directed against the Genevan Psalmody itself on the ground that it reduced congregational song to its most rudimentary form, in that all the people sang the melody in unison without accompaniment

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113 Vol. i, p. 387.

114 i, 663.

115 ii, 9, and passim.

116 i, 663.

and without other leadership than that of a precentor. But criticism has gone much further than this, because the question raised by the *Genevan Psalter* is much broader than any relating merely to the method of administering the ordinance of congregational praise. It is the question of what part music is to have in worship; and the *Genevan Psalter* proposes an answer to this question by offering Psalmody in lieu of all other forms of church music. For it must be acknowledged that the *Genevan Psalter* embodies Calvin's ideals and expresses Calvin's whole purpose in regard to the proper function of music in church worship. In his liturgical scheme for the Reformed Church, music had no other place than that of furnishing melodies for singing the metrical Psalms.

The mere statement of the fact thus acknowledged constitutes the gravamen of the main charge laid against Calvin by historians of the art of music. One of the latest of these, Mr. Louis C. Elson, will serve as a sufficient instance. Having referred to Luther as "an ardent musician, who desired to approach the beauty of the Catholic ritual in the music of the Protestant Church," he proceeds to say:

"At the other extreme we find John Calvin, a bitter opponent of the fine arts, a man who desired that the music of the church might attract no attention to itself, but merely become a peg whereon to hang the rhythmic recitation of the Psalms."<sup>117</sup>

Mr. Elson's presentation of the critical attitude will serve our present purpose, because, though unguarded and unsympathetic, it approaches more nearly than most to the actual facts. But his designation of Calvin requires much qualification. In Calvin's writings certainly there is nothing entitling anyone to call him an opponent of the fine arts. He dealt with them appreciatively, and his numerous references to them are thoroughly consistent. We may take as typical his dealing with Jubal, the inventor of the harp and organ, in the earliest reference to art in the Scriptures. Calvin calls Jubal's art faculty a rare endowment, an excellent gift, so much of good amid the evil proceeding from the family of Cain, an evidence of God's bounty in diffusing the excellent gifts of the Holy Spirit through the whole human race.<sup>118</sup> "All the arts," Calvin says, "come from God and are to be esteemed as inventions of God."<sup>119</sup> Calvin's theology found room for the artistic endowment of the human race under his doctrine of "common grace," and his scheme of life found room for the liberal arts; they are to minister to our pleasure and comfort, and are to be used as God's gifts and to His praise.

Calvin was not, then, in theory at least, hostile to the arts. But was he, nevertheless, hostile or even indifferent to the specific art of music? According to Dr. Henry Allon:—

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117 The National Music of America, Boston, 1900, p. 18.

118 Commentaries on Genesis, iv, 20.

119 Commentaries on Exodus, xxi, 2.

“Calvin was utterly destitute of musical sensibility, as every page of his works and every element of his character indicate; he was too much of a theological formula to have much of the genius of song. And this unhappy defect has deprived his writings of the broad human sympathy which characterizes Luther’s, and has entailed upon all the churches that bear his name such musical asceticism and poverty.”<sup>120</sup>

It is true that Calvin was no musician as Luther was, and that being undeveloped on the musical side, he failed of the full understanding that comes by participation. But in warmth of sympathy and appreciation he failed not at all:—“Among other things which are suitable for men’s recreation and for giving them pleasure, music is either the foremost, or, at least, must be esteemed one of the most prominent; and we must esteem it a gift of God to us with that purpose.”<sup>121</sup> “We doubt if there is any thing in this world which can more powerfully turn or bend hither and thither the morals of men.”<sup>122</sup> As to his own “sensibility,” Calvin has testified: “Our own experience shows a secret and almost incredible power of music to move hearts one way or the other.”<sup>123</sup>

Throughout his writings Calvin recognizes music as a divinely appointed instrument to enrich and ennoble life and even to minister legitimately to the entertainment of the masses; and this with no other restrictions than would be insisted upon by anyone of an equal ethical seriousness.<sup>124</sup>

It is true, nevertheless, that Calvin opposed any encroachment of the fine art of music within the sphere of worship; that he wished, in Mr. Elson’s phrase, “that the music of the church might attract no attention to itself,” and should be employed only in strictest subordination to the ends of spiritual edification and the glorifying of God. The end of aesthetic gratification had with him no relation at all to worship. Worship is the response of heart and mind to the Word of God. Its outward actions should have dignity and grace, but not adornment.<sup>125</sup> The attempt to adorn it with the music of the organ is foolish. Things without life giving sound are incapable of understanding, without which there is no praise. The organ music of the Papal Church was imitated from the Jewish, in which instrumental music was tolerated because God dealt with the Jews as with spiritual children needing to be entertained.<sup>126</sup> The tongue is the special instrument by which God’s praise is to be declared and



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120 “Church-Song” in Lectures before Y. M. C. A. in Exeter Hall, 1861-1862. London, n. d., p. 304.

121 Preface of 1543.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 Comm. on Genesis, ut supra. Compare Abr. Kuyper, Calvinism, N. Y., etc., n. d. [1899], pp. 206 ff, and Doumergue, vol. ii, chap, iv, 1st part.

125 Institutio, Book iii, ch. xx, § 32.

126 Homilia in I Lib. Samuel cap. xviii. Opera, xxx, 259. Doumergue’s effort (vol. ii, p. 521) to show that Calvin may have had merely the abuse of the organ in mind is hardly successful.

proclaimed, and that by singing as well as speaking.<sup>127</sup> “If singing is tempered to a gravity befitting the presence of God and angels, it both gives dignity and grace to sacred actions, and has a very powerful tendency to stir up the mind to true zeal and ardor in prayer.”<sup>128</sup>

The singing thus favored is that of the body of believers, “proceeding from deep feeling in the heart”; the singing of a choir, whether on behalf of the people or to them, finding no recognition or place. The whole range of art forms in which music can reach the congregation only by impressing them as auditors was excluded. And even, in congregational singing, “we must carefully beware, lest our ears be more intent on the music than our minds on the spiritual meaning of the words.”<sup>129</sup> Augustine had been so conscious of the encroachment of sensuous charm upon spirituality in the church Psalmody of his time as to consider the expediency of having the Psalms rendered merely by a modulated recitation.<sup>130</sup> Calvin, with the same end in view, did not go so far. He provided a full repertory of grave yet beautiful melodies, but he arranged that in worship they should be sung in unison by all, disregarding the harmonic parts. M. Douen characteristically attempts to show<sup>131</sup> that Calvin’s objection to four-part singing in worship was merely an item of his antipathy to beauty, and quotes the following passage from the *Institutio*:

“The songs and melodies which are composed to please the ear only, *as are all the fringots and quaverings of Papistry, and all which they call trained music, and tunes in four parts*, are by no means suitable to the majesty of the church, and cannot be otherwise than greatly displeasing to God.”

But the words here printed in italics are not Calvin’s. They occur only in the French version of 1560.<sup>132</sup> They are one of numerous glosses added to the text by the hand of an unknown translator, and there is no reason to believe that they even passed under Calvin’s eye.<sup>133</sup> Calvin’s objection to employing four-part song in worship was simply the fear that attention to the music might divert the mind from the words.

It would be idle to attempt to reconcile Calvin’s canons of worship with a theory of art for art’s sake. If his temperament had been artistic, his canons would in all probability have been different; certainly their application would have been less severe.

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127 *Institutio*, Book iii, ch. xx, § 31.

128 *Institutio*, Book iii, ch. xx, § 32.

129 *Ibid.*

130 *Confessions*, Book x, ch. 33.

131 Vol. ii, p. 375.

132 Book iii, ch. xx, § 32. *Opera*, vol. iv, 420.

133 Doumergue, vol. ii, p. 520. Compare B. B. Warfield, “The Literary History of Calvin’s ‘Institutes,’” *Pres. and Refd. Review*, April, 1899, p. 209.

And yet one who will try to put himself in Calvin's situation is not likely to feel that he was playing the part of a music hater or of a mere iconoclast. Facing on one side the religious music of his time he found nothing except the venerable system of Gregorian plain-chant as used in the old Church. It was historically and inextricably interwoven with the doctrines and ceremonies which the Reformation had renounced. It was a music removed from the people with a curious ingenuity—so complicated that they could not have performed it if permitted, and in fact kept entirely in the hands of an official class, set exclusively to words of a foreign tongue the people could not understand, and, when performed in their hearing, probably heard with dull indifference by a people whose natural taste it did not appeal to and whom no one had cared to train to an appreciation of it. Facing the music of the people he found it rude and untaught, but left free to flow in more natural channels and to mingle with life. He found it also contaminated by the contact, fouled by the impurities of life and degraded to become too often the instrument of immodesty and the inciter of dissoluteness.

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In a similar situation Luther resolved to provide religious songs for the people, and also to conserve the interest of plain song in Protestant worship. In the first resolution he succeeded and in the second he failed. Calvin set his heart on fashioning the Word of God itself into songs for the people, and he turned his back upon the traditional ecclesiastical music, making popular song a part of the cultus of a democratic church. Those who condemn him for the latter course have not yet shown just how Calvin could have succeeded where Luther failed, or how the Gregorian music should have adapted itself to express Calvin's ideals and to extend his Reformation. They seem to imply a neglected opportunity to organize and maintain a full musical establishment at Geneva, where, in fact, he struggled to introduce music at all, and could not wrest from the Council a living wage for his single precentor. They fail on the one hand to give Calvin credit for providing a popular song that stirred the heart of nations, and they neglect on the other to record the services of his musical associates to the development of the modern art of music.<sup>134</sup>

It must be remembered also that the iconoclastic side of the changes at Geneva did not fall to Calvin's hands. All that pertained to Roman ceremonial had been swept away before his coming. The practical question was not how much of the Roman worship he should retain, but whether he should follow Zwingli's lead in renouncing all religious use of music in worship. So that Calvin's work in establishing congregational song was a purely constructive work. His critics should begin by giving him credit for his purpose to restore music to a place in Reformed worship, in which prior to his coming it had no place at all. And even though the spiritual triumphs of the new Psalmody be accounted as beyond the ken of the musical critic, he ought in fairness to acknowledge the loving care given to secure its musical excellence within its admittedly narrow limits. That Professor Dickinson, in his *Music in*

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134 On this last point consult Kuyper, *Calvinism*, pp. 226-230.

*the History of the Western Church*,<sup>135</sup> should devote so much space to the Lutheran chorals, and dismiss the Genevan melodies with a reference to them “as unemotional unison tunes,” suggests that the demands of fairness are not always complied with. It might, moreover, be argued that in having the melodies sung in unison Calvin consulted the best interests of congregational song. Both the plain song and the Lutheran Hymnody furnished ample precedent for his course, of which his own very competent musicians seem to have approved, as have many since.<sup>136</sup>

Whether for good or for ill the musical ideals and example of Calvin long dominated the worship of the Reformed Churches. He must be held responsible, without doubt, for what Dr. Allon, in the lecture already referred to, describes as “the musical asceticism and poverty” of “all the churches that bear his name.”<sup>137</sup> But Dr. Allon surely goes rather far in holding Calvin responsible for the indifference and neglect into which the performance of Psalmody afterwards fell in more than one branch of the Reformed Church. He goes on to say:

“In no Calvinistic country—American, Scotch, Dutch, and, so far as it is Calvinistic, English—is there a church-song. The musical Luther has filled Germany with rich church-hymnody: the unmusical Calvin has so impoverished Puritan and Presbyterian worship, that the rugged, inartistic, slovenly psalmody has become a by-word and a needless repulsion; for surely there is no piety in discords, nor any special devoutness in slovenliness; our nature craves something better than the traditional psalm-singing of the inharmonious meeting-house.”

Now Calvin did in fact provide a church song for France, and provision for its continued well-being was made in all the colleges established by his influence, in each of which music and training in Psalm singing constituted a part of the curriculum, with regularly allotted hours in every week’s calendar.<sup>138</sup> Presumably, therefore, what Dr. Allon means is that Calvin’s principle of severing worship from the fine art side of music tended ultimately toward complete musical indifference and consequent slovenliness in the performance of Psalmody. And, if the matter is so stated, the tendency in that untoward direction may be freely admitted, provided that Calvin be not held responsible for the fact that the people of the Netherlands and Scotland, and other lands into which his doctrine spread, had less musical sensibility and gift than the countrymen of Luther.

In the course of time the constraint of Calvin’s ideals has gradually come to be less felt in the worship of the Reformed Churches. A modification of view as to the relations of art

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135 New York, 1902, p. 362.

136 Doumergne, vol. ii, p. 519. Bovet, p. 67.

137 Exeter Hall Lectures, 1861-1862, p. 304.

138 See Doumergue, vol. ii, p. 513.

and worship has permitted the harmonization of congregational song, its instrumental accompaniment, and also the introduction of the music of impression whether of the choir or organ. On the other hand, the free spirit of evangelism has brought within the sanctity of worship the light and frivolous melody which Calvin would have repudiated as “unbecoming the majesty of the church and displeasing to God.” But through all changes there continues to be felt in all Reformed Churches the force of his insistence upon congregational praise still asserting itself against the encroachments of choir music, and the restraining hand of his ideal of art held strictly in subjection to spiritual ends.

Note.—The study of the Psalmody of the Calvinistic Reformation ends here; but it is proposed to add an appendix tracing the decline of Psalmody in French-speaking churches.



Portrait of Theodore Beza \_\_\_\_\_

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## XI. Appendix: The Decline Of Psalmody In French-Speaking Reformed Churches.<sup>139</sup>

We have considered thus at length the Genevan Psalmody in Switzerland and France, because in it we are dealing with the source and spring of the Reformed Psalmody in general. And the logical course would be to proceed at once to follow the several streams of its advance into other countries until we shall have gained a connected history of the whole movement to establish Metrical Psalmody, and then to follow that with a similar study of its general decline. But the actual materials hardly admit such an arrangement. We have to deal not with the Psalmody of the Reformed Church, but with that of national Reformed Churches, mutually connected with Geneva, but severally independent; subject to common influences, but separated by national boundaries. The materials for our study insist in grouping themselves along these national lines, and the only practicable way to a complete account of the development and decline of Reformed Psalmody is to take up the national Churches consecutively, and in each case to follow the history of the Psalmody from its rise to its transition into modern Hymnody, noting as we proceed those common principles and influences which gave unity to the whole movement.

Our next step, therefore, is to carry forward the story of the Genevan Psalmody in its original home and in France to the point of its ultimate displacement.

For more than a century after its completion the *Genevan Psalter*, without alteration, continued in universal use among French-speaking Reformed churches. But during a considerable part of that period several causes were coöperating to produce marked changes both in the spirit and practice of the Psalmody.

(1) The first of these was the waning of the enthusiasm characteristic of the early Psalm singing. As French Protestantism gradually lowered its aggressive ideal of winning France to that of establishing itself within effective lines of defense against outside interference, so the tone of its worship also was lowered, and it had to be defended against that spirit of indifference lurking at the gate of every church. This indifference, naturally, was especially conspicuous in the Psalmody, because congregational song depends upon the good will of the greatest number of people.

In 1579 the national Synod of Figeac advised "Churches that in singing Psalms do first cause each verse to be read,... to forbear that childish Custom, and such as have used themselves unto it shall be censured."<sup>140</sup> This early introduction of what came to be known as "lining the Psalm," plainly marked a decadence. Two years later the Second Synod of Rochelle dealt with current indifference to Psalmody as follows:

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139 Not delivered in connection with the "Stone Lectures."

140 Quick, *Synodicon*, vol. i, p. 132.

“Forasmuch as there is a notorious contempt of Religion visible in all places, yea also in our Religious Meetings, we advise that Notice be given to all Persons, to bring with them their Psalm-Books into the Churches, and that such as contemptuously neglect the doing of it, shall be severely censur’d; and all Protestant Printers are advised not to sunder in their Impressions the Prayers and Catechism from the Psalm-Books.”<sup>141</sup>

The lessened interest in Psalm singing continued to manifest itself in spite of these ecclesiastical censures. Some of the churches found it tedious to sing through the whole of the allotted portions (“pauses”) of the Psalter, and undertook to skimp them. In 1617, the Second Synod of Vitré dealt with this practice as follows:

“Whereas Complaints are made us, that in some Churches before Sermon they sing part of the Psalm, and reserve the last Verse for conclusion of the Exercise. This Assembly enjoins all the Churches to sing out the whole pause, and to conform themselves as much as may be to the ancient Order.”<sup>142</sup>

The succeeding Synod of Alez, in its “Observations made on Reading the Acts of the last National Synod held at Vitré,” thought that the practice had been dealt with too leniently, and ordered that:

“These words, *as much as may be*, shall be razed out of that Canon which had enjoined the Churches to sing full parts of *Psalms*, and so conform themselves into that Antient Custom in use with us ever since the Reformation.”<sup>143</sup>

These successive actions of Synod show a real desire and effort to maintain the Reformation Psalmody in its integrity. All the practices condemned were actual breaches of the established church discipline, and capable of correction. But the waning of the earlier enthusiasm was beyond the reach of any process of discipline.

(2) Partly a cause and partly an effect of this changed attitude toward the Psalmody was a dissatisfaction with the canonical Psalter itself as the subject-matter of praise. In the first enthusiasm at receiving and singing the Word of God in their own tongue, one Psalm was as good as another, and to the bold and aggressive spirit of the early Huguenots the imprecatory Psalms were far from unwelcome. The colder spirit of later generations felt the need of discrimination, and this they exercised in the way most feasible, the way of selecting from the Psalter the Psalms they thought best adapted to public worship. By the end of the sixteenth century<sup>144</sup> the custom of singing through the Psalter in course was generally given up in France, and the choice of the Psalms for the day was recognized as being in the pastor’s hands. In Switzerland the old custom obtained somewhat longer; in some parts, as at

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141 Ibid, vol. i, p. 139.

142 Synodicon, vol. i, p. 499.

143 Synodicon, vol. ii, p. 11.

144 Douen, vol. i, p. 526.

Neuchâtel, it lingered till well toward the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>145</sup> And in France, even to our own day, there have been voices of earnest protest against eliminating from actual use any part of the Psalter as being an unwarranted tampering with God's Word.<sup>146</sup>

(3) Parallel with the desire to eliminate parts of the Psalter was the desire to supplement it by adding other songs of Scripture. In this there was nothing inconsistent with Genevan principles; and the *Genevan Psalter* of 1562 already contained Marot's version of the Song of Simeon and the versified Ten Commandments. The project was in fact committed, in 1594, by the national Synod of Montauban to Beza himself, then residing at Geneva in his honored old age. Beza responded in 1595 by publishing at Geneva sixteen versions of Scripture songs as *Les saints Cantiques recueillis tant du Vieil que de Nouveau Testament, mis en rime Française par Theodore de Besze*.<sup>147</sup> In 1598 the national Synod of Montpellier directed that "they shall be received and sung in Families, thereby to dispose and fit the People for the Publick Usage of them in the Churches, until the next National Synod."<sup>148</sup> Beza's collection was reprinted in 1597 and 1598, but very soon fell out of sight. It may be that Beza's versions did not appeal to the popular taste. Or it may be that the real demand was already for a more distinctively evangelical Psalmody, and that Beza's versions, which with two exceptions were passages from the Old Testament, did not meet the demand, or even add materially to the resources furnished by the Book of Psalms.

(4) The great changes in the vocabulary, syntax and prosody of the French language in the latter half of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century contributed greatly to the dissatisfaction with the Psalmody. The language and versification of the *Genevan Psalter* became at first antiquated and then uncouth. Ultimately it became even unintelligible to the common people. The revision of the Psalter was felt to be a necessity, lest the Reformed Church should share the reproach of the Latin Church of singing the Psalms in a dead and unknown tongue.<sup>149</sup>

It was not, however, until the last quarter of the seventeenth century that the revision of the *Genevan Psalter* was officially undertaken. A number of provincial synods united in requesting Valentine Conrart, the eminent secretary of the French Academy, to revise Marot and Beza's work in the original metres, retaining so much of the language as was practicable.

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145 See Bovet, p. 48, note.

146 See preface to the complete *Les Psaumes de David tout en musique suivis des continues sacrés*, Paris 1840: published by authority of the consistory of the Reformed Church of Paris.

147 For its contents, see Douen, vol. ii, bibliographie, No. 216.

148 Quick, *Synodicon*, vol. i, p. 196.

149 "Avertissement" prefixed to Conrart's revision. As early as 1646, Jean Diodati, himself a native of Geneva, declared in the preface to his *Les Pseaumes de David, en rime*, that for a long time, a revision had been desired, in order to overcome the distaste felt by many for the Psalmody.

The first fifty-one Psalms with melodies, and accompanied by the prose version, appeared in 1677 as *Le livre des Psaumes, en vers françois, par Cl. Ma. et Th. de Bè. retouchez par feu Monsieur Conrart, Conseillor Secretaire du Roy,... Première partie.*<sup>150</sup> It was twice reprinted in the same year. The complete Psalter appeared in 1679 as *Les Psaumes en vers François, retouchez sur l'ancienne version. Par feu M. V. Conrart, Conseillor, etc.,*<sup>151</sup> with the approbation of several synods. Though claiming to be only a revision, Conrart's is substantially a new version. Gilbert, the author of a rival version, endeavored to deprive the new Psalter of the distinction of Conrart's name. Conrart had died in 1675, and left his MSS. to his friend M. A. de La Bastide to be prepared for the press. Gilbert claimed that Conrart's work had been so largely rewritten that the printed book should not bear his name.<sup>152</sup> There are grounds for thinking that Gilbert underestimated Conrart's part in the new version,<sup>153</sup> which continued to be known by his name.

Conrart's Psalter appeared at a time when, under Louis XIV, the Reformed Church was under constraint and distress, soon to culminate in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685). No national council could be held, and any official authorization of changes of worship was impracticable. The new version was used independently in some congregations, but more, so far as they remained unscattered, went on in the old way.

It was the refugee congregation at Zurich which again brought forward the project of revision, overturing to Geneva, as the head of Reformed Churches, to take up the matter. The reply of the Venerable Company of Pastors was favorable. They appointed a committee of three of their number to examine Conrart's version, with special instructions to eliminate any expression of the imprecations of the Jews against their enemies.<sup>154</sup> The work of the committee, largely performed by Benedict Pictet, was complete in 1693. The new rescension was probably printed in 1695, but no copy of the original edition is known to have survived. The title of the 1701 edition reads: *Les pseumes de David mis en vers françois. Revus de nouveau sur les précédentes éditions, approuvés par les Pasteurs et Professeurs de l'Eglise et de l'Academie de Genève.* It was introduced at Geneva in October or November, 1698, and after a year's trial of it, a circular letter was sent to the other French-speaking Reformed churches, explaining the motive and method of the new rescension of Conrart, and inviting its general adoption.<sup>155</sup>

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150 Bovet, bibliographie, No. 192.

151 Ibid, No. 195.

152 *Les Pseumes en vers François* par Mr. Gilbert, Paris, 1780: preface, pp. 2, 3.

153 See Bovet, pp. 157-159.

154 Bovet, p. 164.

155 Bovet, pp. 165, 166.

The responses of the churches showed anything but unanimity.<sup>156</sup> In Switzerland the new Genevan Psalter was adopted by many of the French refugee churches and by the national churches of Erguel and Neuchâtel; at Berne it was rejected. The French churches at London, Copenhagen, Hamburg and Frankfurt either rejected it or postponed its examination. The church at Berlin adopted it with qualifications, and issued an edition with amendments of its own.<sup>157</sup> The Church of the United Provinces ("Synode Wallon") resented the primacy assumed by Geneva in issuing without consultation a new Psalter, and offering it for general adoption. This was pronounced an act of schism, and the bitterness thus aroused continued through years of controversy and alienation.<sup>158</sup> The "Synode Wallon" undertook ineffectually a revision of its own; most of its churches falling back on *Marot and Beza*. Eventually Conrart's version was accepted as a basis, and was subjected to a fresh rescension, which appeared at The Hague in 1720 as *Les Pseaumes de David, mis en vers François, et revus et approuvez par le synode wallon des Provinces-unies*.<sup>159</sup> This was authorized by the States General in 1729, and was very frequently reprinted.

Upon the adoption of this Psalter the version of Conrart in its three rescensions, that of Geneva, that of Berlin and this of the "Synode Wallon," was in possession of the entire field. But the new version never attained anything like the position of the old. All the sacred associations of the Psalms with the sufferings of the fathers were enshrined in *Marot and Beza*. The new version depended for its welcome upon the fact that it restored the text of the Psalms to a shape practicable for general use. But metrical Psalms had lost their authority in French-speaking churches. The curious zeal for revision which made the Psalms an object of contention, and which brought forth further proposals for elimination and still new versions, had its roots not in a common zeal for the purest text, but rather in dissatisfaction in the use of Psalms. Behind was a growing desire among the churches for a Hymnody that should be frankly evangelical. Psalm singing continued for a long time in spite of the raillery of Voltaire;<sup>160</sup> dissatisfaction within the churches expressing itself by continually narrowing

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156 They were printed in a pamphlet (without date), *Récit de la manière dont les psaumes de David, retouchés par M. Conrart ont été introduits dans l'Eglise de Genève*. See Bovet, p. 243, and, for a summary of the responses, pp. 166, 167.

157 H. L. Bennett in Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, p. 936 dates this as 1702; but a London ed. of *Les Psaumes de David, retouchez, etc.*, bears in its title the words *Revus à Genève & à Berlin*. The 1702 ed. (Berlin) claims, however, to be *retouchée une dernière fois*.

158 For the scarce pamphlet literature embodying this controversy see Bovet, appendice, note ix, and, for the details of the Walloon revision, pp. 169-171.

159 This issue, reported by M. Douen, *bibliographie* No. 439, anticipates by two years, the date of publishing the Walloon revision given by Bovet, pp. 172, 287.

160 Voltaire's well-known characterization of Geneva and its Psalmody was published in 1768 in "premier chant" of *"La guerre civile de Genève"* (*Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, Basle, 1785, vol. xii, pp. 295, 296). Dis-

the selection of Psalms actually employed. The dissatisfaction extended also to the music of the Psalter. Early in the eighteenth century a disposition to add the vocal parts to the melodies showed itself, and was followed by various schemes of modifying or replacing them. The first definite effort to substitute new tunes for the old was made by Jean Pierre le Camus of Geneva. In 1760 he published an edition of the Genevan rescension of the Psalter with tunes of his own composition in two parts,<sup>161</sup> and in the preface characterized the old melodies as “fatiguing and insipid.”<sup>162</sup>

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The actual transition from the old Psalmody, thus invalidated in many ways, into the new Hymnody, was a gradual one, proceeding through the eighteenth century. It was effected not by a formal displacement of the metrical Psalter, but by the admission of the Hymn Book to an equal status and the churches’ preference of the hymns.

(1) In Geneva itself the desire for an evangelical Hymnody had been recognized and partly met at the opening of the century. In 1703, within five years of the introduction of the rescension of Conrart’s version he had helped to make, Benedict Pictet, with others, proposed to the Venerable Company as “a happy innovation” to supplement the Psalms with New Testament hymns, after the example of the Lutheran Church, which, they said, “is a good one to follow.”<sup>163</sup> Pictet was duly commissioned to prepare the hymns, and in 1705 published *Cinquante-quatre cantiques sacrez pour les principales solemnitez*. Twelve of these, paraphrasing or closely following Scripture, were selected by the Company and authorized for public use, and from that date generally printed in the Psalters as an appendix. In principle, this project, except for its emphasis on the New Testament, hardly went beyond the apparently forgotten project of the French Synod at the end of the sixteenth century. But it took its impulse from Lutheran precedent, and it marks the beginning of the new period of “Psalms and Hymns” on equal footing. The number of hymns in use increased,

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regarding the rhythm, it may be rendered line for line as follows: “Famous city, rich, proud and cunning, Where they all weigh problems, and nobody ever laughs; The art of Barême is the only art that prospers. They hate the ball and abhor the theatre, They are ignorant of the melodies of the great Rameau, And for the general diversion Geneva drones out The good King David’s old-fashioned concerts In the faith that God is placated by bad poetry.”

161 Bovet, bibliographie, No. 254. For a specimen of his tunes, see Douen, vol. ii, p. 289.

162 In a note to the passage already quoted, Voltaire said: “Ces vers sont dignes de la musique; on y chante les commandements de DIEU sur l’air: Réveillez-vous, belle endormie.” In Voltaire’s time the Psalm tunes were doubtless not heard at their best. But it seems odd that, for the sake of raising a laugh, he should have cared to borrow the venerable complaint of Roman Catholics that Calvin’s musicians appropriated melodic material then current with secular associations;—a charge that from their standpoint had some relevancy, from his none at all, and which surely had ceased to be a live issue by the middle of the eighteenth century. In the particular case of appropriation he alleges, Voltaire seems to have been misinformed.

163 Registres de la Compagnie, quoted by M. Gaberel, Histoire de l’Eglise de Genève, iii, 19.

and broadened in character, later in the century. In the new edition of *Les cantiques sacrés*, as attached to the Genevan Psalter of 1778, they numbered fifty-four.

The period of selected Psalms and hymns continued till the rise of modern French Hymnody in connection with the “Réveil” of the early nineteenth century. Its leader, César Malan, whose work inaugurated the new Hymnody, endeavored quite vainly to revive the interest in Metrical Psalmody, publishing both an “evangelized”<sup>164</sup> and a literal version<sup>165</sup> of the Book of Psalms.

(2) In France, from the persecutions under Louis XIV to the Edict of Toleration of Louis XVI, congregational Psalmody was practiced, if at all, only under great difficulties. The churches lay prostrate, and the assembly of the faithful who still remained was prohibited. Psalms were sung in the household, and in “the assemblies of the wilderness” there was an attempt to maintain under rude conditions the simple liturgical order of the Reformed Church.<sup>166</sup> In many of the congregations formed abroad the history of the Psalmody followed that of Geneva, to which they looked for supplies of Psalm books as needed. In the last quarter of the century, in a number of refugee churches, notably those with Lutheran surroundings, the complete Psalters gave way to selections of Psalms accompanied by fuller collections of hymns. That made in 1771 for the church at St. Gall<sup>167</sup> had sixty Psalms, and in the second edition only thirty. That made in 1775 for the church in Leipzig appeared as *Cantiques tirés en partie des Pseaumes et en partie des poésies sacrées*,<sup>168</sup> and in its preface Dumas, the pastor, exhorted the Reformed to imitate their brethren of nearly all churches who were wiser in that they sang hymns expressive of Christian thought and feeling. The Reformed church at Frankfurt, upon gaining permission to depart from the Lutheran cultus, published in 1787 its *Nouveau recueil de psaumes et de cantiques*, which remained in use for thirty years.<sup>169</sup> In 1791 the church at Berlin published its collection of selected and modified Psalms with hymns,<sup>170</sup> prefaced by the statement that their Psalmody had long since ceased to satisfy their hearts. These collections, in their manner of dealing with the Psalms and in their free use of hymns, expressed the general sentiment entertained by the majority of Reformed people in France.

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164 *Les Chants de Sion*, etc., Geneva, 1824. Containing fifty Psalms with music.

165 *Chants d’Israël*, Geneva, 1835. For Malan’s efforts to reinvigorate Genevan Psalmody, see his son’s *Life, Labours and Writings of Caesar Malan*, London, 1869, pp. 184, 328, 329; also Bovet, pp. 197-200.

166 Cf. G. de Felice, *History of the Protestants of France*, Tr. Barnes, London, 1853; pp. 367 ff.

167 Bovet, *bibliographie*, No. 256, & see p. 194.

168 Bovet, *bibliographie*, No. 257, and see pp. 194, 195.

169 *Ibid*, No. 259, and see pp. 196, 197, note.

170 *Ibid*, No. 260.

In the early nineteenth century there was still some resistance to the prevailing trend. A number of Reformed pastors in France, coöperating with some from Geneva, engaged for several years in efforts to rekindle the old zeal for metrical Psalmody. It was hoped that a fresh handling of the text, with musical settings modified to modern taste or newly composed, would insure a renewed welcome to the Psalter in its integrity. As a result there appeared at Paris and Geneva in 1823, *Psaumes de David et cantiques, corrigés dans les paroles et dans les quatre parties, par Charles Bourrit, pasteur, bibliothécaire, etc.*<sup>171</sup> But the effort failed of any real influence, and the new Psalter was soon forgotten. The attempt of the consistory of the Reformed Church of Paris on similar lines and with similar results has been already referred to. These ineffective Psalters were followed in turn by a series of local collections, notably that of Lyons (1847), of Paris (1859) and of Nîmes (1868), each of which may be described as “Choix de psaumes et de cantiques sacrés,” and each of which has come into more or less general use.

(3) The Church of the United Provinces is the only one of the French-speaking Churches whose Psalm book conveyed the canonical Psalter in its integrity down to our own time. Some efforts at elimination and revision, failing to succeed, were followed in 1781 by an equally abortive evangelized Psalter in the manner of Isaac Watts’s *The Psalms of David imitated*. It was by Daniel Zachary Chatelain, of Maestricht, appearing as *Pseautier évangélique*.<sup>172</sup> What the Walloon churches had “for a long time ardently desired” was that privilege of singing hymns in which nearly all the other Protestant churches of our language have found peculiar edification.<sup>173</sup> In September, 1797, the “Synode Wallon” decided by a very large majority to introduce hymns.<sup>174</sup> In June, 1798, a commission was named to compile a hymn book,<sup>175</sup> and their work was ratified and approved by Synod in September, 1801.<sup>176</sup> The hymn book appeared in 1802 as *Cantiques pour le culte public, recueillis et imprimés par ordre du Synode Wallon*. It contained one hundred and thirty hymns for public worship set to tunes from the old Psalter and from Lutheran books, with some specially composed for it; and also three hymns without music for private use. Henceforth it appeared bound up with the Psalters.

The authorization of this book may be regarded as the last step in the introduction of hymns into the worship of French Reformed Churches, and it rounded out the full circle

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171 Bovet, bibliographie, No. 264: as to the music, See Douen, vol. ii, pp. 381 f.

172 Bovet, bibliographie, No. 258.

173 Preface to Cantiques, 1802.

174 “Extraits des Articles du Synode,” prefixed to Cantiques, 1802.

175 Ibid.

176 Ibid.



of change. But this was not accomplished until two hundred and thirty-eight years had passed since the death of Calvin.



### **Appendix to this Electronic Text: Provenance**

This material originated in a series of lectures given at Princeton Theological Seminary. (The separately-published *Syllabus* is shown below.) The first lecture only, with added material, was published in the *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* in three parts:

Vol. V. No. 1. March, 1909. (sections I.-IV.)

Vol. V. No. 2. June, 1909. (sections V.-X.)

Vol. V. No. 3. September, 1909. (section XI.)

Page numbers are from that serialized publication.

Substantial parts of the other lectures, with additional material from a 1910 series of lectures, were incorporated in *The English Hymn*, 1915.

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

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### **SYLLABUS OF THE Lectures on the L. P. Stone Foundation For 1906-1907.**

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#### **THE PSALMODY OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES**

by the

**Rev. Louis F. Benson, D.D.**

Editor of "The Hymnal"

Author of "Studies of Familiar Hymns"

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The Lectures will be delivered in the Miller Chapel,  
Monday, Feb. 11, to Friday, Feb. 15, at 5 P. M.  
and Saturday, Feb. 16, at 11 A. M.

#### **LECTURE I.**

##### **The Psalmody of the Calvinistic Reformation.**

The object of these lectures is to study the origin and follow the practice of congregational song in the Reformed Churches. In its origin neither a spontaneous, popular movement, nor a development of Lutheran hymnody, but an element of the Calvinistic cultus, and distinct in method and principle.

1. *The Genevan Psalter*. Calvin's endeavor to establish congregational song at Geneva. Conception and development of a metrical Psalter. First issue in 1539. Clement Marot's part in it. *La Forme des Prieres*, 1542. Beza and the completed Psalter of 1562. Its spread in France.

2. *The Psalter Music*, an essential feature. Pains taken with it. Its popularity and great influence in spreading Psalm singing. The Huguenot psalmody; and adaptation of the Genevan tunes to many languages.

3. *Calvin as the Founder of the Reformed Psalmody*. His personal leadership and work. His views (a) as to the subject matter of praise, (b) as to the function of music in the cultus. His views and example the determining influence in Reformed psalmody.

## LECTURE II.

### **The Psalmody of the English Reformation.**

1. *Failure to introduce an English hymnody*: (a) along Lutheran lines. Coverdale's *Goostly Psalmes and Spiritual Songs*; (b) by way of Englishing the Latin Church hymns. The *Primers* and Cranmer's efforts for vernacular hymnody. The Prayer Books of Edward VI definitely establish English worship outside the area of hymnody.

2. *The Calvinistic psalmody introduced into England*. Sternhold imitates Marot: his *Certayne Psalmes* (1548-9), Edward's Act of Uniformity (1549) as an authorization of metrical psalmody: gives great impulse to production and use. The Scripture Paraphrase.

3. *Sternhold and Hopkins' Psalter*. The work of the Marian Exiles. Their *One and Fiftie Psalmes* (1556), the basis of English psalmody. Completion of Psalter (1562) under 'moderate' views. The appendix of hymns. The period dominated by Puritan predilection for psalms, but in time the appended hymns became a resource of the Puritans. The practice of psalmody: the tunes and 'lining the Psalm.'

## LECTURE III.

### **The Psalmody of the Scottish Reformation.**

1. *Early (Lutheran) balladry and spiritual song*. *Ane Compendious Booke*. The Wedderburns of Dundee. Beginnings of Scottish Psalm singing (1546).

2. *The Scottish Reformation Psalter*: based generically on *Sternhold and Hopkins*, and specifically on the 1561 Edition of the Genevan Exiles' *Forme of Praiers*. Completion of Psalter by General Assembly and Uniformity Act (1564). The liturgical status of psalmody in Scotland as contrasted with England. Principle of Church control and its exercise. The controversy as to 'conclusions.'

3. *The Psalmody of the Old Psalter Period* (1564-1650). Contemporaneous descriptions. The song-schules, and decay of music. 'Proper' tunes, and rise of the "Common tunes." Efforts to Anglicanize Scottish worship: the Psalter of King James.

#### LECTURE IV.

##### **The Psalmody of the Westminster Assembly.**

Supremacy of Sternhold and Hopkins in England threatened in time of James I (*a*) by the impatience of culture at separation of poetry and devotion—*e. g.*, Geo. Wither and his *Hymns and Songs of the Church*, 1623; (*b*) by Puritan demand for a more literal version.

1. *The Westminster Assembly*. The Long Parliament and psalmody reform. ‘Praise’ in the Directory for Worship. *Rous’ Version* as the proposed new Psalter. *Barton’s Version*. Rivalry of the two prevents parliamentary action.

2. *The Westminster-Psalter period of Scottish Psalmody*. Detrimental effects of Directory and the new Psalter (revised by General Assembly and printed without tunes in 1650). Two types of Restoration psalmody: efforts to reconstruct parochial psalmody.

The absence of hymns and efforts to add them. Simeon’s *Spiritual Songs*. Scottish Church becomes legislatively a hymn singing church in 1708. New movement toward hymns in 1741, inspired by Dr. Watts. *Translations and Paraphrases*, 1745, 1781. Enlargement of psalmody effected, but with disturbance.

#### LECTURE V.

##### **The Reformed Psalmody in the American Colonies.**

1. *The Huguenot Psalmody*, of Coligny’s colonies, and of New Amsterdam, connects American psalmody with the fountain head. The Genevan Psalter in America. The barrier of language confines it to narrow limits.

2. *The Pilgrim Psalmody*, at Plymouth and Salem. Ainsworth’s *Booke of Psalmes* set to the Genevan melodies. It merges (1667, 1692) in the Puritan psalmody.

3. *The Puritan Psalmody* (1629), an extension of that current in Church of England. *Sternhold and Hopkins*. The Puritan yearning for “purity” brings about beginnings of an American psalmody. *The Bay Psalm Book*, 1640: characteristics and Presbyterian use. Musical rendering.

4. *The Dutch Psalmody*. The Colonists’ Psalter (Dathen’s) a translation of Marot and Beza’s with the original Genevan music. Dutch characteristics. Attempt to preserve them in English Psalter of 1767. The Psalms and Hymns of 1789. The “Rule of Dort” and organization of R. P. D. Church as a hymn-singing church.

5. *The Scotch-Irish Psalmody*. *Rous’s Version*. The meagre musical equipment. Proportions of immigration elevate Rous into commanding position. The status of “the subject matter of praise” originally and under the Adopting Act.

## LECTURE VI.

### The Reformed Psalmody in the American Presbyterian Church.

1. *The Change in the type of Psalmody.* Influence of the Great Awakening on psalmody. Whitefield's part. Isaac Watts and his work. Early use of his *Psalms Imitated*. New York Controversy, 1744. Status as to (a) church control of psalmody; (b) subject matter of praise. The introduction of *Watts* slowly proceeding and always supported by Synod. The Second Church of Philadelphia case. Synod's position.

2. *The Psalmody a cause of division and controversy.* Effects of Revolution in worship: low estate of psalmody. Presbyterian union and a proposed new version (1785). *Barlow's Revision* of Watts, 1787. The question of hymns. The Psalmody Controversy: in Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky.

3. *The Church as a Hymn-singing Church.* The Directory of Worship, 1788. Reformed Psalmody passes over to the minor Presbyterian bodies. Attempts to conserve metrical psalmody. The first hymn books. Matter of Church control. Psalm singing practically banished. Efforts to restore it. Concluding reflections.

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