

Protestant Church Music: A History

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The Reformed church played the most important role in the development of the language question. It undertook, in any case, the “purification” of divine services from all other remnants. Calvinism’s sober, puritanical conception of divine worship as unadorned teaching and preaching, its sharp rejection of the miracles of the Mass, its leaning toward the ethical and pedagogical, like its aggressive, anti-Catholic, even anti-Lutheran attitude, drove it to extinguish all “papistic abominations.” This meant organ music as well as candles on the altar, the Latin language as well as the trappings of the priest, florid counterpoint as well as pictures in the church—indeed, the whole ceremonial cult and the form of the Mass above all. Johann Scultetus, the court preacher of Elector Johann Sigismund, was even allowed to attack the mass and the singing of Latin in church with great vehemence in Lutheran Brandenburg. Hoë, the arch-Lutheran in Dresden, still (like Luther) declared ceremonies, altars, pictures, and art music in the church to be adiaphora, tolerated rather than encouraged. Georg Calixt, however, though a Lutheran, declared his outright opposition to the celebration of the Mass. Even the Great Elector, Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, still felt it necessary in his will to recommend to his son that he should “do away with the Lutheran customs in a polite way” (Leube). The consequence of these undertakings and attitudes was in fact that the celebration of the Mass was more and more simplified and an impoverishment set in; of the whole ceremonial that had been so fruitful for music, only the Kyrie and Gloria (the so-called *Missa brevis*—at that time usually called *Missa*) were left. Consequently, the demand became so small that it could be filled from the common musical literature, and the stimulus for Protestant composers to write *Missae* declined greatly.

BEGINNINGS OF THE REFORMED PSALM LIED AND THE ORIGINS OF THE LUTHERAN CANTIONAL SETTINGS. THE CANTIONALES

As a result of the attitude of the Reformed confessions toward music and liturgical form, all but the simplest types of art music were drawn more and more into the orbit of Lutheranism. As far as the general history of music is concerned, the Reformed churches were productive only in the field of the hymn and, for a time, that of hymn settings. Only hymns were acknowledged, and then only in their simplest form, as choral congregational song. Indeed, even Zwingli, though himself the poet and perhaps composer of the melodies of several songs, and to a greater degree Calvin, had consciously eliminated the associations with the musical tradition of the old church and with contemporary art music which Luther had been at pains to preserve. Furthermore, the sharp emphasis on morality had severed the connection with secular folk song that had been so fruitful in the Lutheran church. Thus, only one path for the creation of a body of songs for congregational singing remained open: new settings of the contemporary literary material following the trends at court.

The artistic genesis of a Calvinistic treasury of songs had its own historic background. The Strasbourg songbooks of the 1520s and ‘30s (see p. 46 f.), which show an affinity to the Zwinglian position, already reveal a strong tendency to utilize the content of the Psalms for congregational singing. In 1538 Jakob Dachser at Strasbourg and in 1542 Hans Gamersfelder at Nuremberg had each published a complete rhyming Psalter with tunes. In 1540 the *Souterliedekens*, Flemish psalm lieder with secular tunes, had appeared in Antwerp. These were revised and published (1556-57) for three voices by Jakob Clemens non Papa. The Ulhart Psalter and the significant, complete psalm composition of Burkhard Waldis (see p. 48) also belong to this series. For southern Germany, the Zurich songbook of Froschauer (1540, 2nd or 3rd edition; see pp. 47 and 513) had already represented a decisive step in the direction of the Zwinglian position. Its authors, the Constance Reformers Johann Zwick and Ambrosius Blaurer,

aided by the poets Matthäus Greitter, Heinrich Vogther, Ludwig Öler, and others, are known in music history for their connections with Ducis and Dietrich. Zwick's musical limitations are very clear: he relegates countless hymns to a few known melodies that recur again and again—the number of new tunes is extremely small. In the important preface he expresses the conviction that although precedence might readily be given to psalm singing, the other kinds of religious song must not be neglected in its favor; still, in church, music should be restricted exclusively to congregational song. But Zwick did not have his way. Soon the only material for congregational singing in the Reformed church was the Psalter. When, doubtless in response to a direct suggestion from Calvin, Clément Marot began writing the “official” rhyming Psalter, propagandist motives must have played a part too. The French court, whose favorite poet was Marot, received the Psalter with enthusiasm. King Francis I had the poet send a copy to Emperor Charles V, who in turn spoke of it with praise. Catherine de' Medici, Marguerite of Navarre, King Henry II, and Diane de Poitiers all outdid themselves in the use of the Marot psalm lieder. This was apparently one of the many subtle attempts of Calvinism to penetrate the leading circles and gain a footing there, but Catholic reaction would not permit it. It was not until after many struggles, and long after Marot's death, that a complete rhyming Psalter could be published for the first time (1562). (For the further history of the Reformed hymn and the so-called Huguenot Psalter, see chap. V, p. 507 ff.)

Within German Lutheran church music, the Reformed psalm lied achieved only secondary importance, and this not until after the translation of the Marot Psalter into German (1565) by the Königsberg law professor Ambrosius Lobwasser (incidentally, a Lutheran) and its publication in 1573 (see p. 546). Thereafter it was disseminated in countless editions, well into the 19th century. In France the Marot Psalter appeared in various arrangements for several voices, among others in three different versions by Claude Goudimel. The last of these (1565; see p. 535) offered the Psalter in an unpretentious four-voice form, in *contrapunctus simplex*—that is, homophonic, with the cantus firmus in the tenor. (Earlier arrangements by Bourgeois [1547, 1554, and 1561], as well as those by Goudimel of 1551-66 and 1564, had not significant place in Lutheran music.) Lobwasser's Psalter now appeared with the settings of Goudimel's last version (1565), achieving through this an amazingly wide distribution. Thus, the historically important factor for Lutheran church music was not Lobwasser's texts or the French melodies introduced with them, but the presentation in simple four-voice, note-against-note cantional settings at such a relatively early time. Previously, settings of this type had scarcely appeared at all in German secular songs. In the area of religious song they turned up only in a few works by Johann Walter (Walter's so-called second lied type), and otherwise only in the humanistic ode. What significance the different compositions and types or styles of settings of the Huguenot Psalter had for the Reformed church and how they were employed there (within or outside the church service) will not be discussed here (see chap. V). But for Lutheran church music the appearance of a German-language rhyming Psalter in pure cantional setting was an event of far-reaching significance. It does not matter whether the melody lay in the tenor or, as later became the rule, the soprano. It was, in any case, the only part actually sung. As the evidence shows, men and women could sing it in octaves, and the other parts, it must be supposed, were instrumental. Indeed, it is quite possible that organ accompaniment to congregational singing came about in this way. The organist could intabulate the more complicated, polyphonic settings usual in the Reformation period, and use them to alternate with the congregation but not to accompany it, whereas the simple cantional settings were almost ideal for accompanying. As a matter of fact, the latter seem to have been used in this manner in the Reformed church too. The Zwinglians had dismantled the organs in their churches, but it is reported from Bern as early as 1581 that the congregation sang with the help of a cornett (obviously the soprano part is meant here) and three trombones or, for the sake of students, with an organ. The Hamburg *Melodeien Gesangsbuch* (1604) speaks expressly of the organ accompaniment to hymn singing. The complicated and metrically involved settings of the Reformation period were probably also often presented so that only the cantus firmus was sung, while the other parts were played on instruments or pulled together on the organ. In any case, they remained art music and did not lend themselves structurally to congregational singing. Now, however, the polyphonic settings were arranged so that the congregation could sing the melody to the accompaniment of a simple, four-voice setting. The concept of “choral singing” (see p. 63 ff.) changed from one of absolute unison singing to one of

accompanied unison singing. The word “chorale,” originally designating liturgical altar chant and its monodic presentation, gradually came to mean the congregational song; this was, to be sure, monodic, but now it could be sung with accompaniment. From now on one finds this provided for in songbook titles, like that of Lukas Osiander: “So arranged that an entire Christian congregation can easily sing along.” The Huguenot Psalter therewith provided the impetus for a practice that has remained to the present day one of the foundations of all Protestant church music.