

II. The Development of the Psalter in the Music-Life of the Church

A. The Pre-Reformation thrusts

1. We pause but briefly to note the translations of the Psalms in many languages, including Angle-Saxon, long before there was much formalized structuring of Bible study and music. The Psalms were sung and chanted in churches and by martyrs (e.g. Jerome of Prague). Due to their expression of the life of "everyman", the popularity of the Psalter for such service is quite distinguished.
2. In music in general and psalm-singing in greater particularity, three musical contributions are noted in this era:
 - a. The "plainsong" (as old as the hills)
 - b. Harmony (10th century)
 - c. Counterpoint

GROVES DICTIONARY OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS is recommended for particulars in this field.

3. Immediately prior to the reformation the following was true:
 - a. the masses had almost no part in church music...
 - b. there were some song-schools (many, in fact) but they did not serve the bulk of the church...only the "choir-elite".
 - c. the vast majority of the tunes were secular tunes only slightly baptised.
 - d. The music was often accompanied by bodily movements and gyrations not unlike the modern rock scenes of today. If anyone things anything is new in ideology...guess again.

B. Calvin

1. Prior ideas:
 - a. Luther: As in many other things, Luther is virtually the "father" of congregational singing. He edited (having translated) some psalms, composed many poems, wrote tunes and appropriated words for them. Luther loved music and loved to hear it sung (and played!) Calvin will not agree with him on the latter but the warmth of the German singing and the heartiness of the sung worship was a blessing to Calvin and no doubt he owed something of warmth to Luther.
 - b. Zwingli: On the other hand, Zwingli, not a musician, would gladly have dispensed all singing and had a reading of the Scripture (in concord) in its place. Zwingli did not have a long life as a reformer and many of his ideas fell into disuse or oversight. But Calvin was appalled by the concept of a service where the people did not participate in the worship... by singing. Calvin was not much of a musician, either, but he had an ear for what helped the people and the service order.