

### 6. The Two approaches to Music

#### a. Calvin<sup>14</sup>

- i. Considered anything that was not directly authorized by the Bible should be rejected.
- ii. All hymns that were not direct quotations from scripture fell into the above category, thus they were not used by him and his followers. As Calvin saw it, the New Testament scriptures only recognized psalms as material suitable for Christians to sing.
- iii. Such hymns were banned, along with any form of instrumental musical accompaniment, and organs were ripped out of churches.
- iv. Instead of hymns, biblical psalms were chanted, most often without accompaniment.
- v. The Calvinist absolutely forbade any texts to be sung in churches except the Book of Psalms and a handful of canticles.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, singing in harmony and the use of instruments of any kind were strictly forbidden.
- vi. Examples of this may still be found in various parts of Europe, including the “free churches” of western Scotland.
- vii. Calvin and his doctrine on song is shown in the following recorded statement by him:
  - a) *“...simple and pure singing of the divine praises, forasmuch as where there is no meaning there is no edification... Instrumental music was only tolerated in the time of the Law [the Old Testament] because of the people’s infancy.”*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_music)

<sup>15</sup> *The Story of Christian Music*, by Andrew Wilson-Dickson, 1996, pg. 65.

<sup>16</sup> “”pg. 65.

### b. Luther<sup>17</sup>

- i. The other Reformation approach we have already discussed, however, to recap slightly.
- ii. Martin Luther produced a burst of hymns, hymn writing and congregational singing. Luther and his supporters often used their hymns, or chorales, to teach doctrine, and practice to worshipers.
- iii. In fact, the earlier English writers tended to paraphrase biblical text, particularly Psalms; Isaac Watts followed this tradition, but is also credited as having written the first English hymn which was not a direct paraphrase of Scripture. We will touch more on this later.
- iv. Lutheran Song
  - a) For the Reformers, it was vital for the Bible to be available in the language of the people.
  - b) There was also a good market for Christian hymns and songs in the common tongue.
  - c) Luther insisted that songs should be learned by heart if possible. For this reason, schools attached to Lutheran churches began teaching their young boy students to lead the congregational singing. At the same time, this gave the young people a deep familiarity with the new Christian songs.
  - d) For some time the singing was still in unison, emphatically without accompaniment. Organs were being built into many churches for the first time in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, but they made a different contribution then, than what most people expect today. Then, there was no feeling that congregations needed the support of an organ in singing of any kind. They and the choir were perfectly capable of enjoying a first-rate tune without the help of any

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<sup>17</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_music)

supporting harmony, so most of the early song-collections simply print the melody.

- e) Luther's very first of song (the *Neue geistliche Gesänge* of 1523) is in 4-part harmony. The explanation for this lies in its presentation, not as a modern hymn-book, with all the harmony parts conveniently laid out for the organist, but as a set of four part-books, each for the use of one voice or group of voices.
- f) In church, the congregation would sing their songs in unison and unaccompanied. The choir, however, might well have been capable of singing in four parts, in which case it often took the responsibility of giving the people a time of rest and singing every other stanza for them.
- g) If you can imagine, the song would then be sung in the following manner, the congregation in unison and the choir in harmony, back and forth through the stanzas.
- h) If an organ were available, it might be used to support the choir, doubling the voice-parts, but it would have been thought quite illogical for the organ to be played against the firm unison line of the congregation.<sup>18</sup>

## 7. The Genevan Psalter

- a. In 1550 Theodore de Beza had finished translating all 150 Psalms into French. A professional musician, Louis Bourgeois (c. 1523-1600), was commissioned to set them to music. The result was the Genevan Psalter, completed in 1562. Such a task might seem simple, and results of little interest. However, the Genevan Psalter had a profound influence on the Christian world.
- b. The tunes contained in the Psalter were a compilation from several sources, as were those of the Lutheran tradition. Some had their origin from Gregorian chant, a few from folk-melodies

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<sup>18</sup> *The Story of Christian Music*, by Andrew Wilson-Dickson, 1996, pg. 62.

and some from Lutheran tunes, although the Calvinists hated the Lutherans as much as the Roman Catholics. This is a testament to the truth that music can cross the highest barriers erected by human failings.

- c. Calvin wanted first-rate melodies for his congregations. Music had the capacity *“to move and inflame the heart of humanity”* and therefore it should be used to praise God with the qualities of ‘weight’, ‘modesty’ and ‘majesty’ appropriate to such a task.
- d. The impact of the Genevan Psalter in and even beyond the Reformed Calvinistic Church world was great. Many polyphonic arrangements were made from it. Many arrangements by the best composers of the time. The composer Claude Goudimel, on the title page of his psalm-collection of 1565 explained that the songs were:

*“not for leading the singing of the church, but for the glorifying of God specifically in the home.”*

- e. It was common practice for such vocal pieces to be played on instruments, or with instruments and voices mixed. They were also arranged for the popular combination of voice and lute, again for private devotions and therefore still within the realm of music for worship. Outstanding composers continued to make choral arrangements of the Genevan Psalter and it was translated into many languages, including Dutch, German and English before the end of the century. The Genevan Psalter has been an inspiration for countless other works down through the years and its tunes have been included in many other psalters and hymnbooks the world over.<sup>19</sup>

## 8. The English Reformation

### a. The reason

- i. The reformation that occurred in England was not so much due to a ruler exercising his freedom of conscience, but rather it was triggered by political necessity.

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<sup>19</sup> *The Story of Christian Music*, by Andrew Wilson-Dickson, 1996, pg. 66.

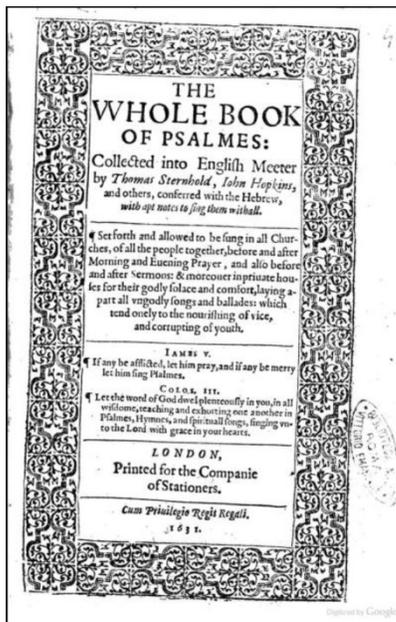
- ii. Henry the VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon could only be achieved at a cost with Rome. At first Henry saw himself as the head of the new church that was formed in England; he was not attracted by the Lutheran ideas of reform. In fact, a pile of Lutheran books were burnt outside Great St. Mary's Church in Cambridge in 1520 and well after the act of Supremacy of 1536, when Miles Coverdale published his *Goostly [Spiritual] Psalms and Spiritual Songs* in English, they were still being banned.
- iii. Probably one of the most radical changes on Christian music during Henry's reign was caused by the dissolution of the monasteries, some of which had maintained the Roman traditions of liturgy and music. A number of centers were spared, including thirteen which had schools attached.
- iv. The reign of Edward VI (1547-1552) began with further changes. All cathedrals received a Royal visit during Edwards first years as king. The results of the visitations included sweeping recommendations of reform. The changes included, reducing the great complexity of the liturgy, simplifying the visual spectacle, forbidding the singing of Latin antiphons, responsories or sequences and sometimes reducing the numbers in the choir.
- v. The resulting visit at Lincoln Cathedral commanded the following:

*"[The choir] shall from henceforth sing or say no anthems of our Lady or other Saints, but only of our Lord, and them not in Latin; but choosing out the best and most sounding to Christian religion they shall turn the same into English, setting thereunto a plain and distinct note for every syllable one: they shall sing them and none other."*<sup>20</sup>

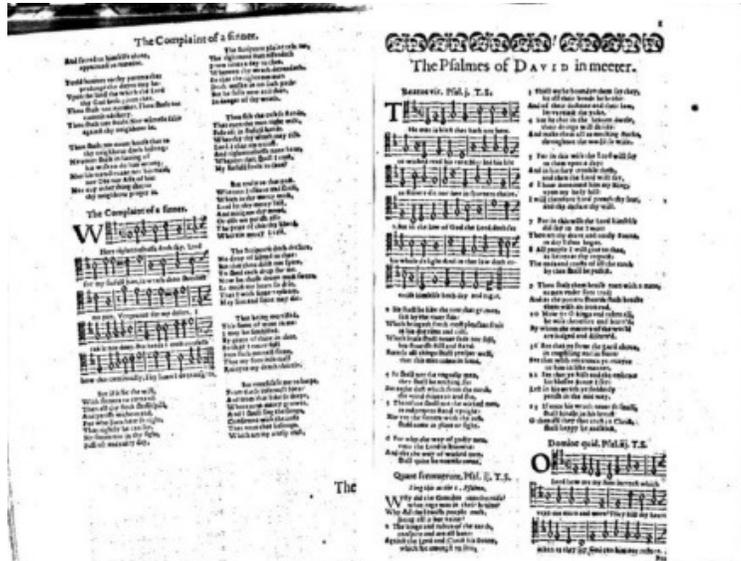
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<sup>20</sup> *The Story of Christian Music*, by Andrew Wilson-Dickson, 1996, pg. 68.

- vi. In 1549 the Act of Uniformity under Edward made the *Book of Common Prayer* compulsory in all places of worship in England, Wales and Ireland. Unlike the refined sets of service of service-books mandated by the Roman Catholics, this book was all in English. However, it gave little guidance pertaining to the use of the music and was relatively straightforward and simple.
- b. The Five-Year Bloody Reign
  - i. After the death of Edward, Queen Mary (the bloody queen, and a Roman Catholic) took the throne in 1552. Her attempts to restore the island nation to the Roman Catholics resulted in many reformers fleeing the country to Lutheran Germany or to Geneva.
  - ii. Publications of metrical psalters in English continued in Geneva with such printings as Sternhold and Hopkins' *One and fiftie Psalms of David* of 1556. These were very much in the Calvinistic tradition, with simple and strong tunes and no harmonization.<sup>21</sup>



<sup>21</sup> *The Story of Christian Music*, by Andrew Wilson-Dickson, 1996, pg. 70.



Page from Sternhold and Hopkins *The Whole Book of the Psalmes*, 1631

c. The Reign of Queen Elizabeth

- i. In 1558 upon her accession, Elizabeth once more reversed many of Mary’s religious decrees and restored the position roughly to that of 1552 and the second version of the *Book of Common Prayer*.
- ii. The above step led swiftly to her excommunication by the Roman Catholic Pope, Pope Pius V, the queen determined to avoid further bloodshed and tread a middle path.
- iii. The more “radical” reformists were no happier with her than were the Catholics. Both parties found quite different reasons to object to the *Book of Common Prayer*, but both found relative safety under her rule.<sup>22</sup>
- iv. It is said that Elizabeth enjoyed the ceremonial side of worship and the Chapel Royal continued to employ the services of the finest musicians.
- v. Toward the end of Elizabeth’s reign, Psalm singing in parish churches became increasingly popular.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *The Story of Christian Music*, by Andrew Wilson-Dickson, 1996, pg. 70.

<sup>23</sup> *”*, pg. 71.