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A DEFENSE OF PSALM SINGING: SOLUTIONS TO CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

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A DEFENSE OF PSALM SINGING:
SOLUTIONS TO CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the
College of Fine Arts
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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2023

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

HISTORY OF SINGING PSALMS

The history of singing the Biblical Psalms from the Old Testament goes back thousands of years. Early Jewish worship by the nation of Israel was centered upon singing the Psalms, and this formed the early musical worship of the first-century Christian church as well. Yet today this practice is only observed by a few denominations and has fallen out of style among mainline evangelical churches. There are Psalters being printed, but for the most part they still contain many of the traditional musical and lyrical structures that go back several hundred years. For many, these sacred texts have too much tradition to make them useful or relevant to modern worship services.

The singing of The Book of Psalms in corporate worship practice is not a new concept. In 1707, Isaac Watts, an English Congregational minister, began his own attempt at modernizing the congregational music of the English church. He was appalled at the lack of participation and lack of musical excellence pervasive in the congregational worship. Watts believed that there were three main issues that contributed to the decline in the singing of the Psalms, in English-speaking congregations. He desired to address these wrongs: “1) the Psalms alone were neither appropriate or sufficient for congregational worship under the New Covenant of the gospel, 2) most ordinary Christians understood very little of what they sang from the Psalms – especially about Old Testament symbolism or ‘types’– and thus were unable to sing from the heart, and 3) their corporate singing had declined to such an abysmal level which neither edified the singer, nor could it, he insisted, glorify God” (Crookshank, 2016, xii). Watts did his part to assist in solving these issues by writing all new adaptations of the Book of Psalms and hundreds of hymns. In fact, an unintended consequence was that his hymn compositions helped to move English congregational worship away from the Psalms and into hymns.

Yet, it seems that these same issues have cycled through history on a regular rotation as musical style has developed and evolved with each generation. Understanding the issues highlighted by Watts and how they relate to current musical

tastes has provided an opportunity to re-imagine what psalm singing can look like in a modern context of worship. Each generation of church attendees has had to deal with the frustration of changes to familiar lyrical and harmonic structure in singing. There has always been a division between those who grasp onto the past out of a need for familiarity and those who want to find a comfort in the present musical expressions. Looking at these issues over time, how they were confronted, and what evolved from these confrontations can provide a helpful understanding of how we can grow in regards to the same issues.

KEYWORDS: Book of Psalms, psalm singing, Luther, Calvin, Watts

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A HISTORY OF PSALM SINGING:
FROM ANCIENT TIME TO MODERN

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CHAPTER 1. EXAMINING THE ISSUE OF PSALM SINGING

1.1 The Current State of Psalm Singing

The collection of poetry in the Old Testament used for Jewish liturgical practice is known as the Book of Psalms. In Jewish literature these texts are called “verses of praise” and, as in the Greek language, the root word meaning is *to play instrumental music* and by extension meaning *to sing to musical accompaniment*. Throughout the years, this collection has been referred to in several different ways and in different historical contexts. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the early Septuagint, referred to this collection as the *Psalterion* (stringed instrument); the Latin Vulgate, as the *Liber Psalmorum*; and the Council of Trent referred to the collection as the *Psalterium* or, like the later Septuagint, *psalmos*.¹ These poetic verses were collected over a period of several hundred years by many different authors, with some directly referring to historical events.

The original purpose for most of these poetical compositions was to provide music for singing by choirs of Levites — the assembly of Israel — and accompanied by various instruments. They have also been used in the Jewish synagogue worship as well as in Jewish households. Privately, Jewish households sang psalms, specifically the Hallel psalms (113-118) during the Passover meal, and parents might sing psalms to their children. This collection of literature has in its primary role been a significant part of Jewish life and liturgical practice throughout history. Since the establishment of the Israelite monarchy under King David around 1,000 BC, the singing of the Psalms has been central to Jewish worship practice for the nation of Israel.

¹ Marie Peirik, “The Psalter in the Temple and the Church.” (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1957), 1.

It was during this period of Davidic kingdom, that most of the psalter texts came into predominate liturgical use. Primarily this was because King David became the central author of the texts, and their use became codified into Jewish worship rituals. David began construction on a permanent temple for Jewish worship, and their musical accompaniment developed with the use of a permanent worship space. The temple gave impetus to the development of instrumental and vocal participation in the nation's worship practices. Some of the remaining authors of the Psalms served in prominent roles of liturgical practice in the Jewish religion, such as Asaph, the Sons of Korah, and even King Solomon.

From these beginnings the biblical Book of Psalms has retained a mystical reputation as a divine hymnal of sorts and its use continued into synagogue worship practices of the first century AD. Since the early Christian church may have patterned its worship services after the Jewish synagogue service, it is understandable that Psalm singing would continue in the Christian service. For the Christians of the early church, it was not missing from their ecclesiastical practice that twice in the New Testament the Apostle Paul mentions the singing of "psalms." When the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:19, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord."² Paul understood the important role that music was to play in the formation of the early Christian church. Since he was a product of the Jewish pharisaical system, he already included the language and singing of psalms as part of his worship and worldview. Yet there is much debate among scholars as to what Paul was referring to in both passages. There are those who think these passages

² See also, Colossians 3:16.

describe specific genres of sacred music and that his use of the word “psalms” refers specifically to the Old Testament Book of Psalms, known to the Gentiles through the Greek translation, the Septuagint.³ Still other scholars believe the texts “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” are synonyms for religious singing in general as they are used as sectional headings in the grouping of psalms in the Greek Septuagint. At the very minimum understanding of the texts, the Apostle includes the Old Testament Psalms in his writing and assumes that his readers have a basic familiarity with them. Professor Daniel J. Block says, “Although it is unclear whether ‘psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs’ function as synonyms or reflect three kinds of music, it is clear that together these terms signify all kinds of music.”⁴ In addition, the Apostle’s use of the Greek word for psalms, *psalmos*, shows that Paul confirmed the Book of Psalms to be important to the life of the early church, which is underscored by the New Testament author, Luke. New Testament scholar Jim Samra remarked that Paul’s use of the Greek word *psalmos* agrees with the writing of Luke: “Additionally, the fact that Luke also uses *psalmos* to refer to the Old Testament Book of Psalms (20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33) for theological instruction reinforces the point that the early church saw the archetypical hymns of Israel as instruments of theological instruction.”⁵

It is important to always bear in mind that these psalms have deep, intense meanings to those who know their history and sing them. Singing a sacred text is usually a musical statement of profound commitment that is meant to express the genuine

³ Mel R. Wilhoit, “Psalms in the Early Church,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 1, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 21.

⁴ Daniel Block, “For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship,” (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 234.

⁵ Jim Samra, “Hymns and Creedal Worship in the New Testament,” in *Hymns and Hymnody*, Vol. 1, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 5.

personal spiritual sentiments of humankind. These songs can be expressions of devotion, affirmation of beliefs, statements of affection, and vehicles for assurance. For adherents to Judaism, these songs are more than just lyrics; they are a complete survey of Jewish faith and expression.

Singing the psalms is not just personal devotion, as singing a sacred text also offers another benefit, one that the reformer Martin Luther sought to expand and facilitate. Hymns and sacred texts have the unique ability to teach and communicate theological doctrine. Throughout history, the singing of major theological tenets has been used to reinforce and catechize people in their understanding of doctrinal teaching. After teaching, another major benefit to singing the sacred texts is its power to encourage and build up the faithful who participate in the practice of musical expression. For the Apostle to include these statements in two of his letters shows that he understood the powerful tool that singing was in the early church.

Despite this history, Psalm singing has become a rarity in Protestant denominations, and it is important to understand why it has declined. In the late 19th century, most Psalters began to be replaced by hymnals and their use was retained only by small denominational subgroups. What was once the norm for liturgical worship in America has now been greatly reduced, and in Europe the practice has declined even further. This was due in part to many factors, some that were intentional and some that were accidental. There are those that place the blame on the rise of hymns, especially those by Isaac Watts, as a reason for declining Psalm singing. Others may mention the growth of European music in the United States around the 19th century with performance being prioritized. Yet, we also cannot ignore the fact that singing Psalms remained

unchanged in both lyrics and musical presentation for many years; this also did not serve the practice well. For most Protestant churches, Psalm singing is not really on their list of congregational singing; it is no longer relevant to the people who attend weekly services. This means that their message and purpose has been lost to generations over the last several hundred years. What was at one time an extremely passionate and personal part of liturgical practice has been neglected, and quite often its influence has been misunderstood.

There has not been a reformation of Psalm singing for some of the same reasons that Isaac Watts observed in 1707 when he undertook his project to re-write adaptations of the Psalms. Watts believed that there were three main issues that provoked the decline of singing the Psalms in English-speaking congregations and he desired to rectify these wrongs: “1) the Psalms alone were neither appropriate or sufficient for congregational worship under the New Covenant of the gospel, 2) most ordinary Christians understood very little of what they sang from the Psalms – especially about Old Testament symbolism or ‘types’ – and thus were unable to sing from the heart, and 3) their corporate singing had declined to such an abysmal level which neither edified the singer, nor could it, he insisted, glorify God.”⁶ While Watts was addressing this issue in the British church in 1707, these observations could also have been shared by two other important figures in psalmody, Martin Luther and John Calvin. All three of these historical figures faced a decline in the use of the Psalms in the vernacular, as well as a decline in congregational singing. This was true before the Reformation, in Watts’ time, and it is true in modern day worship practices as well. As we have seen the rise and fall of the use of Psalms

⁶ Esther Rothenbusch Crookshank, “Forward,” in *The Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs of Isaac Watts*, (Frisco, TX: Doxology and Theology Press, 2016), xii.

throughout history, there are points we can learn from the cycle that can benefit a new relevancy to Psalm singing today.

My contention is that these circumstances have impacted the singing of Psalms at various times throughout history, and once again we should address them in a positive way. To begin with, we have to remember that each time we witness a resurgence of Psalm singing, there is a new twist or component coupled with a purposeful effort to present something appropriate to the present-day. Martin Luther, when he decided to begin writing adaptations of the Psalms, did not reach back to old texts but instead wrote new lyrics in the common speech of his day. As Calvin compiled the Genevan Psalter, he sought new poetic metered texts coupled with new melodies. Watts did not compose new musical accompaniment, but with great intention brought new fitting lyrics to the church attendees of his time. With that in mind, we will explore the research and thinking behind producing a modern Psalter for worship practices. In short, the common feature that all of these shared was the presence of new lyrics in the common linguistic phrases of their day. We should not think that a resurgence of Psalm singing could happen without this same feature.

It is also worth noting the complete lack of evidence regarding the musical accompaniment of the Psalms from the historical record. We have no information as to how many of the Psalms were sung, how many were chanted, whether any refrains were structured, or whether some used antiphonally and responsorial and so on. For assistance we can only look at what archaeological evidence exists of musical practice in the ancient world, but conclusions are evasive. At the beginning point in Psalm singing history, music was basically a local product of a geographical area's culture and art. Later, in the

Greco-Roman world, music was monophonic (single voiced, having one line), and this practice allowed music to circulate orally; notation was not necessary or yet realized. Even into the early first century, it is probable that the new Gentiles of the early Christian church were not that familiar with Jewish synagogue tunes, and we have no record of any melodies being associated with specific Psalms. Another fascinating possible musical practice in religious liturgy was the musical practice of chant and improvisation. While we do not have ancient records of these practices, we know they were practiced in early church music, indicating that to some degree they were passed down through history. The possibilities of melodic and musical accompaniment are buried deep within ancient history and the cultural practices of those specific contexts. We must be content with these unknowns and work diligently to not enforce our modern music practices and western harmonic construction on the ancient record of the singing of the Psalms.

This issue of musical accompaniment has plagued the singing of Psalms for all of history. The early Christian church sang with just a melodic line; polyphony would not begin to be used until around the tenth century.⁷ In fact, Calvin's Genevan Psalter was initially only provided with a melody, for he believed that singing in harmony would cause confusion and provide less focus on the lyrics.⁸ For most of early church history, musical accompaniment was either banned or limited by both clergy and the guidelines of the church. As psalters developed with new translations and new melodies, congregations struggled to keep up with the changes. Their weakness lay in several areas. The first was literacy; even if you could print a psalter, there was no guarantee that the congregation

⁷ Mel R. Wilhoit, "Psalms in the Early Church," in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lampert, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 22.

⁸ Corneliu C. Simut, "John Calvin and the Complete French Psalter," in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lampert, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 58.

could read it. Added to this, it was also difficult for congregations to learn the entire mix of melodies that might be required to sing the Psalms; early psalters had only lyrics, and later ones included music, and nearly no one in the congregation could read music. These problems ultimately led to a solution that in the end was a detriment to Psalm singing - the practice of 'lining out' a song, especially in English language worship of seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Hymnologist Ester Crookshank describes this practice as follows:

In Nonconformist worship during the seventeenth century, a leader read the psalm one line at a time, in alternation with the congregation's singing of each tune phrase. This custom was called "lining out" or "deaconing," after the precentor, clerk, or deacon — often musically unlearned — who had been selected to line out the tunes. Instituted first as a provisional measure for church singing by the English Puritans at the Westminster Assembly of 1644 to assist illiterate worshippers, lining out had been brought to the colonies and become entrenched practice in New England by the 1720s. In the next fifty years, the paradox evolved that psalm singing declined sharply through the very measure devised to help illiterate singers.⁹

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify what factors contributed to the growth of Psalm singing and what prompted its decline throughout periods of Christian church history. We also stand to benefit from the immense influence that this book of verse has had on humankind throughout history. Professor and author Walter Brueggemann said of the Book of Psalms,

The book of Psalms provides the most reliable theological, pastoral, and liturgical resource given us in the biblical tradition. In season and out of season, generation after generation, faithful women and men turn to the psalms as a most helpful resource for conversation with God about things that matter most. The psalms are

⁹ Esther Rothenbusch Crookshank, "We're Marching to Zion," in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, ed by Richard J. Maouw and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 23.

helpful because they are a genuinely dialogical literature that expresses both sides of the conversation of faith.¹⁰

In this study we will also look at the theological issue of singing Psalms as we remember they were written in a specific historical context to a specific historical people. One must have a clear hermeneutic to remember context when applying the Psalms to modern worship practices. These verses were written within the early formation of Judaism as it formed its tabernacle worship and later its temple liturgy. They were also written pre-Christ, so their language does not include the events that would shape the new Christian Church. Dating back to the Reformation, paraphrases of the canticles from the Gospels — the Benedictus (Song of Zechariah), the Magnificat (Song of Mary), and Nunc Dimittis (Song of Simeon) — were frequently allowed to be sung, but the metrical Psalms dominated congregational singing. This meant that the Christian Year was like living in a perpetual Advent with no celebration of the Nativity, and an endless Lent with no acknowledgement of the resurrection. As J. Michael Morgan observes,

An obvious solution was to broaden the interpretation of psalm paraphrases to reflect more of what we experience in our lives as we live on this side of the cross. John Patrick (1632-95), preacher at the Charter House in London, believed strongly that portions of some of the psalms were not appropriate to be sung in Christian worship, that they dwelt too much on the wrath of a vengeful God, called too strongly for the destruction of the enemies of Gods chosen people, and dealt too intimately with issues that were only associated with Jewish faith and culture. In his paraphrase, published for his congregation in 1694, he claimed the license to interpret the psalms in a more Christian light, thus setting the stage for Isaac Watts and his psalms “imitated in the language of the New Testament” some twenty’ five years later.¹¹

It is most helpful to have this broad study of Psalm singing, which includes its beginnings and historical developments. As we look towards a rejuvenation of singing the Psalms, we must have a balanced approach that provides us with perspective on the priorities of the future. To many these are not just texts from antiquity, they are the words

¹⁰ J. Michael Morgan, “English Language Metrical Psalters of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Hymns and Hymnody*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 162.

¹¹ IBID, 162.

of the creator, intended to be used in worship of His deity. This belief furnishes another layer of complexity to the modification and use of these liturgical texts. However, throughout history this viewpoint has been used to justify stagnation and at times decline in their use, as if the God who inspired these words only intended them to be used in a certain time and or in a specific manner. We need a well-rounded approach that understands their historical practice and traces the advancements and declines of Psalm singing throughout history. By thoughtful consideration of Psalm singing throughout history, we can arrive at a healthy perspective with which to move forward for their use in contemporary liturgical settings.

1.2.1 Research Questions

The obvious route to research this topic is an examination of historical psalters, liturgical practices, significant points of transition, theological impacts on psalters, and recent historical endeavors to address the use of Psalm singing. To confront some of the questions regarding research, there are some authentic facts to bear in mind in understanding the Psalms and their origins. The Psalms are written in Hebrew poetic form, a structure that clearly shows an internal parallelism that signals that these are intended to be sung. The Book has amazing symmetry and balance, and when you follow the Hebrew alphabetical order, you will notice that there are a total of 121 poems. Even Psalm 119 is unique in that it is divided into twenty-two sub chapters, each containing a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and there are eight verses per letter. The 121 poems can also be divided into 121 pericopes, or groups of two or more systems. Its literary structure indicates the intentionality of the use and meaning of the book.

In summary, can the clues from the history of singing the Psalms provide us with information that gives a more complete picture of what is necessary to resurrect the

singing of Psalms? We can ask the same questions regarding significant personalities and transitional linguistic complexities: what kind of framework of singing the Psalms do they provide us that we can apply to contemporary contexts? My contention is that all of these discovery points and data will provide solutions to the lack of Psalm singing in our contemporary liturgical settings. By studying history and learning from the challenges of the past, we learn that there are similar solutions that have been applied to this practice, some with more success than others, but nevertheless, we can learn vital evidence that can provide solutions to encourage this ancient practice for today.

1.2.2 Uniqueness of the Book of Psalms

We also have to consider the uniqueness of the Psalms as a poetic genre and how they interact with humanity. The Psalms are fundamentally of two literary genres; first, there are hymns that are a call for the righteous, the nations, the created universe, and the author's own heart to praise God, creator of all. Second, they contain intense prayers that cry for deliverance, mercy, complaints, various supplications as well as affirming confidence and thanksgiving to God. They are not just a historical collection of poetry, as they are connected to specific events either in the past, present, or future prophecies that makes them more than just literature. It is helpful to keep foremost in this research that these songs were written explicitly for the Jewish people who had a specific understanding of their language tied to their culture and history.

1.2.3 Uniqueness of the Psalms Usage

What is unique about the Psalms is that they can become personal, first-person narratives of those who employ them. As you read them you can easily take on the voice of the Psalmist, crying out to God with an anxious voice. These ancient words can easily

be adapted into personal pleas and supplications. In fact, the Psalms have served this purpose for centuries as a vehicle of communion with God. Among the most intense of the Psalms are the Seven Penitential Psalms: 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142. These and others like them have been most regularly recited throughout history as outpourings of the human condition. Chief among their characteristic language is hatred for evil and sin, cries for forgiveness and pardon, humility, and repentance of sin. As humankind agonizes over the sin of others and their own, the author's words come from deep within their soul's seeking restoration with an offended God. By identifying these historical practices in their contexts, we can then apply this to the current evolving musical tendencies and styles.

It is this uniqueness of literary styles that drives us to defend and rehabilitate the singing of Psalms. Singing psalms brings the faithful into the exceptional practice of using God's word as the vehicle of worship, in essence singing God's word back to God. This is an extraordinary liturgical practice and has proven to be an effective tool in liturgical worship for centuries. Added to this paragon of religious musical practice is the fact that the Biblical Psalms contain the breadth of human expression for the soul to give voice in praise. Professor Esther Crookshank said this of Watt's thoughts on singing the Psalms: "For Watts, the beauty of scriptural songs was that they met the needs or expressed the feelings of people in individual situations – they had concreteness, particularity, and specificity."¹² Dr. Crookshank goes on to argue

¹² Esther Rothenbusch Crookshank, "We're Marching to Zion," in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, ed. Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 19.

this was the basis on which Watts sought to write his modern imitations of the Psalter.

For centuries the faithful have used the Book of Psalms to give voice to praise, prayer, illness, persecution, famine, disease, battle and whatever else may assail humankind. In the patristic era of the early Christian Church, when Christians sought to live in monastic communities, the Psalms were essential to their lives of simplicity and prayer. On a daily basis, prayers, chants, and songs were offered with the Psalms as their source. Of course, if one was desiring to grow in personal piety, what better way than to recite the words from the Holy scriptures. No other printed collection has served the needs of faith in providing a vehicle for communication with the divine. This perspective on using these texts may be reduced in practice, but their effectiveness has remained. The challenge is how to bring the exceptionality of using these texts into the twenty-first century lives of Christians.

1.2.3.1 History of Psalm singing

The first step is to investigate the history of Psalm singing from ancient beginnings to the present-day usage and publication. The singing of the ancient Jewish book of Psalms has persisted throughout history in some form or fashion. While we know the textual sources of the original songs, we do not have evidence of the musical settings, how they evolved, or when they were lost to history. We assume much about the content of the Psalms, but in reality, we have very little evidence of their actual practice. We can assume that throughout history the original settings used in Judaism influenced future performance practices. It is also possible that melodies traveled through history with minor adjustments and appeared centuries later in Psalm singing. When we inquire of

Psalm singing throughout history, we find that it faced challenges that forced wholesale changes upon the form and musical accompaniments of the Psalms themselves. The optimum step we can reach in English language Psalm singing is to take a newer translation of the Book of Psalms, then create a paraphrase that contains the spirit and intent of the passage and put it into a metrical form. We will always be many steps away from the original use of the Psalms, but our goal is not so much authenticity, but fidelity to the text and its purpose.

1.2.3.2 Transitions in Psalm Singing

Here, I identify historical transitions and changes that occurred in the practice of Psalm singing. The Book of Psalms was written in Hebrew yet developed as a worship ritual in many other languages. Presumably, the singing of the Book of Psalms in Hebrew continued past the Babylonian captivities and into the time of Christ in Jewish synagogue worship practice. The Greek Septuagint (translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) was completed around 200 BC, and the early New Testament Church used this as the sacred text. As the world grew under the influence of Hellenism, how did this change in language from Hebrew to Greek impact the singing of the Psalms? In the first three centuries we find references to singing the Psalms in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Tertullian (155-220), Ambrose of Milan (339-397), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), and Basil (320-379). In the fourth century we find more documentation of the use of Psalms for worship. So, they are being sung, but in what language and what musical style?

Originally, the Roman Christian church was established in the Greek language, but that was relaxed over time and further translations began to appear in different

languages. Another interesting historical impact on Psalm singing was from a decree by the Council of Laodicea, which met from 363-364 AD. Concerned about the influence of secular music on church worship, the leaders set forth strict guidelines on what to sing and who should be singing during the liturgy. The effect was to minimize the singing of the laity and open the doors to professional musicians. Another change soon impacted Psalm singing, as by the fourteenth century, Latin had become the language of the liturgy and the singing of the Psalms was further removed from the people because it was practiced exclusively in Latin. The Reformation and its focus on the spoken language of the people was another key point as Luther set out to write vernacular hymns based on the Psalms as well as Psalm adaptations for singing. Yet, this was not universally practiced and even in the mid-16th century, laws would be passed by governments that outlawed reading the Bible in the common language or singing of Psalms.

1.2.3.3 Authors and Composers

It is important to search and find crucial authors and composers who were pivotal to restoring and contributing to Psalm singing. History is full of theologians and musicians who impacted the singing of Psalms. However, it is hard to identify those who invested in this liturgical practice before the Reformation as they were most likely isolated instances. What impact did the early Christian church (first-fourth centuries) have on this ancient practice? Psalm singing went through various periods of growth and decline, and each time it went through a metamorphosis, there were key individuals and other factors that contributed to this progress. There were also challenges that each of these pivotal voices faced. Biblical translations appeared

in various languages, and these linguistic changes also impacted society as well. We can discern what cultural changes helped to lay the foundation for the innovation that key personalities had upon the practice of Psalm singing. Examining the lives of core personalities will also provide direction and ideas for future inspiration and discovery to this worship practice.

1.2.3.4 Evolving Paraphrases and Musical Construction

We will seek to answer key questions regarding how lyrics and musical construction evolved to meet the changing musical styles of each generation. Since ancient history does not provide us with musical notation of the practice of singing Psalms, we are left with only speculation. However, we can ascertain the musical structure of Psalm singing during the early church, in the form of Gregorian Chants. Following this form, we can see the drastic changes initiated by the Protestant Reformation sought to return singing to the vernacular of the laity. What musical constructions accomplished this best and what changes in musical composition impacted Psalm singing? It would seem throughout history that creating adaptations of the Book of Psalms in English has relied upon poetic, metrical paraphrases. While this has not always been the case and, certainly in a modern setting, is not always the case, it seems to be the easiest way to accomplish a strophic accompaniment. Using lyrics that are not metrical and follow a ‘through composed’ form makes it hard for congregation use. It is harder to teach a tune, and, from a printing perspective, it makes putting something into musical notation much more difficult because of the potential for a roaming melody. History has shown us that metrical poetry and

musical accompaniment that follow a song form, serve the singing of Psalms in a consistent and constructive way.

1.2.4 Significance of a Psalm Study

The significance of a study like this is to illuminate the historical information regarding past psalmody and give insight into future endeavors that aim to promote or resurrect its practice. There have been many attempts in the last twenty years to try and bring some sort of resurgence to Psalm singing. Certainly, the development of the internet and growth in musical technology has provided various vehicles for these endeavors. There is no shortage of artists creating, mostly in ‘through composed’ form, melodies for every chapter in the Psalms. There has also been an increase in the printing of new Psalters that are mostly compilations of old and some new material. There are lessons to be learned in all these attempts as well as lessons from history that should guide future enterprises. By embarking on this type of study, perhaps we can identify the major transitions and peak activities of Psalm singing along with musical and textual factors that were contributors to those events. There were also clear theological sentiments that contributed to the major historical developments of Psalm singing that should be included as well. There also has to be an honest understanding that we can never reclaim the original intent and use of singing the Psalms. While Psalm singing holds great promise and benefit to liturgical and private use, we must find a way to practice it in the context of the vernacular, both linguistically and musically. For when you truly study Psalm history and its varied uses, its successes were due to its use in dialectal language, vernacular music, and culture. At each step along its record, what fueled important developments was improvement upon its original use and adjustments to make it accessible for its

current contextual setting. When you consider this, you understand that often success is not based upon invention, but re-invention of time tested and proven sources. Psalm singing is not immune to this formula, and we will see how it has been adapted throughout history.

CHAPTER 2. SINGING IN ANCIENT WORSHIP RITUALS

It is important that before we review the literature surrounding Psalm singing, we look at the use of music in cultic and religious practices throughout history. By examining the roots of musical expression and understanding how it was then used for spiritual enrichment and pageantry, we can better understand the development and use of Psalm singing over periods of time. The early chapters of the beginning book in the Old Testament give us very little information regarding music, but there are a few exceptions. There is one important record found in Genesis 4:20-21: “And Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and have livestock. And his brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.”¹³ In this text, just seven generations removed from Adam and Eve, we have music as a part of recorded human history. Later in Genesis we see that music has become a celebratory part of the culture when in Genesis 31:31:27 Laban says, “Why did you flee secretly and deceive me and not tell me – so that I might have sent you away with gladness and with songs, with tambourine and with lyre.”¹⁴ From these Biblical records, we can confirm the existence of singing and playing of instruments in an organized and structured fashion.

Evidence of religious practices in early Canaanite settlements of the Middle East has been depicted as lively and sometimes orgasmic experience by archaeological discoveries. There has been throughout history a belief that music can provide a gateway to the divine and that its use would usher us into a spiritually ecstatic state of worship. Music in cultic worship was also viewed as providing a supernatural expression either by emotional outburst or a spiritual purging, which could transfer one into a prophetic out-

¹³ Legacy Standard Bible Version, (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2021).

¹⁴ IBID

of-this-world experience. An early discovery of a piece of pottery shows a group of five musicians known as the “Phoenician Orchestra,” two with double pipes and the others with cymbals, drum, and lyre. This may represent an early form of cultic worship and is probably a musical tradition that was shared by Canaanites, Philistines, Phoenicians, and Judaeans. We also discover this early record of the lyre in archeological finds:

The first-known unambiguous depiction of the lyre, called in the Near East by words deriving from the root *knr* – the *kinnor* of the Bible, is a wall painting from the Beni-Hasan tomb in Egypt (c1900 BC). The instrument is shown being played in a horizontal position by a Canaanite/Semitic musician as he walks.¹⁵

In the Old Testament we learn that music played an important part of daily and secular life as well. Music functioned in many roles such as a farewell ceremony, a procession for holy war, a song for the digging of wells, a signal for communication, the behavior of drunkards, sinners, and harlots, and many more.

Nearly all ancient peoples have had an elaborate use of music within their respective religious rituals because most believed that music was a gift to humans directly from the gods. Some like Horace believed it was a form of appeasement to the gods with a similarity to a blood sacrifice or the burning of fragrant incense. From the sarcophagus of Hagia Triada, there are records that flutes were played at the giving of sacrifices as early as 1,300 BC. Censorinus, the Roman writer from the third century AD, said: “Music is pleasing to the gods, for if it were not pleasing to the gods, then the public

¹⁵ Edwin Seroussi, Joachim Braun, Eliyahu Schleifer, Uri Sharvit, Sara Manasseh, Theodore Levin, Tang Yating, Kay Kaufman Shelemay, Jehoash Hirshberg, Philip V. Bohlman, Israel J. Katz, Bret Werb, Walter Zev Feldman, Don Harrán, Alexander Knapp, David Bloch, and Emily Thwaite. “Jewish music.” Grove Music Online. 2001; <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000041322>.

games which are intended to placate the gods would not have been instituted.”¹⁶ In Greek society, music played a vital role in sacrificial ceremonies with ancient texts calling for dancing and flutes in the offering of a sacrifice on the altar. In Roman records, we read that Cicero proclaimed that the Law of the Twelve Tables required that worship of the gods be done with singing and accompaniment by flutes and lutes. Since music was an accepted part of pagan worship practices during the time of early Israel, we can understand how we find that there are some similarities in Jewish musical expressions.

Even though we find these early mentions of music in Genesis, we do not find music referred to as part of Jewish religious practice until the exodus out of Egypt. This record has led many historians to believe that Jewish musical expression developed in Egypt over the 400 years of captivity. It was during this time of Egyptian influence that the Jewish culture formed and nurtured their own musical expressions to become a part of their worship practices. As the children of Israel fled Egypt, they left with musical skills, technical knowledge, and Egyptian instruments. It is after the Egyptian exodus we find the record of the first Jewish song ascribed to praising God as they celebrate victory over the Egyptian army in the crossing the Red Sea. This is recorded in Exodus 15 as Moses and the sons of Israel sing a song to Yahweh in praise for their deliverance. Throughout the remaining record of Jewish history, we find singing and instrumental music used by the Jewish nation as part of their worship of Yahweh.

Music played an enormous part of the Jewish liturgy and ceremonial worship practice. The German scholar, Johannes Quasten described the liturgical practice in this way:

¹⁶ Johannes Quasten, “Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity,” Translated by Boniface Ramsey, (Washington, D.C.: O.P. Nationals Associate of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 1.

In the Temple at Jerusalem the Levites sang during the offering of the Paschal sacrifice to the accompaniment of flutes, which were sometimes played by non-Levites. In this regard, the Talmudic description of the Feast of Tabernacles is very clear. At the liturgical celebration on the seven mornings of the feast, those who participated chanted the Hosanna from Psalm 118:25 while they circled around the altar of holocaust, bending toward it the palm branches which they were holding in their hands. So too, as they retired from the altar at the sound of the trumpet, they cried out repeatedly: “Beauty be yours, O altar!” At eventide the most distinguished of the people assembled together. Pious men danced with torches in their hands before the people, singing songs and hymns, while the Levites, arranged upon the fifteen steps (corresponding to the fifteen gradual psalms) which led from the Court of the Men to the Court of the Women, accompanied them with harps, citharas and numerous other instruments.¹⁷

From Biblical passages, we know that the dedication of the first temple, Solomon’s temple, involved elaborate and large musical presentations. These are described in 2 Chronicles 6:11-13:

Now it happened that when the priests came out of the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to divisions), and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Hernan, Jeduthun, and their sons and relatives, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them 120 priests blowing trumpets in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to give thanks to Yahweh, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised Yahweh saying, “He indeed is good for His lovingkindness endures forever,” then the house, the house of Yahweh, was filled with a cloud.¹⁸

This record speaks of a coordinated, rehearsed, and large-scale involvement in musical production. When you think of the organization and rehearsal needed to pull this off without amplification, without notation and so on, it is remarkable to consider the skill required of all the participants.

¹⁷ IBID, 62.

¹⁸ Legacy Standard Bible Version, (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2021).

It is quite difficult to understand music in Jewish society after David's son, King Solomon and before the exile periods of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities (732-537 BC). Later, from the Second Temple period, or Herod's temple, these musical offerings continued in very large and complex performances. Besides biblical references we have this record in the Rabbinic writing, Arachin, Mishnah 3:

They did not sound less than twenty-one blasts in the Temple and not more than forty-eight in a day. They played on not less than two lyres or more than six, and on not less than two flutes more than twelve. And on twelve days in the year the flute placed before the Altar: at the slaughtering of the First Passover, and the slaughtering of the Second Passover offerings, on the first Festival Day of Passover, and on the festival day of Pentecost, and on the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles. They did not play on a brass flute but on a reed flute. Because its tone was more pleasant, and the music was concluded with one flute only since this on its own produced a nicer conclusion.¹⁹

Scholars also describe the organization of singing Psalms and the principal role this was given in the music of the temple liturgy:

According to post-biblical sources (3rd and 4th centuries AD) the Temple liturgy of the Herodian/Early Roman period (40 BC–70 AD) was highly formalized, especially as regards the singing of psalms (Mishnah, Tamid vii.4; see also Mishnah, 'Arachin ii), particularly the Hallel (Psalms cxiii–cxviii). It is also assumed that the synagogue (beit ha-keneset: 'house of assembly') first became formalized in the Late Hellenistic period, initially as a secular and somewhat later as a religious institution. This certainly may imply some continuity of musical liturgy from the Temple to the synagogue.²⁰

¹⁹ Ronald H. Isaacs, "Jewish Music: Its History, People, and Song," (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997) 61.

²⁰ Edwin Seroussi, Joachim Braun, Eliyahu Schleifer, Uri Sharvit, Sara Manasseh, Theodore Levin, Tang Yating, Kay Kaufman Shelemay, Jehoash Hirshberg, Philip V. Bohlman, Israel J. Katz, Bret Werb, Walter Zev Feldman, Don Harrán, Alexander Knapp, David Bloch, and Emily Thwaite. "Jewish music." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000041322>.

During this time the Jews had expressed their religion in two main locations, the Temple in Jerusalem, and the local Synagogue. There was no standard book of prayer or liturgy for the synagogue, but they probably used practices that had become standardized over time. There was probably both singing and chanting of the biblical Psalms and other Psalm-like compositions that we find confirmed in the Qumran scrolls and other sources. It is probable that melodies ascribed to significant passages of the Psalms in antiquity were still influencing the melodies of those Psalms many centuries later. Although these sources refer to the lavish musical productions at the Second Temple in Jerusalem (after 537 BC), most evidence before this is reliant upon scarce archaeological findings.

Although we have records of music being used in Jewish religious ceremonies, there are no remnants of melodies, no records of the scales or rhythms that were used or accompaniment practices. Yet, when we discuss ancient music, it is important to remember the primary characteristic of ancient vocal music is that it is in modal form. These types of modal scales were particularly significant and practiced in ancient music regardless of being Greek, Jewish, or Christian. As far back as Plato and Aristotle, the *ethos* or impression that the various modes provided the listener helped to determine which modes were used in application of various texts. Although there is no notation that exists, the music of Jewish religious ceremonies was taught and preserved through oral traditions. This means that it is likely that the synagogues or assemblies of worship assimilated some of the temple's musical practices before the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD. This also meant that in the Greco-Roman world music was monophonic (one melodic line) or just a single melodic line with a rhythm. There was no accompaniment made of harmony, which would not begin to develop until the European

Middle Ages around the eleventh century. Since the melodies that were used for the Psalms were local and formed under the influence of ancient Middle Eastern culture, it is possible that they influenced melodies of later centuries of singing. These melodic strains moving from century to century would continue to exist and influence Psalm singing through the years. Arthur Eric Werner, in his book, *The Sacred Bridge*, "...contends there was a strong link between Jewish cantillation from the Temple and melodies employed in the early church, thus providing a link to the development of later plainsong (commonly called 'Gregorian chant')." ²¹

Another factor involved in liturgical music was the idea of a spiritual sacrifice instead of a literal animal offering, as adopted from pagan Greek philosophy. To the Greeks, an actual blood sacrifice of an animal was not necessary in the worship of gods; instead, what was needed was an inward, heartfelt, spiritual sacrifice. This concept also appears in the early Christian Church as both Christ and the Apostle Paul refer to worship as being a spiritual offering or service. In the New Testament, the Old Testament animal sacrificed on the altar becomes the individual offering their heart and life in a spiritual sacrifice. This concept that God was pleased by the heart of man rather than his works or sacrifice was not entirely new, as the Psalms speak of offering God a sacrifice of supplication and humility. This principle was foundational in the early church, to the extent that early Christians began to label their liturgical singing as their sacrifice to God.

Christianity entered the Roman world already crowded with religious ritual and expression, so it did not appear out of place in Roman society. In many ways, the new

²¹ Mel R. Wilhoit, "Psalms in the Early Church," in *Hymns and Hymnology, Vol. 1*, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 26.

religion was just another spiritual movement in a culture already saturated with liturgical customs in adoration of many different gods and cults. One of the things that set the Christian church apart was its use of the biblical texts from Judaism; instead of rejecting the orthodoxy of the Jews, the Christian church saw Jewish orthodoxy form an important part of this new faith. With this came the practice of using the Book of Psalms, now no longer viewed as prophecy but as a fulfilment of those Jewish texts. This new religion based in the ancient Hebrew demonstrated a new perspective of these Psalms provided by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. New Testament professor Larry W. Hurtado describes the influence of the Psalms on the early church's theology:

...it is most likely that a great part of earliest Christian hymnody involved the chanting of Old Testament psalms, christologically. Indeed, the influence of Psalm 110 and other psalms reflected in the New Testament is probably to be accounted for by positing their familiarity through wide and frequent usage in earliest Christian worship...the Old Testament psalms, especially those that had already begun to be read as royal-messianic psalms in some pre-Christian Jewish circles, were 'unlocked' as predictions of Jesus and as descriptions of his glory. As Christians were 'enlightened' to understand the Psalms christologically, they were chanted as praise of Jesus, and likely became a familiar feature of earliest worship (e.g., 1 Cor. 14-26; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).²²

Indeed, the singing of Psalms along with biblical hymns and newly composed songs began to represent an important part of the infant church practices. The first record we have of the early Christian church singing is from Pliny the Younger who wrote a letter to the emperor Trajan, while he was acting as governor of Bithynia and Pontus (111-12 AD). This Roman Province on the Black Sea in the northern part of modern-day Turkey gives us insight into the liturgy of the early Christian church. It also shows how quickly Christianity had spread and how quickly it had formed its liturgical practices. Pliny was a

²² Larry W. Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 88-89.

non-Christian and was seeking advice on how to deal with these Christians who he had arrested. Author R. Scott Connell gives us Pliny's description of this event: "They affirmed, however, that this was the extent of their fault or error, that they were wont to assemble on a set day before dawn and to sing a hymn among themselves (*Carmen, dicere secum invicem*) to the Christ, as to a god."²³

In the first century as the early Christian church began to form, it did so in three different languages. Aramaic was the common language of the Jews and used by Jesus and his disciples. In the synagogue and temple, a more formal Hebrew language was used. Finally, the early church apostles and writers of the New Testament used Koine Greek, which was the common spoken language of the ancient Roman empire. As the church expanded, it gradually progressed into the more universally understood Greek language and this was the vernacular of the church for the first three centuries. However, by the fourth century with the completion of the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, Latin became the official liturgical language of the Christian church. This necessitated a transition musically, for the use of Psalms and hymns would gradually shift from Greek to Latin, which would require musical adjustments as well. The transition in music seems to have begun in the late fourth century but was not fully realized until about the ninth century. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be much information regarding this shift, and we can only speculate how the singing of Psalms moved from the Greek language to Latin. The early Latin hymns were usually derived from Psalter and New Testament texts and typically composed in a strophic form.

²³R. Scott Connell, "Latin Song in the Early Centuries," in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 1, ed. Mark A. Lampport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 56.

It was also during these early centuries of transition that the church fathers began to form strong opinions and directives about the use of music in religious services and even daily life. Latin song was birthed in a world of Greek culture; Greeks considered music to have a strong emotive quality upon those who sang and played music and concluded that it could ultimately have a major evil impact on hearers. The early church fathers were keen to stop any unholy influence that might be the result of musical participation, which led to attributing a sort of divine moral power to music, even if unintended. Clement of Alexandria (150-215), one of the patristic fathers, condemned those who were distracted from worship by the godlessness of musical performance. He also condemned the use of musical instruments in church not just because they were used in pagan worship, but because they could inflame the passions of the heart. Clement wrote and suggested that there was a strong connection between music and morality and that the church should consider Christ as the New Song. R. Scott Connell provides this translation from Clement -

He who is from David, yet before him, the Word of God, scoring the lyre and cithara as lifeless instruments, and having rendered harmonious by the Holy Spirit both this cosmos and even man the microcosm, made up of body and soul - he sings to God on his many voiced instrument and he sings to man, himself an instrument: "You are my cithara, my aulos and my temple," a cithara because of harmony, an aulos because of spirit and a temple because of the word, so that the first might strum, the second might breathe and the third might encompass the Lord.²⁴

In this allegory, it was Clement's thought that the unity of the church was an expression of musical harmony led by the supreme choir director, Jesus Christ. He believed that when the church gathered to sing, they were to sing songs to Christ that

²⁴ R. Scott Connell, "Latin Song in the Early Centuries," in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 1, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 55.

were informed only by the Holy Scriptures. Clement was not alone in his stance, as the other early church fathers took similar views. Since the early church's theology was strongly tied to the use of allegory in its hermeneutic, it is easy to understand how the church founders arrived at some of the conclusions they put forth. It was not only the influence of evil they sought to contend against, but also heresies and confusions about the infant church and its teachings. The belief that music contains some sort of divine or spiritual power over the morality and behavior of a person comes essentially from pagan beliefs and is usually rooted in the ignorance of musical structure and composition. At its root is superstition and it has seemingly impacted the theological thought of many religions, thus, the early Christian church would not be immune to these thoughts as well. Yet time after time in church history, the initial fears die away as musical taste and harmonic development evolve and become more satisfactory to the human ear. What the church fathers considered musically immoral and decadent would eventually be practiced by churches without the least concern for its impact on the listeners' piety.

In 313 AD, Emperor Constantine legalized the Christian religion, and the result was that worship could now come out of the shadows and occupy a larger share of society. This meant that Christian worship could move into larger, public spaces and that the liturgy of the church could be further developed. Certainly, this was to have a great impact on public worship and the use of music in Christian worship. As Anthony Ruff observes,

There are scattered references to ensembles and small choirs in the early Middle Ages, but it seems that most music was sung by the entire congregation or by an individual such as a cantor, priest, or deacon. There is extensive evidence of the people singing refrains in alternation with psalm verses of a cantor. This also

seems to be the most common manner in which psalms were sung in the early monastic office.²⁵

When Emperor Charlemagne came to power in 800 AD, he desired to develop a uniform liturgy that included the melodies of liturgical chant throughout the realm. This development would later be referred to as Gregorian chants in the eighth or ninth century. These chants were primarily taken from the text of the biblical Psalter contained in the Latin Vulgate. Along with this new form of liturgical music, musical notation began to appear in the ninth century. It was not standardized at first and earliest forms were squiggly lines noted above the lyrics.

By 1,000 AD you begin to see notation using staff lines, with four lines being the standard by the thirteenth century. However, notation without lines and notation with less than or more than four lines continued to be used during the Middle Ages. Notation was reserved for reference books or rehearsal and eventually in service, but the Gregorian chant was usually sung from memory in services. Most written music from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance was intended for liturgical use and was almost exclusively in Latin. Most of those who could write or read music were in the service of the church, so musical performance was predominantly reserved for the church. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the music sung in the Christian church consisted of Liturgical Latin poetry or newly composed Latin hymns. Professor Anthony Ruff of St. John's University gives this perspective on singing in the Middle Ages:

From the existence of an extensive repertoire of medieval vernacular folk songs both sacred and secular, we can reasonably surmise that medieval peoples sang often and readily in daily life. While the music was plainchant, the lyrics were mostly scriptural texts, which were predominantly the Psalms. The case exists that

²⁵ Anthony Ruff, "Gregorian Chant through the Centuries," in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 1, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 82.

the laity were familiar with the Latin liturgy and musical expressions, in so much as their memory could serve them. The more complicated question is whether medieval people also sang at the liturgy, which was conducted in Latin and dominated by clergy (to the exclusion of active participation of lay people).²⁶

It has been a standard belief that Christians during the Middle Ages (fifth to fifteenth centuries) did not sing in their vernacular in liturgical worship services. Many scholars believe that there was no congregational singing in services and that any religious singing that did take place was outside the church in daily life. However, the exception to this scholarly position seems to be based in German scholarship, which shows that German vernacular singing was taking place in liturgical settings dating back to the ninth century. There is evidence that Latin hymns were being translated into German going back to 800 AD. While we do not know if this practice was isolated only in German-speaking lands, we do have witness to it. Gerhoh of Reichersberg (1083-1169) recounts witnessing this German culture of vernacular singing when he writes, “[a]ll the earth exalts in praise of Christ with vernacular songs, but especially the Germanic people, whose language is especially suited for communal singing.”²⁷ Throughout German speaking lands, Latin hymns were translated into German vernacular, and there is also evidence at the beginning of the fifteenth century that Latin hymns were also being translated into Hungarian, Polish, Czech and German. While this shows some exceptions, in most parts of Europe, congregational singing had been dominated by the clergy and their appointees, with the audience reduced to observers. What these examples do show is that during the Middle Ages, there were some clergy in some locations that considered

²⁶ Anthony Ruff, “Pre-Reformation Vernacular Hymnody,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 1, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 225.

²⁷ *IBID*, 225.

vernacular singing to be an important part of the liturgy and that the congregants had an active role to play in the service.

As the Reformation moved across Europe in the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic church was put on the defensive. Luther was not the first to call for reform of the Catholic Church, as there were others before him who raised the same issues. In response to the Reformation, the Catholic Church called the Council of Trent (1545-63) to address the controversies of the Reformation, and the council's work would later become known as the Catholic Reformation. It is well documented that vernacular singing of hymns and Psalms was extensive in certain geographical areas during the Middle Ages, yet Luther's Reformation brought a new emphasis to congregational vernacular singing and made it a principal part of Protestant liturgy. The response from the Catholic church was at first resistance, with many cynical of this new movement because of its association with the new "heretical" movement of Protestantism. However, there were those who pushed ahead with the idea of vernacular singing, and one early hymnal of the Catholic Reformation was published in Czech in 1529.

In Cologne in 1582, the Catholic priest, Kaspar Ulenberg distributed a collection of all 150 Psalms in meter, continuing in print into the nineteenth century. In Poland, Jan Kochanowski published the entire psalter in metrical rhyme, and it was then set to four voices and published in 1580. It was used widely across Europe by both Catholic and Protestant congregations for singing the Psalms. In France, the psalter translation by the Protestant, French poet, Clément Marot, was also popular among the Catholics. Other translations were approved by Catholic officials including a new publication in 1648 by Bishop Antoine Godeau of Grasse, *Paraphrases des Psaumes*. However, these new

vernacular adaptations of the Psalms were seen as threat to the liturgy, so in 1686 a royal council prohibited the translation *Paraprases des Psaumes*, because its popularity was deemed as a vehicle for pulling people away from the Latin liturgy.

The eighteenth-century enlightenment brought changes not only to society, but to Catholic and Protestant churches as well. Catholic leaders shared new feelings about the worship service as expressed by one in Greslau, noted here by Anthony Ruff:

The people should be actual participants of what occurs in the assembly, and not idle spectators, or worse, just staring in admiration at what is happening.... The actual participation of the members of the community in the communal worship of God is only conceivable when every member is conscious and remains conscious of what the servant of the altar undertakes in the name of Christ or in the name of the community.²⁸

With these new ideas came the development of the *Singmesse* or the “sing-Mass.” To help Catholics understand the Latin liturgy, a series of strophic hymns were composed to be sung throughout the Mass. Empress Maria Theresia of Austria published a decree in 1755 that *Singmesse* be part of the liturgy throughout Austria. However, vernacular singing of hymns and Psalms have an inconsistent history in the Roman Catholic church. There is historical evidence that in German speaking regions as well as other specific regions, congregational singing in the vernacular was developed and practiced. However, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that the effort to involve vernacular participation into Catholic liturgy was actively pursued and called the “Liturgical Movement.”

As we trace the foundations and development of musical expression as part of liturgical form, we can observe key factors that caused Psalm singing to evolve, expand,

²⁸ IBID, 83.

and diminish. The singing of Psalms enjoyed its peak during the first (Solomon's temple) and second (Herod's temple) temple periods, a time when it was a vital part of the established state religious liturgy, literally commanded by Yahweh to be used in worship of Him. Between these two periods it could be argued that Psalm singing diminished in practice, but that decline in significance is mainly due to the destruction of the temple and captivity of the Jewish people. What is evident from history is that Psalm singing was strongly identified with Jewish liturgical worship and was formed as part of early Christian church's worship. We really do not know how much Psalm singing continued after the destruction of the first temple and during the exilic periods, but usually in times of religious persecution that which is oppressed experiences a resurgence, even if hidden.

With the dawn of the Christian church, Psalm singing would now become not just a practice of Judaism, but also of Christianity. In this context it would not enjoy the formality and structure of the Hebrew temple worship but would serve alongside new hymns as part of the growing Christian liturgy. Soon Psalm singing would address the language changes, Hebrew to Greek, Greek to Latin, and evolve musically to adapt to new words and translations. This may have seemed insurmountable and perhaps some thought that Psalm singing would pass into antiquity, but this proved wrong. As thousands of pilgrims journeyed into the Egyptian deserts, Psalm singing experienced another period of growth. Monastic life promised a renewed emphasis on the Book of Psalms as it was the perfect source text for prayer and solitude. As monasteries, convents and religious societies birthed and spread from Egypt, the use of the Book of Psalms served a prominent role in daily orders. As the Middle Ages faded, the Psalms were less and less a part of daily life as they had fallen from the vernacular; use of Latin in the

liturgy was now outside the realm of common people. Biblical texts were no longer accessible to a mostly illiterate population, Latin was for the educated, wealthy and the church. However, it did not vanish from use, as its Latin translations proved to be essential to the church and its liturgy. It may have withered from the common tongues of the faithful, but it was thriving in ecclesiastical use. With the arrival of the Reformation, singing Psalms re-appeared, adapting to the vernacular of the various cultures; Luther and Calvin breathed new life and relevancy into the Book of Psalms. Singing Psalms became an essential mark of the Reformation, as well as the Counter Reformation and continued to spread from Germany to Switzerland, Great Britain, and America. Once again, in the 21st century Psalms singing has met its demise: will it surge again? Can it accumulate again, and what factors from history give us direction?

CHAPTER 3. REVIEWING PSALM HISTORY

The next part of my literature review involves looking at the development of the Book of Psalms. The gathering of psalms developed over a wide period of almost 1,000 years, yet there is no full consensus as to the exact dates. Recent scholarship believes that the canonization of the Book of Psalms took place well before the second century BC. The collection pre-dates the Second Temple era (516 BC) and suggests that Psalms' important role and popularity was established well before the formal assembly. There are various Hebrew terms associated with the Psalms that can give us insights into their use and performance practices. In Psalm forty-five, the Hebrew word *psalm* is translated as song and in 119-133 it is translated as ascents. The authentic Hebrew words used are related to the Hebrew word *mizmôr*, which indicates a chant similar to a recitative with musical accompaniment. In Psalm 137:3, the Hebrew word *shîr* is translated as song, and it indicates singing with a modulated voice. These words and others give us the impression that different songs were used in various musical interpretations — chanting or singing — and by inference in different performance and accompaniment settings as well.

The Psalms first existed as individual poems and then over time assembled into collections of various cataloguing. These groups were probably assembled for liturgical use and came to be a total of six collections. They are defined by their predominant authors corresponding to specific time periods.²⁹

1. David – chapters 2-40
2. The Sons of Korah - chapters 41-48

²⁹Marie Peirik, *The Psalter in the Temple and the Church*. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1957), 4.

3. David - chapters 60-71
4. Asaph – chapters 49; 72-82
5. Various Authors – chapters 83-88; Korah, 88, 84, 86; David 85; Solomon 71
6. Anonymous – chapters 89-150; other than Moses, 89; David 100; 102; 107-109; 137-144

Further classification resulted in The Book of Psalms being categorized as five separate books, each ending with a doxology. It may be that this division into five books was to mirror the Five Books of Moses. The five books are as follows:

1. Chapters 1-40
2. Chapters 41-71
3. Chapters 72-88
4. Chapters 89-105
5. Chapters 106-150

The Book of Psalms is also a poetic book, and it is helpful to understand poetic structure in the Hebrew language. The forms of this parallel structure can be identified as follows:

- Synonymic: where two half-verses contain essentially the same thought or sentiment, expressed in different but complementary words — one half-verse in response to the other.
- Antithetic: where an idea or thought is reinforced by two half-verses that oppose each other with contrasting statements, one in response to the other.
- Synthetic: where the second of two half-verses respond to the first by completing its statement.
- Climactic: where a single idea or thought is augmented and expanded from line to line (or from verse to verse) with a cumulative, unfolding effect.

This parallel system is also found in other ancient Near Eastern poetry within Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Egyptian writings. Psalm verses usually are made of two equal or roughly equal parts and some may have three or more divisions. The verses are then arranged in groups of equal or approximately equal length.³⁰ This is the primary reason that a literal

³⁰ Yehudi Wyner, “The Book of Psalms and its Musical Interpretations,” Milken Archive, <https://www.milkenarchive.org/articles/view/the-book-of-psalms-and-its-musical-interpretations/>.

translation into another language will not retain any poetic form from the original Hebrew.

In analyzing the Book of Psalms, one should consider chapter differences and notations. First, the numbering of the chapters is different based on the sources of the translation used. In the LXX (Septuagint), there are several chapters that are broken up and divided differently from the Hebrew textual sources that originate from the Masoretic Text. In the 1611 King James and post-Reformation Protestant Bibles, the chapters and numbers follow the Masoretic Text. In the Latin Vulgate, English translations of Wycliffe and Coverdale, and most Roman Catholic translations, they follow the numbering of the Septuagint. Secondly, you will notice superscriptions that contain musical, historical, or liturgical notes found at the beginning of 113 Psalms. These are thought to be later additions and not part of the Psalm texts, even being omitted in some modern translations. There exist many speculative commentaries as to what these words mean, many of them perceived to have something to do with musical accompaniment or performance practice. For example, there is some thought that the often-used word “Selah” may have meant “to raise the pitch.” We just have no evidence that sheds specific light on what this ancient Hebrew term meant in the context of the Psalms.

Thirdly, in the Middle Ages, Latin Psalms are in various formats, both as standalone books and in devotional manuals known as primers. There are three major Latin versions: the *Romanum* (translations of the Greek Septuagint, probably not by Jerome), the *Gallicanum* (by Jerome late fourth century from a revised Septuagint), and the *Hebraicum* (around 385 AD by Jerome directly from the Hebrew). The *Gallicanum* became common, and it was usually the version printed in the Vulgate Bible, which

helped it become the most popular version. The *Romanum* was most commonly used in both Roman and English churches into the thirteenth century. Before the Reformation most biblical texts were produced as separate excerpts of the Bible, the Psalms and the Gospels were often treated in this manner. The Psalms were divided into chapters by Stephen Langton in the thirteenth century, before that only a colored initial marked the beginning of each verse and Psalm was known by its opening words in Latin. What we know as the biblical Book of Psalms took centuries to reach its current form. In spite of this, it has remained consistent throughout the years, and at its core, it is intact from the original form.

CHAPTER 4. HISTORY OF PSALM SINGING

Another important step in analysis is to review Psalm singing in various church eras and historical periods. We can observe the changes that Psalm singing endured and how it evolved through varied uses and circumstances.

4.1 Old Testament and Intertestamental Psalm Singing

What we do know from biblical records is that the pinnacle of Psalm composition and use was during the reign of King David, the second king of Israel. It was then under David and his son King Solomon that the musical practices of the nation became strongly identified with religious life. It is worth noting that David does have other Psalm-like material or songs recorded in the Old Testament that are not in the Book of Psalms. For example, 2 Samuel 22:1 has the heading of “And David spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.” This is a similar heading to Psalm 18 “Of the servant of Yahweh, of David, who spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.” From this we see evidence that David wrote songs and Psalms that may not have been included in the Book of Psalms or at least in their complete form. We also can understand that Israel probably sang Psalms that are not recorded in the Book of Psalms as well and these probably were used in temple liturgy.

As the Book of Psalms was collected and used in ancient worship, it has been discovered that the texts were not read; Psalms were either chanted or sung in a more

intricate form.³¹ In formal worship settings they formed the basis for liturgical prayer in the order of worship. Many times, they were used in responsorial form, which is the oldest song form that has been part of Jewish religious music and the early Christian church. The early church continued to use many of the Hebrew responses from Jewish liturgy, such as *Amen*, *Hosanna*, *Alleluia*, and others. It was regular practice to continue these Jewish traditions so that even when a congregation reached one of the five doxologies of the five books of the Psalms, the early Christians would respond with “*Amen*.” While responsorial form is well documented in ancient Jewish ritual, antiphonal form is not often mentioned. In the Old Testament we find it mentioned in the use of choirs for liturgical purposes. The singing of Psalms in the Old Testament occurred using both of these vocal practices for worship. I should also note that the dialogue structure of Psalm 23 could facilitate antiphonal use in liturgy, as well as Psalm 66 and 106. The Psalms were not only used for singing in the temple but as a practice in daily life for common people. It is evident that the first century Christian church continued in both responsorial and antiphonal singing practices in worship. One mention of this is recorded in the singing of Psalm 135 and noted by scholar Marie Peirik of Catholic University: “St. Athanasius instructed the congregation at Alexandria to respond to the verses sung by the deacons.”³² From these and other records it appears that the early church continued the two principal forms of singing — responsorial and antiphonal — along with the use of a precentor or lead singer.

³¹ Marie Peirik, *The Psalter in the Temple and the Church*. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1957), 46.

³² *IBID*, 48.

Unfortunately, we do not have eyewitness accounts of the Old Testament practice of Psalm singing. The best record comes near the end of the second temple period, so we assume these practices were passed down from the first temple period. There exists an historical account from Rabbi Akiba, who lived in the last half of the first century and was executed by the Romans in 135 AD. He would have witnessed the religious ceremonies of the second temple before its destruction in 70 AD, liturgy that had remained in place for hundreds of years. There were three principal forms of responsorial public singing which would have included the Psalms:

- 1) The leader intoned the first half-verse, whereupon the congregation repeated it. Then the leader sang each succeeding half-line, the congregation always repeating the same first half-line, which became a refrain throughout the entire song. This is the form in which the adults sang the 'Hallel,' and, according to Rabbi Akiba, was used also for the song of the sea. This form of 'Hallel' is still used in Southern Arabia The same form was made use of by ancient Syrians and Babylonians in laudations and supplications. [It may be assumed that Christ and the Apostles sang the 'Haller' in this manner at the Last Supper.]
- 2) The leader sang a half-line at a time and the congregation repeated what he had last sung. It was said by Rabbi Eliazar that this was the form used to instruct the school children.
- 3) The leader sang the whole first line, to which the congregation responded with the second line of the same verse, continuing manner to the end of the strophe. The *Shema* (Deut., 6:4-9) was recited in public in this manner, as Rabbi Nehemiah explained, and is still used by Babylonian Jews for chanting the 'Hallel' at Passover. Often other refrains were used by the people mostly in public worship, such as *Amen*, *Hallelujah*, *Hoshiana* (O Help!), *Anenu* (Answer us!), etc. Several of the Hebrew Psalms have '*Hallelujah*' in their heading, an invitation to the congregation to respond.³³

We have documents that also attest to the Jews singing the Psalms in the period between the Old and New Testament. Professor Ray Van Neste describes the practice of Psalms singing in Jewish life as detailed in the intertestamental period:

First Maccabees 4:24 describes Jews in the intertestamental period singing a psalm after a victory in battle- 'On their return they sang hymns and praises to Heaven- 'For he is good, for his mercy endures forever' (singing Psalm 136),

³³ IBID, 46.

Fourth Maccabees contains a stirring story of a Jewish mother encouraging her sons to steadfastness under persecution by reminding them of the teaching of their father who ‘sang to you songs of the psalmist David, who said, ‘Many are the afflictions of the righteous.’” (4 Macc 18:15, quoting Ps 34:20)³⁴

All of this changed after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD. Religious life and rituals had to be reorganized and structured and this affected the musical practice as well. The singing and playing of instruments performed in Temple liturgy was replaced by participation of the lay congregation in mass. We also find that psalmody disappeared from synagogue worship as well, perhaps until the seventh century, mainly out of respect for the ruined temple and the hope that temple worship would be restored.

A key feature in the Intertestamental period is the influence of the Hellenism culture, with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC. As Greek scholars began to assimilate into Rome in the second century BC, their influence was felt in the field of oratory, literature, and music. The chant was used to accompany Greek oratorical discourse and even Cicero, the famous orator, described the accent of his delivery as a *musical* tone.³⁵ It is from this Greek influence that we find the beginnings of Latin plainchant that found its roots in the development of the Latin language. These early changes to the language of the Roman empire would also have far-reaching effects on Jewish and Christian religious practices, theology, and sacred texts.

³⁴ Ray Van Neste, “Ancient Songs and Apostolic Preaching,” in *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship*, ed. C. Richard Wells and Ran Van Neste (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 38.

³⁵ Marie Peirik, *The Psalter in the Temple and the Church*. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1957), 61.

4.2 New Testament Psalm Singing

As the Old Testament closes and we witness the birth of Jesus in the gospels, the musical practices of the Temple in Jerusalem remain as they had been for hundreds of years. We do have some evidence in the third century that Psalm singing had remained a common practice even after the destruction of the temple:

...around 200 AD, Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi compiled the *Mishnah*, the first major collection of Jewish oral traditions, approximately 130 years after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. It provides fascinating descriptions of how the Psalms were supposedly employed. In summary it enumerates (Tamid 7:5) that certain Psalms were recited on particular days at the hours of prayer/sacrifice: Day 1-Ps 24; Day 2-Ps 48; Day 3 -Ps 82; Day 4-Ps 94; Day 5-Ps81; Day 6-Ps 93; Day 7 (Sabbath) – Ps 92. Each of these Psalms contains references to Temple worship such as “in the midst of Your Temple” (Ps 48) or “in your house” (Ps. 93), while Ps 92 for Day 7 appears with the ascription, “A Psalm for the Sabbath.”³⁶

We also know the Psalms were sung in the second Temple rituals and accompanied by a variety of instruments up until the temple’s destruction.

In the first century, despite the importance of the temple to Jewish life, most ordinary Jews were not regular attenders. Instead, a great deal found their religious identity in the gathering at their local synagogue. Unfortunately, we have no first or second century documents referring to the singing of Psalms in these assemblies. Regardless, we do know that Psalm-like material was well known to the first century Jews, as the Dead Sea scrolls and Qumran manuscripts show familiarity with the Psalms. It is also observed that the New Testament authors quote from the Book of Psalms sixty-nine times, which is more than any other biblical source. As the early church formed after the death and resurrection of Christ, it would begin to form new practices relating to the

³⁶ Mel R. Wilhoit, “Psalms in the Early Church,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 1, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 18.

worship of Jesus Christ and the traditions of Old Testament Jewish teaching. The Jewish traditions of temple worship, the gathering in synagogues, the writings of the Apostle Paul, and the use of Psalms in worship would shape the early church.

The Book of Psalms helped to form the foundation of the New Testament church's worship liturgy. First, they provided a prophetic prelude to what early Christians believed had been fulfilled in Christ. To the young church, Jesus was the King who would reign forever over His people as described in the Psalter. The Psalms also provided the church with its vocabulary as it sought to define and communicate its mission on earth. The symbolism and expressions contained in the Psalms were transitioned into the New Testament age of grace and provided metaphors for the theology and hymnology to this young movement. The Psalter also was responsible for a body of song that could be trusted for its theological reliability. This was important as the young church struggled against the heresies of Gnosticism and Arianism in its beginning stages of development. When the Council of Laodicea met in 363 AD, it stated in Canon 59: "No songs by private individuals nor any uncanonical books may be read in the church, but only the Canonical books of the Old and New Testaments."³⁷ This did not mention the practice of singing, but the effect was to put forth the Psalms as the only trustworthy poetry to be used in the music of the Christian church. This decision led to a further standardizing of the Christian liturgy across Europe in both content and practice. By the fifth century, the Christian liturgy consisted of Psalms from the Book of Psalms, nine Biblical Odes or Canticles, and a few non-scriptural Christian texts.

³⁷ IBID, 24.

4.3 Early Church Psalm Singing (Patristic era)

At the start of the Christian Church, the Eastern Mediterranean areas where it grew were established in Greek culture and language. It would make sense that this Greek vocabulary was the language that the young church used in its liturgy of worship. In the early centuries of the church, there was no shortage of hymns, especially those based on scripture and biblical themes. One famous hymn, *Phos Hilaron* (“Lamp Lighting Hymn”) was written in the third century AD. Clement of Alexandria (c.160-215) is responsible for the hymn “*Shepherd of Eager Youth.*” Andrew of Crete (660-732) — or Andrew of Jerusalem — originated the use of the liturgical canon in his “*Great Canon,*” which contained 250 penitential stanzas. The greatest of Greek hymnwriters is John of Damascus (c. 675-749); he perfected the words and music in the form of the canon. Ambrose of Milan (c. 340-397) was known for standardizing the “Long Meter,” which contained four lines of iambic tetrameter. There are many more hymnwriters, such as St. Patrick of Ireland (c. 372-466), Pope Gregory the Great (590-604), Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), and Bernard of Cluny in the twelfth century who demonstrated that hymns in both Greek and later in Latin continued to be written for the liturgy of the Christian church from the beginning into the Middle Ages. While the psalms were most likely used in chanting and as a part of worship, there was not a movement to build the early church’s worship practices around the singing of Psalms. Hymns in Greek and Latin were accepted and grew in popularity among the clergy.

History has given us only a few references to Psalm singing by Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Basil from the first three centuries. By the fourth century we have a growing body of examples of Psalm

singing, and one by John Chrysostom (349-407) provides the view that Psalm singing was a commonplace tradition. Mark R. Wilhoit of Southern Seminary provides this quote attributed to John Chrysostom:

If we keep vigil in church, David comes first, last, and central. If early in the morning we want songs and hymns, first, last and central is David again. If we are occupied with the funeral solemnities, ... or if virgins sit at home and spin, David is first last and central. O amazing wonder! Many... know the Psalter by heart... In monasteries, among those holy choirs of angelic armies, David is first, last and central. In the convents of virgins... David is first, last and central. All other men at night are overcome by sleep, David alone is active, and gathering the servants of God into seraphic bands, he turns earth into heaven, and converts men into angels.”³⁸

The early church fathers such as Basil (c. 330-379), John Chrysostom (c. 345-407), Jerome (c. 340-420), and Augustine (354-430) all wrote and spoke of the power of music. Their thoughts on music — that the ethos of music had the power to influence listeners for good or evil — were shaped by the Greek philosophy. Their influence is one reason that for over a thousand years, Christian music was unaccompanied singing. Instruments were shunned and even condemned because of the role they assumed in pagan rituals and early converts associated their use with elaborate musical spectacles reserved for the godless.

The ancient Synagogue service consisted of four elements: reading the Torah, discourse, chanting or singing psalms, and prayer. It was assumed all of this was adapted by the early church, but sources give us a different picture. The prayer aspect of the synagogue worship was only begun after the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD as a temporary measure substituting for the temple until it could be rebuilt. As to the singing and chanting of the Psalms, we find that as a regular practice, sources do not

³⁸ IBID, 23.

mention this until the eighth century as a substitution for its performance in the temple sacrifice. The Jewish temple worship was similar to pagan rituals of the ancient world; people stood and observed the sacrifices of animals upon an altar. Accompanying these offerings as a part of the sacrificial process were musical instruments and singing. As the Christian church grew from infancy, the earlier practices of the Temple took on different forms and meanings. In society, the temple was the site of public worship, and the home, especially the evening meal, was the place of personal worship. As the church developed, this meal took on a new significance as it moved out of the home and became known as the 'breaking of bread,' a meal to be eaten together by the members of the new church. It was at these times that the singing of Psalms and other musical material would take place. We do have a record from 400 AD of a service observed by a Spanish nun named Egeria who was on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. She remarks of the priests singing a Psalm with the people responding, followed by a deacon singing a Psalm, and then another singing a third Psalm, each followed by a prayer. At the conclusion of the service another Psalm was sung followed by prayer and dismissal.³⁹

Scholarship lacks evidence of the early music of the Christian church, especially between the second and fourth century. However, scholars have confirmed that at one time or another over two-thirds of the Psalms were sung in the Temple liturgy. The conclusion is that while the Synagogue did not have a pattern of singing the Psalms, the early church probably did not either, but first century Christians would have sung them in other settings. In the first three centuries we do find references to singing the Psalms in

³⁹ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*. (W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 2006).

the writings of Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Tertullian (155-220), Ambrose of Milan (339-397), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), and Basil (320-379).⁴⁰ In the fourth century we find more documentation of the use of Psalms for worship. From what is available in sources, it appears Psalms singing and chanting were a central part of the early church worship.

During the fourth century and partly from the influence of monastic practices, the Christian gatherings began to have a standardized format and singing became a regular feature. The texts were usually drawn from the Book of Psalms as well as non-biblical hymns and psalms. As noted by James W. McKinnon,

The great upsurge in the singing of the Davidic Psalter during the 4th century has often been cited in support of such a view, reinforced by a passage from Canon 59 of the Council of Laodicea (possibly later 4th century): ‘One must not recite privately composed psalms (psalmi idiotici) nor non-canonical books in the church, but only the canonical books of the Old and New Testament’. Again, the argument is that it was the fear of heresy that encouraged the singing of biblical psalms. Yet, whatever the interpretation of the 4th-century evidence, it is just as easy to read the passage from Tertullian as indicating simply that in the early 3rd century the Davidic psalms were being sung with some frequency and would have been sung whether heretical hymns had become fashionable or not. On another occasion Tertullian makes an apparent reference to the singing of Old Testament psalms (and orthodox hymns as well) at the agapē, this time without mentioning heretical hymns: ‘After the washing of the hands and the lighting of lamps, each is urged to come into the middle and sing to God, either from the sacred scriptures or from his own invention’ (Apologeticum, xxxix.18). It should be further noted that there is nothing in either of these passages from Tertullian to suggest that the singing of Davidic psalms was an innovation in his time.⁴¹

The increase of psalmody and the use of the biblical Book of Psalms relates to the increase in the practice of desert monasticism in the fourth century. Thousands of people

⁴⁰ Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest, and Vernon M. Whaley, *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 1, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 22.

⁴¹ James W. McKinnon, “Music of the early Christian Church,” in *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed 10 Jan. 2023. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.uky.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005705>.

left towns and cities to pursue lives of prayer, piety, and deprivation in the Egyptian desert. The Psalms were particularly useful in fulfillment of this quest, as the primary idea behind the monasticism was to ‘pray unceasingly’ as scripture had commanded. The Psalms provided a ready text to fulfill this and were used as a prayer device in sequential order.

4.4 Pre-Reformation Psalm Singing (Middle Ages)

In the Middle Ages, the Psalms continued to be the guide of faith and practice in the daily lives of the faithful. In this era, the Book of Psalms was the most important book of the Bible, especially in the monastic practices, whereby a monk could recite all 150 Psalms in Latin in a single week.⁴² This is a well-documented and familiar practice that was an important part of life for anyone seeking a life of simplicity and solitary devotion. However, this was not the practice of lay people who also used Latin and vernacular psalters in their own daily piety: “The significance of the psalter is twofold: first as an aid to prayer, personal devotion, and repentance, and second as a digest of biblical themes and stories as various verses were mapped typologically onto the life of Christ.”⁴³ This thought found its way into medieval thought and the Yorkshire author Richard Rolle commented that “‘doing’ the psalms is the most meaningful way of reading the psalms.”⁴⁴ It was from this perspective that we see the Psalms were not just an accessory for use in musical praise, but texts that were meant to shape the spiritual

⁴² James H. Morey, “Introduction,” in *Jerome’s Abbreviated Psalter*, ed. James H. Morey, (Arc Humanities Press, 2019), 2. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1h9dm65.1>.

⁴³ IBID

⁴⁴ Annie Sutherland, “Performing the Penitential Psalms in the Middle Ages,” ed. Manuele Gragnolati and Almut Suerbaum, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 16.

conscience of the faithful. Annie Sutherland said that this was a common belief about the Psalms: “Augustinian exegesis, for example, is insistent in its emphasis on authentic psalmody as consisting not only in reading and reciting songs of praise and penitence, but also in an active living out of godly principals.”⁴⁵ While the texts were in Latin, there was no real attempt to update them over centuries as they were far too engrained in the memories and offices of the liturgy. In fact, most monks no longer read the Psalms but knew them by heart.⁴⁶ What this means is the common person only heard the Psalms sung or chanted in Latin in most areas of Europe. The common person could not afford a printed copy of the Psalms, and most were unable to read Latin, so if they sang, prayed, or chanted the Psalms, they did so from memory. Over time musicians and congregations memorized the Psalms that were part of the holy offices. Although congregational singing was scarce in the liturgy of the church in the Middle Ages, the power of the music being presented was still quite relevant to the laity. Augustin said that when he listened to the music in the church at Milan, “it kindled a ‘flame of piety’ within him.”⁴⁷

4.5 Reformation Psalm Singing

Psalm singing in the sixteenth century was mostly confined to Catholic liturgy and was primarily in Latin. However, by the end of the century, Protestant congregations of many varieties across Europe began to sing hymns and Psalms in their vernacular. These congregations were singing in High and Low German, French, Danish, Swedish,

⁴⁵ Annie Sutherland, “Performing the Penitential Psalms in the Middle Ages,” ed. Manuele Gagnolati and Almut Suerbaum, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 16.

⁴⁶ Daniel J. DiCenso and Rebecca Maloy, “Chant, Liturgy and the Inheritance of Rome” in *Essays in Honour of Joseph Dyer*. (London: Boydell & Brewer: Henry Bradshaw Society, 2017).

⁴⁷ Christopher Page, “To Chant in a Vale of Tears,” in *Chant, Liturgy, and the Inheritance of Rome: Essays in Honour of Joseph Dyer*, (London: Boydell & Brewer: Henry Bradshaw Society, 2017), 432.

English, and other languages. This development led the Catholic church to begin singing in vernacular as well, privately and in non-Eucharistic worship. Much of this trajectory of change can be traced to Martin Luther and his contribution to the musical expression of theology. However, religious songs in Germanic tongues had been growing for decades, especially at religious celebrations. It was not so much a radical change that Luther introduced but rather an improvement upon a movement that had already begun.

Princeton's Professor Robin A. Leaver described Luther's work in this way: "What Luther did was revise and expand some of these earlier hymns, often translations from Latin, made new translations of other Latin hymns and liturgical chants, as well as writing new strophic hymns."⁴⁸ What was new to this practice was that previously religious songs in vernacular were only sung outside of the liturgy at different seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, etc., but Luther's movement made vernacular singing a part of the worship practice. Added to this was the fact that Luther created a new genre of singing, the Psalm-hymn or metrical Psalm, which would dominate protestant worship for the next 250 years.

Beginning in 1523, Luther's new Wittenberg hymns were printed and circulated in towns, with some collecting these songs and assembling them in booklets. In Strasbourg, the printers combined Luther's hymns with new melodies and new texts of metrical Psalms based on Luther's works. In German speaking Zurich, the reformer Zwingli declared that congregational singing was unnecessary as part of worship, but regardless the Zurich publisher Froschauer published a hymnal for use in the town of

⁴⁸ Robin A. Leaver, "Introduction to Volume 2," in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), xx.

Constance comprised of more than eighty metrical Psalms. In French Strasbourg, the young pastor Jean Calvin was given the task of ordering the French worship service after the content and form of the German churches. Calvin believed strongly in singing biblical texts, so in Strasbourg he created his first collection of metrical Psalms in 1539. Two years later he moved to Geneva to serve as pastor and, working with the French poet Clement Marot and theologian Theodore Beza, he created the Genevan psalter. With new melodies composed by Bourgeois and Goudimel, the first completed metrical psalter was published in 1562. The Genevan or French Psalter was to be used almost exclusively by Reformed churches in Europe and became the model for the Dutch, German, and Scottish psalters.

One of the most important influencers on Calvin in developing his thoughts regarding Psalm singing was Martin Bucer (1491-1551), a prominent German reformer and pastor in Strasbourg from 1524-1531. Bucer was originally a monk of the Dominican Order, but it is said that after meeting Luther in 1518 he annulled his monastic vows. At first, he attempted to reform the Catholic Church in Wissembourg, France, but was ultimately excommunicated and fled to Strasbourg. There he joined other reformers and became the pastor of St. Aurelius's Church and then of St Thomas's Church. While exiled from Geneva, Calvin found himself in Strasbourg and a part of Bucer's congregation. Bucer had begun work on a new liturgical flow to the worship service and congregational singing in the conversational tongue of the laity. This experience doubtless left a deep impression upon Calvin and helped to form his initial thoughts regarding Psalm singing and vernacular liturgy. Bucer believed that any liturgy should be

drawn from scripture, a thesis that was consistent with the tenants of the Reformation.

Robin A. Leaver described the worship in this manner:

When the people gather on Sunday, the minister exhorts them to confess sins and to pray for mercy; he confesses to God for the congregation, prays for mercy, and proclaims remission of sins to the believers. The people then sing some short psalms or hymns of praise, after which the minister says a brief prayer and reads something from the epistles of the apostles, expounding it briefly- Hereafter the congregation sings the decalogue or something else. The minister then reads the Gospel and delivers the sermon, whereafter the people sing the articles of faith [i.e. the Creed]. Then the minister prays for the Civil Powers and all men [which is followed by an exhortation, in preparation for communion) After the exhortations, the minister proclaims the Gospel of the Lord's Supper, as the three Evangelists Mathew, Mark and Luke have described, and as St. Paul has handed down to us in 1 Cor. 11. After this the minister distributes the bread and cup of the Lord, and also partakes himself. The communion is followed by a hymn of praise of the congregation. The minister then concludes with a short prayer, blesses the people and dismisses them in peace.⁴⁹

In this new form of liturgy, singing the words of biblical texts was the center of the congregation's participation. Great care was exercised to make sure that neither polyphony nor accompaniment would distract from the singing of sacred words.

The English were also impacted by these developments and what transpired in Wittenberg, even though Reformation sentiments were not that strong in Great Britain. In the mid-1530s, a Protestant clergyman, Miles Coverdale, translated the first English Bible, which would be published in 1535. He also published a small hymnal, *Goostly Psalms and Spiritual Songs*, around the same time. His psalter was abbreviated and contained only forty-one texts and relied on many of Luther's hymns and melodies. In 1546, Henry VIII placed the hymnal psalter *Gude and Godlie Ballates* on a list of banned books and church leaders in Scotland and England were at a loss to find an acceptable collection of hymns and Psalms. Hymns were illegal until 1821, so the only acceptable

⁴⁹ Robin A. Leaver, "Goostly Psalms and Spirituall Songs," (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 25.

form of public praise was that of metrical Psalms. In an interesting turn of events, Thomas Sternhold, Groom of the Royal Wardrobe at the end of Henry VIII's reign and into Edward VI's, began to write metrical Psalms for the young king when he was ten years old. Tradition says that while strolling through Windsor Castle he heard organ music and Sternhold singing some of his own Psalms. Edward was pleased very much by what he had heard and encouraged Sternhold to write more Psalms. At the time of Sternhold's death in 1549, he had completed thirty-seven metrical versions of the Psalms. The collection was enlarged a few years later by John Hopkins, but further development stopped when Mary ascended the throne. Catholicism was once again the religion of the land and Protestants were either sent into exile or driven into hiding. Many chose to find safety in Germany and Switzerland, where they were influenced by the Genevan psalter. In this manner the Sternhold and Hopkins psalter was revised and expanded, and when Mary died in 1558, the political climate was right for the new psalter.

The completed and updated Sternhold and Hopkins *The Whole Book of Psalmes* was published in 1562 and soon became the only source of congregational singing in Anglican churches. Interestingly, it was completed in Geneva the same year as the Genevan Psalter was brought back to England after the reign of "Bloody Mary." Those Protestant leaders who had fled England for Geneva — John Hopkins, William Wittingham, William Kethe, and Robert Wisdom — returned after Mary died and brought with them a new translation of the Bible and a new psalter. *The Whole Book of Psalmes* was not as poetic as the Genevan Psalter but did contain many tunes by Louis Bourgeois from the Genevan Psalter. The Scots, who were quite independent and did not want to share an identical psalter with the English, began working on their own psalter. It

was initiated while John Knox was exiled in Geneva and was completed in 1564 after he returned to Great Britain. The first Scottish psalter included about a third of its texts from Scottish poets.

Matthew Parker, who became Queen Elizabeth's Archbishop of Canterbury, completed his own psalter in 1557, and although it was never published, some copies were printed in 1567, which is of particular note. Parker had remained in England during Mary's reign and worked on paraphrasing the Psalms. His paraphrases are noteworthy because of the use of tunes by the composer Thomas Tallis. In this psalter, the Tallis "Canon" appears for the first time. As Protestant leaders returned from exile with their own psalters, Parker knew that his version could not compare, so he printed just a few copies.

4.6 Post Reformation Psalm Singing

In the seventeenth century, Europe experienced the Thirty Years War, which was especially devastating for Germany, whose population declined by 50%. During this time German hymnwriters flourished, creating new texts and melodies. Lutheran composers would also usher in changes to the music of singing hymns and songs. It is claimed that by the end of the sixteenth century, Lutheran composers produced over 20,000 new hymns.⁵⁰ Lutheran hymns which became known as chorales, were vernacular poetry, sung in unison, and intended to catechize the congregants in Protestant doctrine and faith. Although there was a scholarly respect for Latin and its continued use in liturgy, the

⁵⁰ Benjamin Kolodzie, "Early Lutheran Hymnody," in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lampport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 34.

vernacular become the language of the new religious material. In 1586, the hymnal *Fünffzig Geistliche Lieder und Psalmen* broke new musical ground. The composer, Lukas Osiander the Elder (1534-1604), set the chorales to four-part harmony and moved the *cantus firmus* from the tenor to the soprano. Osiander realized this change and wrote in the preface:

I understand well that composers have usually placed the chorale melody in the tenor. When one does this, however, the chorale melody is unrecognizable beneath the other voices: because of this, the average person does not understand which song it is and therefore can not sing. Therefore I have taken the melody to the soprano [“discant”] wherein it is clearly recognizable and everyone can sing.”⁵¹

Even with the rise of four-part chorales, the organ did not play an influential role in the congregational singing. The organ was instead thought of the dominant instrument in the performance of polyphone music by the choir.

In the seventeenth century, Protestantism was expanding all over Europe and America. English and Scottish congregations continued to sing from the Sternhold and Hopkins psalters, and some even used the 1564 Scottish Metrical Psalter as well. However, a different path was chosen by the English-speaking reformed churches of the Netherlands. Henry Ainsworth (1571-1622) pastored an Independent Reformed English Church in the Netherlands that practiced singing Psalms exclusively. As a Hebrew scholar, Ainsworth believed that the English and Scottish psalters had drifted too far from the original Hebrew texts in their paraphrases.⁵² His response was to publish his own version of the Psalms in prose with a commentary for his congregation.

⁵¹ Benjamin Kolodzie, “Early Lutheran Hymnody,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 34.

⁵² J. Michael Morgan, “English Language Metrical Psalters of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 152

First published in 1612, his *Annotations upon the Book of Psalms* sought to fulfill a more literal translation of the Hebrew while putting it into poetic form. Change was also coming in England when the dominance of the Sternhold and Hopkins psalter was finally challenged by Nahum Tate, poet laureate, and Nicholas Brady, the chaplain to King William III. Together they published *A New Version of the Psalms of David* (1696/98) with the consent of the King. With this new psalter, Sternhold and Hopkins would be referred to as the “*Old Version*” and Tate and Brady, the “*New Version*.” There were no specific theological differences, as Tate and Brady followed the same principle that the Biblical Psalms should be sung in poetic form. The “*Old Version*” continued to be used into the nineteenth century, but the “*New Version*” offered a better poetic flow and new melodies that led to freer singing.

English worship practices held onto the priority of Psalm singing until the eighteenth century and did not generate the rich heritage of hymns that developed in German speaking countries. The reason for this is that England and Scotland adopted the practice of worship that was set up by John Calvin rather than the model of Martin Luther. Calvin and Luther both believed in congregational participation in the liturgy of the church service, and singing was to be a part of that. However, that is as far as the similarities went between the two reformers. In the liturgical use of music, they went in two different theological directions that had consequences for hundreds of years. Luther and Calvin did fully agree that it was important to take the church music out of the possession of the clergy and choir and put it in the vernacular for the use of the congregation. Luther, a well-trained musician, believed that music could accomplish a vital part of the Reformation by teaching scripture and doctrine to the people. The

Catholic Mass was in Latin, and therefore, scripture and theology were not presented in the tongue of the people, thus keeping them from being educated in theological matters. The fact that hymns were freely composed and not bound by Scriptural translations was not an issue to Luther as he believed this was an opportunity to make doctrine more accessible to the common people, especially the illiterate.

Calvin, on the other hand, had very strict views on music and its use in the church. He believed that instruments were not to be used in the church service and that the only words fit to be sung in the liturgy were the words of the Psalms. Both points seem at odds with his theology; first, the Genevan psalter did print other scriptural songs in its collections that were not from the Psalms. Secondly, the practice of singing Psalms meant singing those that called for every instrument to be used in praise of God. In the end, the Puritans and Calvinists of England and Scotland, especially John Knox who had pastored in Geneva, chose to follow the influence and patterns of the Genevan liturgy and not Luther.

Richard Baxter, an English, Puritan pastor (1615-1691), was a noted reformed theologian, church leader, poet, hymnodist, and controversialist. He was an influential leader of the Nonconformists in England and is considered one of the chief English protestants. Baxter's *Reformed Liturgy* grew out of a conference that had met to revise the *Book of Common Prayer*. In his book, he lays out a liturgical practice that is solely built around scripture. In 1692 he published his psalter, *Paraphrases on the Psalms*, for use in private and public worship. Among Puritans, Baxter was not of the strict Calvinist view that only Psalms were to be added to liturgical use but approved of applicable hymns. He did, however, prefer that the paraphrases of the psalter adhere closely to the

literal Biblical text, saying: “I durst not venture on the Paraphrastical great liberty of others; I durst make Hymns of my own, or explain the Apocryphal; but I feared adding to God’s Word, and making my own to pass for God’s.”⁵³ The English psalter continued to develop and in the Savoy Conference of 1661, the Presbyterians raised the issue of congregational singing along with the of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Their complaint was against the Sternhold and Hopkins edition and they requested that they be allowed to fix it or to publish a “purer” version of the Psalms. At the conference, Richard Baxter presented his “Reformed Liturgy” that contained the groundwork for accomplishing this, beginning with borrowing from the Scottish psalter. He described his project in this way:

Concerning the Psalms for Publick use. We desire that, instead of the imperfect version of the Psalms in Meeter now in use, Mr. William Bartons Version, and that perused and approved by the Church of Scotland there in use (being the best that we have seen) may be received and corrected by some skilful men, and both allowed (for grateful variety) to be Printed together on several Columes or Pages, and publickly used; At least until a better than either of them shall be made.⁵⁴

Psalm singing was a popular part of Scottish life and piety and many Scots liked singing the Psalms because of their tunes. They were so popular that future revisions of the metrical psalter resisted the updating of tunes, and the ministers were concerned the people were singing the Psalms not for their words but for their music. Nathan C.J. Hood described the inclusion of music as a valuable part of Scottish life:

Early modern Scotland was a musical society, within which, Melville observed, it was ‘custome’ for people to sing while they worked ‘to ease’ the ‘irksomnes of your labours’. Scots were typical, as across Europe ordinary and elite people loved to sing and perform music in domestic, commercial, and recreational contexts. As most of the population could not read, songs were, for the most part,

⁵³ Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship*, (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1915) 84.

⁵⁴ *IBID*, 83.

listened to and memorised by heart. Consequently, those with catchy, enjoyable, and as such memorable tunes were most popular.⁵⁵

Richard Rolle, the fourteenth century English theologian, defined the psalter in his book on the Psalms: “Psalm singing chases fiends, excites angels to our help, removes sin, pleases God. It shapes perfection, removes and destroys annoyance and anguish of soul. As a lamp lighting our life, healing of a sick heart, honey to a bitter soul, this book is called a garden enclosed, well-sealed, a paradise full of apples.”⁵⁶ During the seventeenth century, the Scottish Puritans continued to prioritize the singing of Psalms in their worship, particularly from the 1564 psalter. However, as the century progressed and Oliver Cromwell rose to power, the Scottish Puritans and Presbyterians became more independent from the Church of England and pursued their own convictions for the Scottish Church. The Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* was banned, and it was decided the old Scottish Metrical psalter was in need of updating. Two Puritan authors, Francis Rous (1579-1659), an English lawyer, and his rival, William Barton (1598-1678), a clergyman in the Church of England, began composing new paraphrases of the Psalms for consideration. The House of Lords favored Barton’s version, but the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland chose Rous’s version. Using Rous’s paraphrases as a starting point, the General Assembly began making revisions and published a final version in 1650. Some of these texts with only minor changes over the years are still sung in churches today.

⁵⁵ Nathan C.J. Hood, “Metrical Psalm-Singing and Emotion in Scottish Protestant Affective Piety,” in *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 151-169. 159, <https://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080%2F14622459.2021.1922070> Accessed January 11, 2023.

⁵⁶ J. Michael Morgan, “English Language Metrical Psalters of the Sixteenth Century,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 65.

In the eighteenth century an evangelical movement began in the Anglican Church of England. The church had been impacted by the Methodist movement of John and Charles Wesley and the preaching of George Whitfield, all of whom began as Anglican clergymen. The popularity of these movements stirred a faction of Evangelical Anglicans so that it rose in power, and by the nineteenth century they were an official party of the church. One of the arguments arose about the popularity of hymn singing in the new evangelical movements outside the church, while some inside argued for a return to Psalm singing. Wilbur Romaine (1714-95) spoke out on the subject of Psalm singing as he felt it had been excluded with the development of new hymns. He called “to restore the singing of them in the congregation to their primitive usefulness” especially at a time when hymn writers “thrust out the psalms to make way for their own compositions.”⁵⁷

When the Pilgrims first settled at Plymouth Rock in 1621, their only form of musical expression was found in the singing of Psalms.⁵⁸ In fact, in America from this beginning until almost 1800, Psalm texts and their singing were the popular music of the day. As time passed, popular tastes changed, the cities and towns began to allow the performance of European style musical presentations and religious music faded from the marketplace. In New England during the seventeenth century, Psalm singing was the focus of Sunday congregational singing. However, as popular music increased, the old Genevan and English tunes fell out of practice and by the eighteenth century the old tunes had been all but forgotten. Unfortunately, the practice of lining out had continued in New

⁵⁷ Karen B. Weserfield Tucker, “Evangelical Anglican Hymnists,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 244.

⁵⁸ Robert Stevenson, “Protestant Music in America”, in *Protestant Church Music: A History*, ed. By Friedrich Blume (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974), 645.

England, and this also contributed to the decline of Psalm singing.⁵⁹ This practice continued in rural areas, mostly because of illiteracy; congregations knew the tunes but not the lyrics and were unable to read the Psalms. Soon people like Thomas Symmes and Cotton Mather, both New England Puritans, were advocating for regular singing, just as Watts was in England. In the new world, John Cotton, a minister in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, communicated his commitment to singing Psalms in worship: “The translating of the psalms into verse, in number, measure, and meter, and suiting the ditty with apt tunes, do help to stir up the affection; and the singing of psalms being appointed of God, they tend to make a gracious melody to the praise of God and edification of his people.”⁶⁰ Cotton along with other colleagues who shared his views published *The Whole Book of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre*, also known as the Bay Psalm Book, in 1640. It was also the first book to be printed in America. Early editions of the Bay Psalm Book or *The Whole Book of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Meter* contained no music. The texts were referenced to the Ravenscroft psalter for the use of tunes.

In the new world of the American colonies, Psalm singing seemed to be the norm of liturgy from its early stages. In 1739, after the English evangelist George Whitfield had preached to crowds in Philadelphia, Ben Franklin said, “one could not walk through Philadelphia in the evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every

⁵⁹ Lining Out was when “a leader read the psalm one line at a time, in alternation with the congregation’s singing of each tune phrase” (Crookshank, 23).

⁶⁰ J. Michael Morgan, “English Language Metrical Psalters of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 153.

street.”⁶¹ Over time in New England the older Psalmody transitioned to the newer Watts along with a change in the tunes that churches used. Singing societies were formed along with choirs, and these created a demand for recent tunes that were more complex than the older psalter tunes. The latest tune books from England were reprinted in Boston and Newburyport, and a group of native composers began to write compositions of their own for psalmody use. These changes in performance and musical settings were helpful in bringing Watt’s collections of *Hymns and Psalms* to greater use in America.

In the mid-eighteenth century, congregational singing in America fell upon hard times. The Puritan directive of Psalm singing still existed, but the neglect of music had caused many congregations to discontinue singing in worship. In those that still sang, the condition of the music was described by Rev. Symmes as “indecent”:

In the lack of music books and the inability to sing by note, a very few tunes were sung from memory, “tortured and twisted as every unskillful throat saw fit, producing a medley of discordant noises; something, as Mr. Walter reports, like five hundred different tunes roared out at the same time,” with the singers often one or two words apart, and in a manner so drawling that he himself has “twice in one note paused to take breath.”⁶²

Although the singing of the Methodist movement under the Wesley brothers had a great impact on hymns and congregational singing in America, it did so without a focus on singing Psalms. In their comments, it was clear that the state of singing Psalms in the eighteenth century was in sad condition:

John Wesley, in his turn, ridiculed the Psalmody of the town churches as “the miserable, scandalous doggerel of Sternhold and Hopkins”; at first droned out, two staves at a time, by “a poor humdrum wretch,” and then “bawled out” “by a

⁶¹ Mark A. Knoll, “The Defining Role of Hymns in Early Evangelicalism,” in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, ed. Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 5.

⁶² Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship*, (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1915), 161.

handful of wild, unawakened striplings” “who neither feel nor understand” what they “scream,” while the congregation is “lolling at ease, or in the indecent posture of sitting, drawling out one word after another.”⁶³

4.7 Modern Era Psalm Singing

In the 20th century, metrical Psalms began to be replaced by hymns in most American churches. However, Reformed churches, especially those in the Calvinist tradition, continued to prioritize the singing of Psalms. In 1893, The United Presbyterian Church joined with other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations to produce a new psalter, new texts with known tunes. This psalter would involve nine denominations and was published in 1912 by Eerdmans Publishing and continues to be printed today. This was one of the last attempts to provide new metrical lyrics for the paraphrases of the Biblical Book of Psalms. This publication was so successful that it served as the basis for other psalter publications, such as the United Presbyterian 1927 Psalter Hymnal. The 1934 Psalter Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church sought to restore the Genevan psalter tunes to its publication.

In more modern worship practices, Psalm singing is viewed as archaic and out-of-date. Added to this is the decline in actual hymnal/psalter sales, as most music in churches has moved to projection of lyrics absent any musical notation. There are also other factors: four-part singing is not as widely used in modern worship and the richness of congregations singing in this manner has become lost. Psalter paraphrases have not kept up with the vernacular and most rely upon dated texts. The one prominent exception seems to be The Free Church of Scotland and their attempts to keep updating the

⁶³ IBID, 222.

language of the Scottish Metrical Psalter. Unfortunately, they do not believe in updating the tunes that are ascribed to these historical settings of the Psalms, so the result is not as satisfying for modern music sensibilities. It seems that although there are pockets of creativity regarding the singing of Psalms, no individual, publisher, or denomination seems willing to invest in completely new paraphrases and new melodies.

CHAPTER 5. HISTORICAL PSALTERS AND INFLUENCES

This chapter reviews important collections of Psalters that have been used in worship practices throughout history.

450 AD **The Book of Psalms** – collection of Biblical texts composed from 1,350 BC to 539 BC by various authors. Canonized in the second century BC. Originally, the Psalms were written in Hebrew, translated into Greek around 250 BC and into Latin by Jerome around 450 AD.

300 BC **Old Latin translations** of the psalms appear.

383 Jerome's **Roannum** Psalter

385 Jerome's **Hebraicum** psalter revision, replaced the Old Latin *Gallic Psalter*.

1531 Miles Coverdale's *Goostly Psalmes and Spiritual Songs drawn out of the holy Scripture* was published. It contained English translations of German hymns from Martin Luther's hymnal. It was mostly dull in its language, but it did set a new path.

1539 **Les Pseaulmes** – The Psalms in French, also known as the Genevan Psalter as well as the Huguenot Psalter, was begun by John Calvin for his congregation in Geneva. The versifications were begun by the notable French poet of the sixteenth century Clement Marot and later assisted by the theologian Theodore de Beze. The first edition was

published in 1539 and the completed fifth edition was published in 1562 with all 150 Psalms.

1556-61 The **Anglo-Genevan Psalter** — This version was used by John Knox with the English congregation in Geneva. The basis for it was the Sternhold and Hopkins psalter. The Anglo-Genevan Psalter formed the basis of the English Psalter in 1560 and the first Scottish Psalter of 1564. The first edition of the Psalm book for the Scottish Church appeared in 1564 and 1565 as a constituent part (without separate titlepage).

1562 *The Whole Booke of Psalms* by Sternhold and Hopkins was printed in England.

The *Old Version*, as it was called, went through 200 editions. Published in 1548, *Certayne Psalmes Chose Out of the Psalter of David, and drawen into English metre*, by Thomas Sternhold, was the first edition printed. The complete Psalter was finished by John Hopkins in 1563 and a final Scottish version printed in Edinburgh in 1564.

Sternhold and Hopkins became the accepted psalter for worship in spite of its obvious weaknesses both in poetry and musical accompaniment.

1592 Este's Psalter — *The Whole Booke of Psalms with their wonted tunes, as they are song in the Churches, composed into foure parts: all of which are so placed that the foure maybe sing eac one a several part of this booke*. Published by Thomas Est(e), this was the most important English psalter of the sixteenth century with the melody placed in the tenor.

1612 **The Book of Psalmes** or the **Pilgrim's Psalter** was published in 1612 by Henry Ainsworth. This was the only book brought by the Pilgrims on their voyage to New England.

1640 **The Bay Psalm Book** was published by the New England Puritans. Many lines from this found their way into the 1650 Scottish Psalter.

1650 **The Scottish Psalter Metrical Psalter** was a product of the Long Parliament's bill to convene 'an Assembly of Divines' to revise the Articles of the Church of England. They produced the Westminster Confession of Faith and began work on a Psalter for use by churches in England, Scotland, and Ireland. The basis for this work was the 1643 Psalter by Francis Rous.

1696 **A New Version of the Psalms of David** by Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady was published with royal approval. It was known as the *New Version* and was heavily revised just two years later. This was a groundbreaking English Psalter that improved upon previous attempts at English Psalters and was credited with raising the quality of the poetic language as well as the musical adaptations to a more artistic level. Dedicated to King William III, this Psalter, gained wide acceptance for over two hundred years.

1719 **The Psalms of David** – This monumental collection was first published by Isaac Watts in 1719. This was the fourth publication of Isaac Watts to contain congregational songs and many are still used today as hymns.

1831 **A New Metrical Psalter** – This Psalter was also known as The English Metrical Psalter and was first published in 1831 and then revised in 1875. This is an excellent example of the growth of English Psalters as the Tate and Brady New Version held a strong influence over the English churches for many years.

1912 **The Psalter** – This traditional Presbyterian Psalter, originally published by Eerdmans in 1912, was a very well-known Psalter used in the United States. It went through eight printings, the last in 1972. This was a very important work in Psalters, as it was originally conceived with input from nine denominations. Currently, the Presbyterian Reformed Church of America still uses the 1927 printing. I have both the 1912 version in PDF and the 1927 version in book form. This was not a literal psalter, adhering to every verse in the Psalms as practiced by the Scottish Presbyterians.

1987 **Psalter Hymnal** – This Psalter/Hymnal was published for the Christian Reformed Church in North America in 1987. This is a traditional Psalter following in the Scottish model, but it does not strictly adhere to versifying each verse.

2010 **The Book of Psalms for Worship** – This newer publication is a traditional Psalter for use by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. The copyright is from 2010, and it is in its eighth printing as of 2017. Although lyrics and tunes are older and traditional, their quotations from the New Testament are taken from more modern translations of the Bible.

2011 **The ARP Psalter with Bible Songs** – This is a second printing undertaken in 2011, however, a large section of the Psalter is taken from the ARP’s Bible Songs publication of 1931. This Psalter is a product of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America and is a very traditional Psalter.

2018 **Trinity Psalter Hymnal** – This collection is in wide use and was printed for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the United Reformed Churches in North America in 2018. The texts and tunes have been collected from previous publications, *The Book of Psalms for Singing* (1973), *The Book of Psalms* (2009), and the *Trinity Psalter* (2000). This is a traditional collection and has wide use as it is both Psalms and hymns. The tunes are traditional and, even though this was published in 2018, there are no updates to the harmonies or inclusion of modern tunes.

2012 **Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship** published by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and Brazos Press, a division of Baker Books. It includes multiple settings of almost all the Psalms.

Figure 1.1 Important Events in Psalm Singing

Important events in Psalm singing

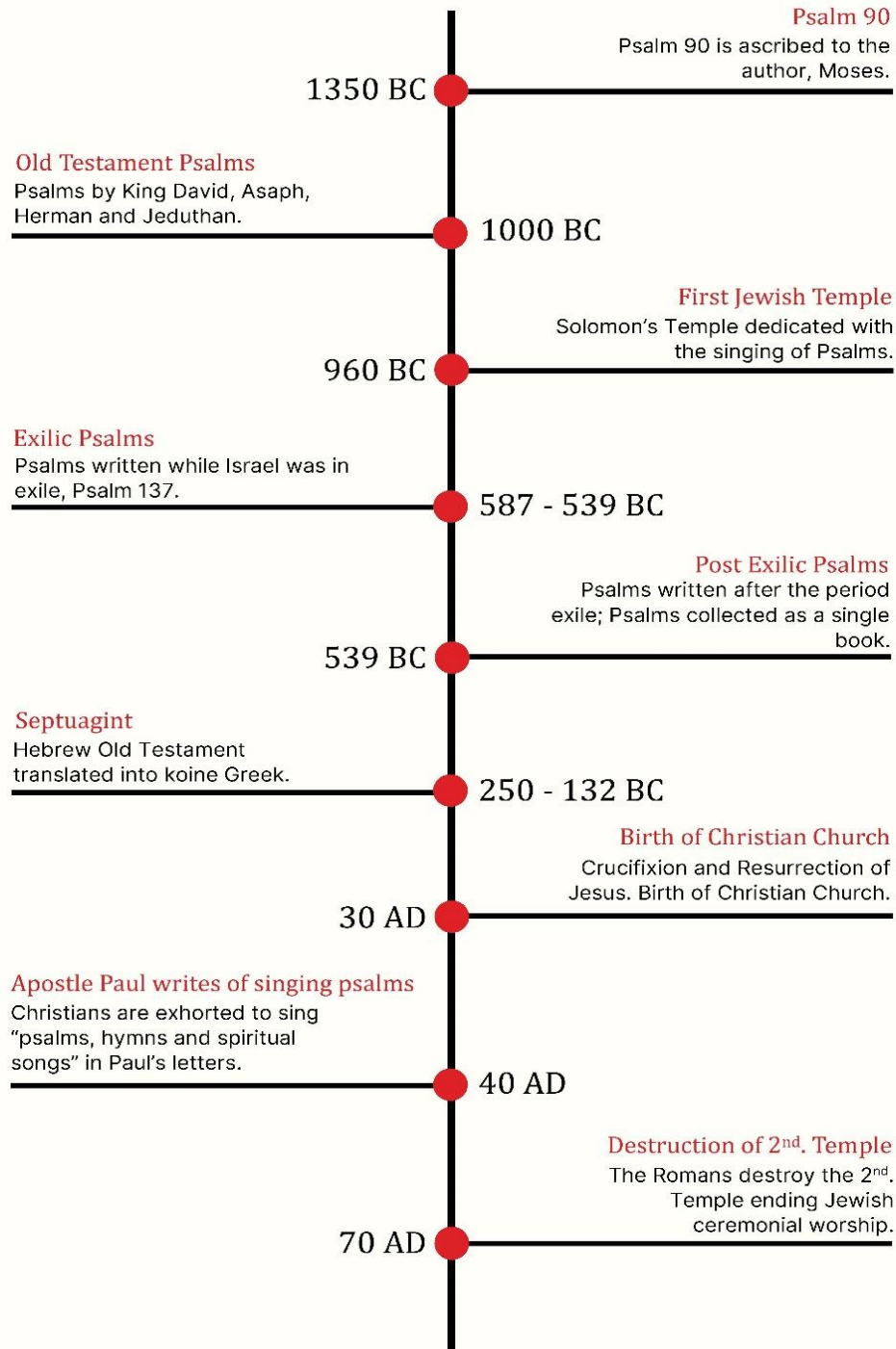


Figure 1.2

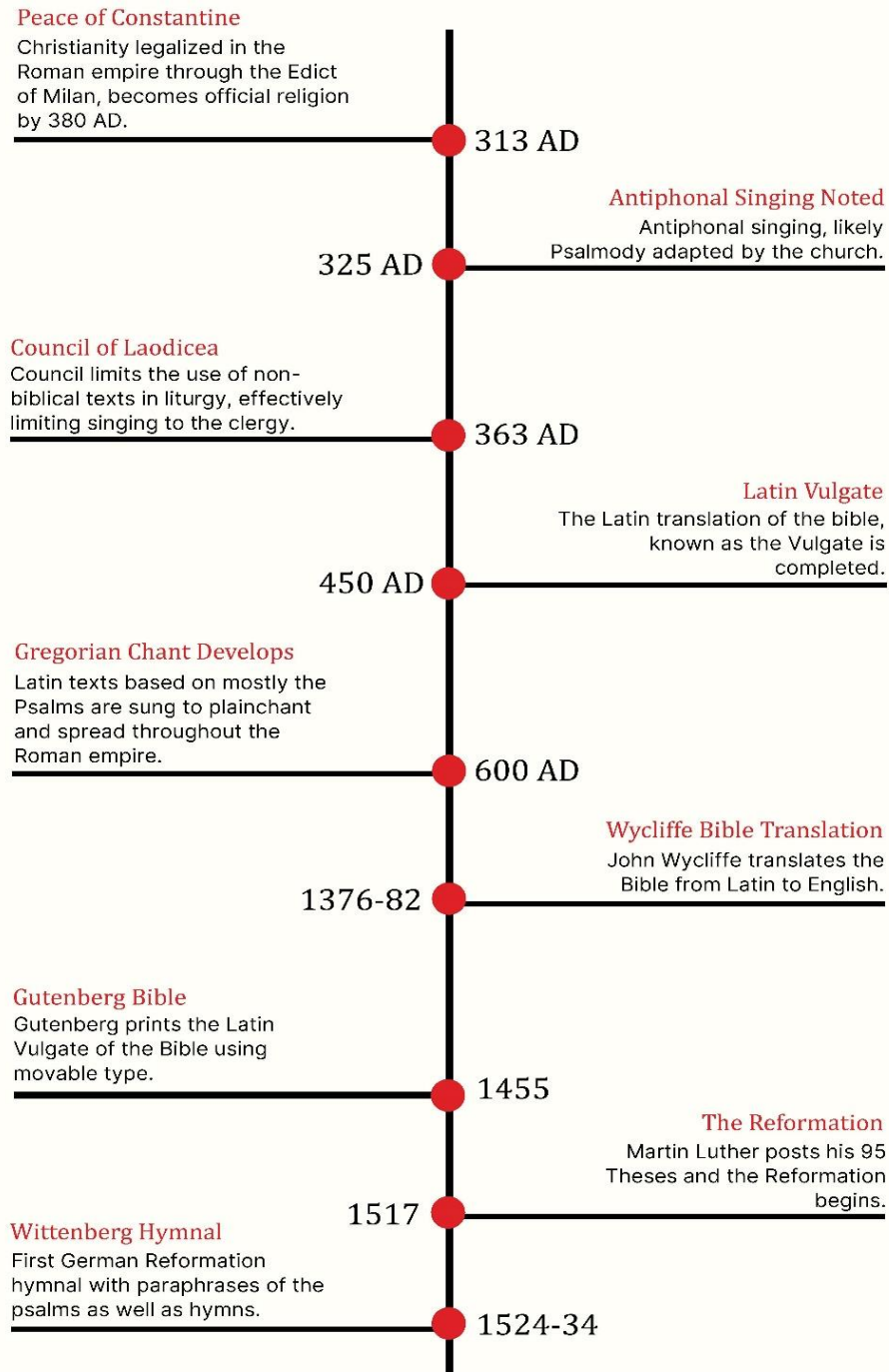


Figure 1.3

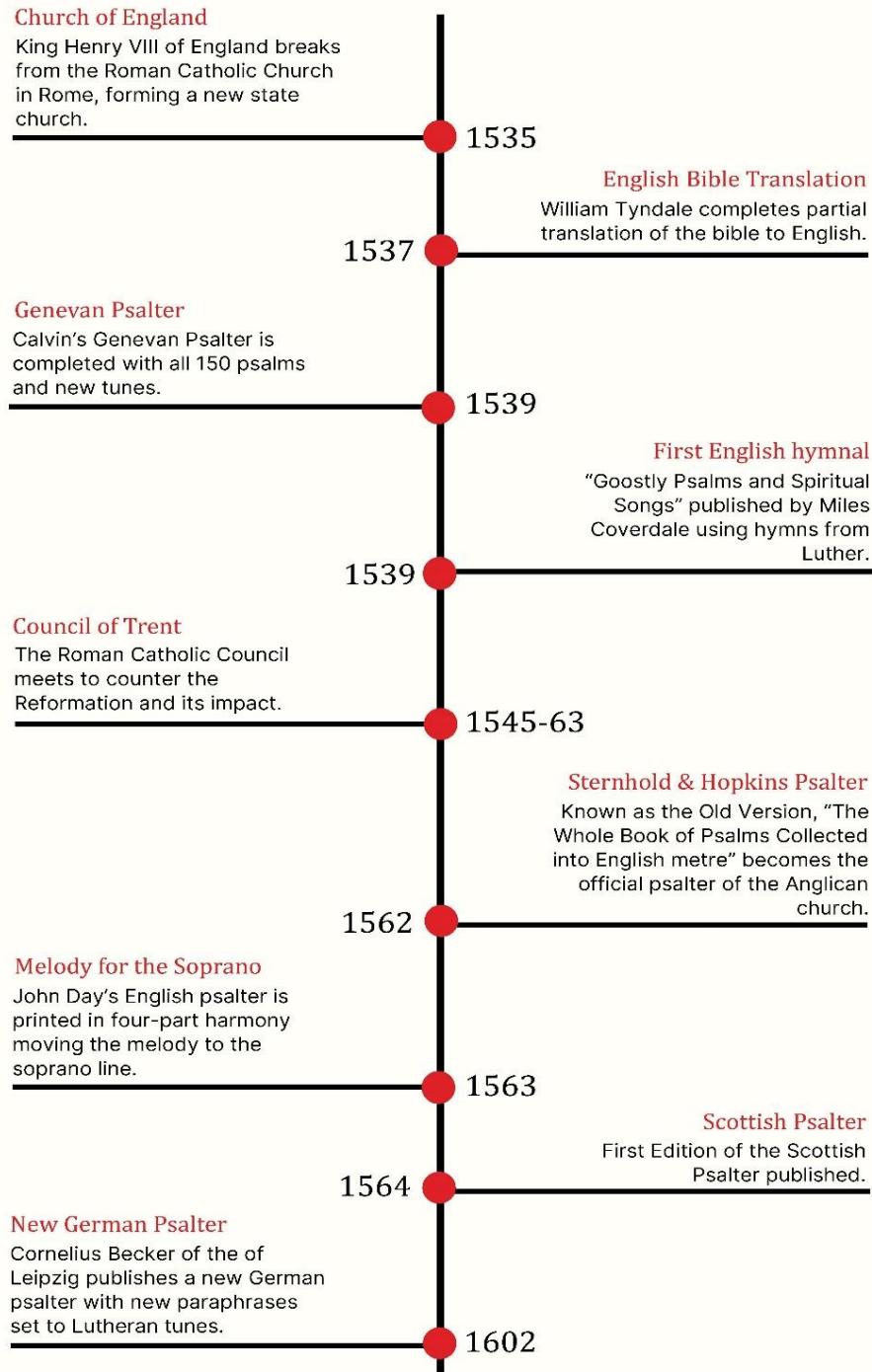


Figure 1.4

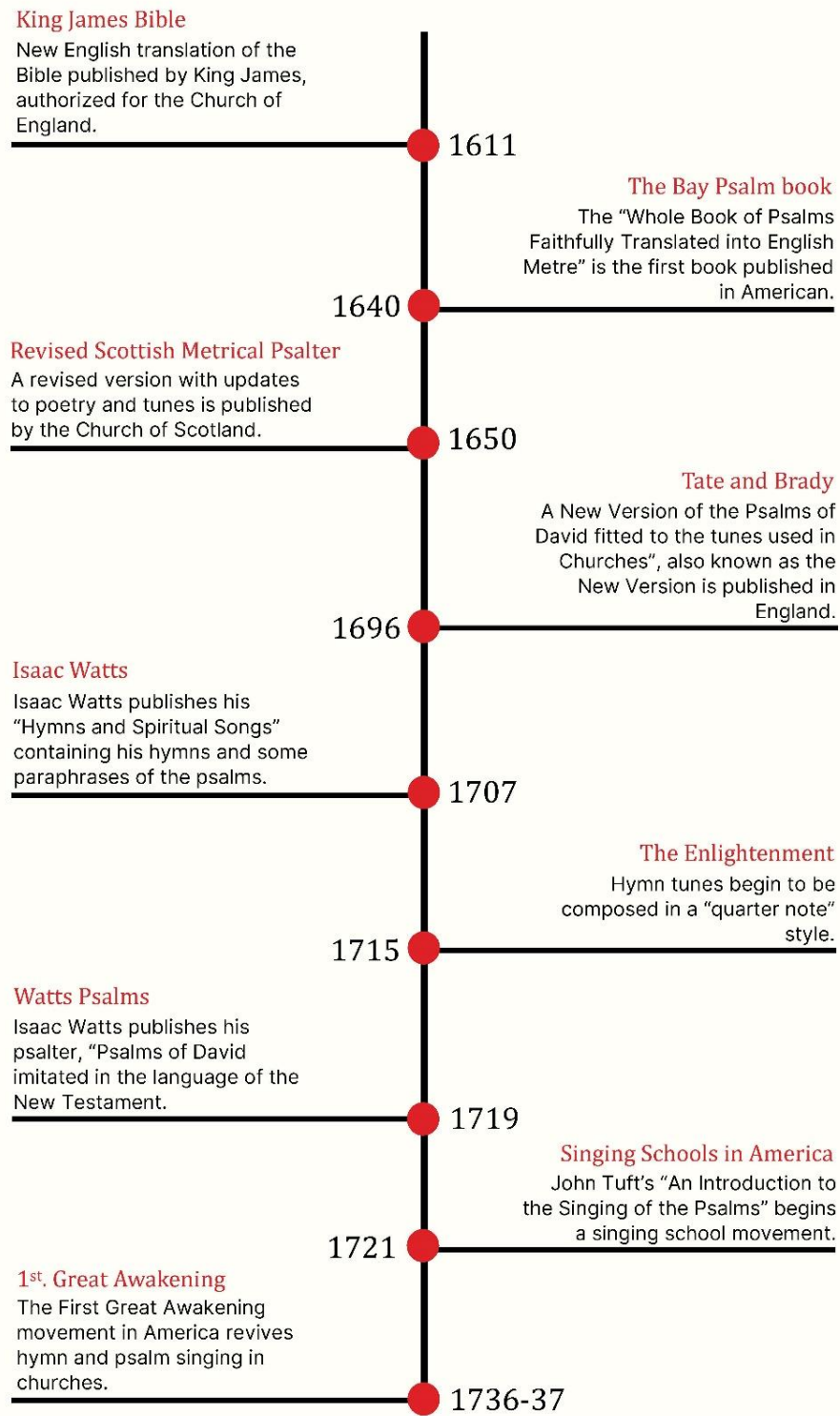
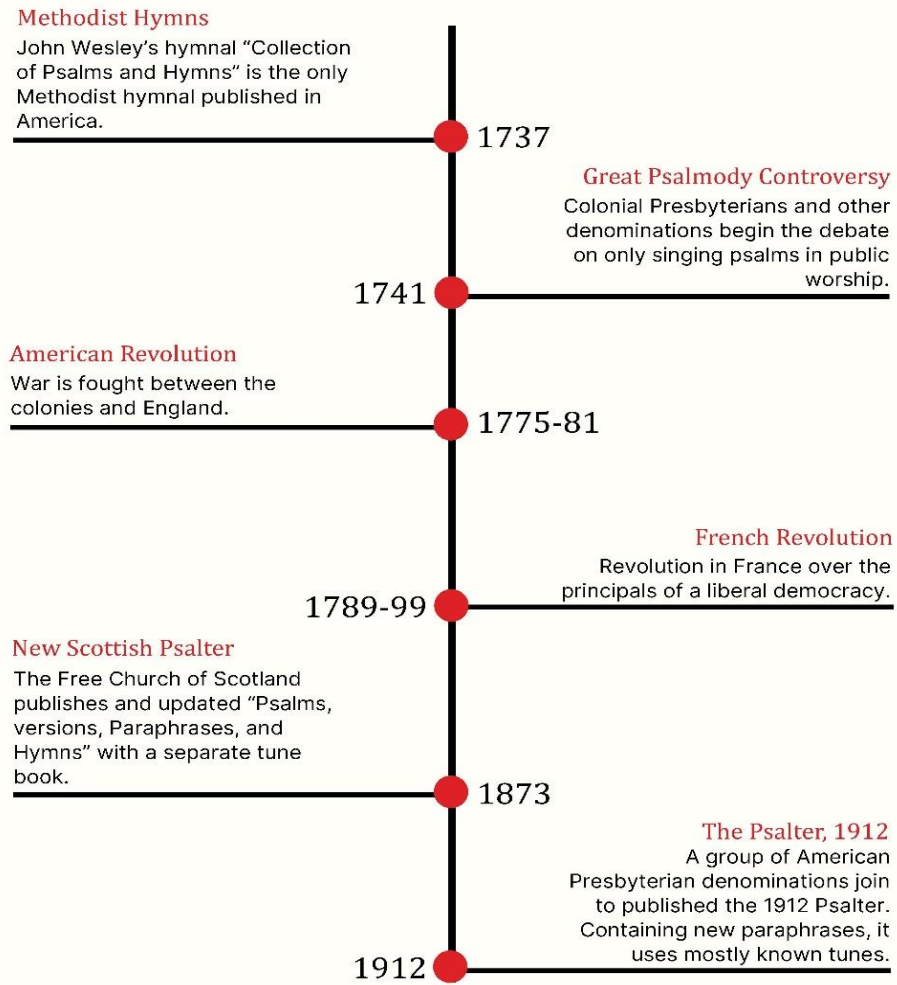


Figure 1.5



CHAPTER 6. KEY TRANSITIONS IN PSALM SINGING

In examining the research and sources for Psalms singing, there were three unique individuals that contributed to the development and growth of Psalm singing in history. The evidence suggests that their vision, giftedness, theology, and passion fueled the growth of Psalm singing in their own historical time and context. These three, Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, and Isaac Watts, instituted innovations that had far reaching consequences, lasting for years and even centuries. The conclusion is that these key people and their revolutions altered the natural historical progression of an ancient practice. In each specific instance we can trace how these various individuals, guided by unique circumstances, had a profound impact on furthering Psalm singing. It is helpful to examine each of these monumental shifts in Psalms singing in detail so that we can reach the right conclusions. In doing so we must keep in mind that for each of these individuals their creativity was viewed by many as an assault on tradition and something new that should not be equivalent to the established liturgical music. As this has always been the case, innovation and the introduction of change is met with resistance, and this was true for Luther, Calvin, and Watts. All three of these men faced enormous resistance and, to some degree, persecution. The approach they took to congregational singing was considered revolutionary and evoked extreme emotions in response.

Overshadowing all these men and their changes to psalm singing is the Protestant Reformation, which not only changed the Christian church, but also reformed congregational singing for Protestants and Catholics. One of the priorities of the Reformation was the desire that the people should worship in their specific vernacular. Robin Leaver says this in her book *The Whole Church Sings*:

It is difficult for people of the twenty first century to fully comprehend the extent and importance of vernacular song in earlier centuries. No aspect of life, serious or frivolous, no detail of news, national or local, no human emotion, euphoric or dysphoric, no natural event, phenomenal or catastrophic, would be allowed to pass without becoming the subject of vernacular songs.⁶⁴

The spark that was lit with this concept was made all the more conceivable by the printing press and the possibility of putting dialectical texts into the hands of common people for their own personal use. For hundreds of years musical performance had been taken up by the church and the elites, congregational participation was not a priority, often only used when a response to the mass was called for. The Reformation turned this around and said that congregational participation should be a priority, and in addition, laid out the material and methods to accomplish this.

It must also be mentioned that an important contribution to the use of psalters was the development of musical notation. Notation first appeared on the scene in Venice with the printer Petrucci beginning in 1526, however, it took another twenty years before other printers followed in his path. When Luther posted his ninety-five theses in 1517, Europe was in the midst of moving from an oral society to a literate one. This was an important milestone in modern progress, but only insofar as people could actually read. This was the case in religious music of the regional tongue, and the people had to be taught the new music that was being produced. Before the sixteenth century, singing was done by ear, not by the reading of notes with the eyes. Melodies and texts were passed down from generation to generation orally, and it is conceivable that revisions to the melody would sometimes sneak into this process. Instead of musical notation, a melody would be

⁶⁴ Robin A. Leaver, *The Whole Church Sings*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 8.

known by a system of codes and signs that would enable the singers to recall from memory each specific song or tune. It was normal for the first line of a popular tune to become the title or the label by which the tune was known. This was common that by oral identification you would know a tune name by its original text even if you were singing a different text with the tune. Ancient songbooks of lyrics would make this distinction, printing a text and giving instructions that it should be sung to a tune known by a different text. Melodies could be named after their composers, particular people, professions, and in Germany, after famous Meistersinger poets. Progress in this area would be slow, but it would make a larger catalogue of melodies accessible to the common person. This opened up the possibility of people learning new music quickly and remembering old music with less dependency on mental facilities.

6.1 Martin Luther (1483-1546)

The Reformation led by Martin Luther was more than just a theological movement, as it reconstructed the entire liturgical practice of the church. Martin Luther was a complex and gifted man who did not set out to change how worship services were conducted. He was born in 1483 in Eisleben, Germany, the son of a miner and prospector. His father Hans desired that Martin receive the best education he could, so his childhood was filled with studies in preparation for university and a career in law. He was educated in the classics as he grew, but he was also well trained in music. He studied poetry and learned to play the lute as well as other instruments. As a young student in Eisenach, Germany, he supported himself financially as other students did by being a “*walking singer*.” Students would walk in little groups around the town offering to sing

and perform in exchange for money, food, or drink. He continued his law education and completed his degree of *Magister Artium* in 1505 and prepared to enter university. These plans were abruptly ended, and upon finding himself caught in the middle of a thunderstorm in July 1505, he made a promise to St. Anne that if he survived, he would become a monk.

On July 16, 1505, he entered the monastery of the Augustinian hermits in Erfurt, Germany. As his career progressed, Luther became a professor in Wittenberg in 1512, where his lectures concentrated on the Book of Psalms. Martin Luther became intimately acquainted with the Psalms, and in fulfilling the holy offices, he sang through all 150 Psalms each week. Disenchanted with the practices of the church, Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, thus beginning the Reformation. Yet, there were more than just theological issues to be addressed, and eleven years later in 1523 he wrote a pamphlet addressing the need for liturgical reforms — *Concerning an Order of Public Worship*. This led to another publication, a manual of sorts to address changes that were needed in Liturgy. Published in 1523, *An Order of Mass and Communion* for the Church at Wittenberg is where Luther made his thoughts regarding congregation singing known. Scholar Scott A. Moore quotes Martin Luther on this issue:

I also wish that we had as many songs as possible in the vernacular which the people could sing during mass, immediately after the gradual and also after the Sanctus and Agnus Dei. For who doubts that originally all the people sang these which now only the choir sings or responds to while the bishop is consecrating? The bishops may have these [congregational] hymns sung either after the Latin chants, or use the Latin on one [Sunday] and the vernacular on the next, until the time comes that the whole mass is sung in the vernacular. But poets are wanting among us, or not yet known, who could compose evangelical and spiritual songs,

as Paul calls them [Col. 3:16], worth to be in the church of God... I mention this to encourage any German poets to compose evangelical hymns for us.⁶⁵

This represented a new and upsetting way of thinking regarding the people's participation in the mass. In Wittenberg, the All-Saints Foundation based at the castle church served the liturgical needs of both the University of Wittenberg and Frederick III's chapel. These ninety people, including chaplains, vicars, musicians, singers, and choirboys, were responsible for 1,138 sung Masses and 7,856 spoken masses each year.⁶⁶ Wittenberg was never a major population center, even in modern times its residents number around 50,000; obviously, Catholic liturgy dominated daily societal functions. It is no doubt that these new thoughts on liturgy could threaten the livelihood and economic activity of many people as it could change what was a very busy enterprise.

What Luther was proposing in his guide to singing Psalms was a principle known as *dynamic equivalence* and was something he practiced in his own translations of the Old and New Testament. He was trying to bring scripture alive in the dialect of the day by using creative and modern German so it would be easily understood by the people. (This principle means to translate as a sense for sense translation sometimes translating whole phrases with readability in mind. This contrasts with *formal equivalence*, which seeks to translate in a more literal way, emphasizing grammatical structure.) Luther recognized the sea of change that was being introduced, and in a letter to George Spalatin at the end of 1523, we read in detail what his vision was for singing Psalms in the

⁶⁵ Scott A. Moore, "Martin Luther," in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 23.

⁶⁶ *IBID*, 23.

vernacular. Dr. Scott A. Moore quotes Martin Luther and his desire that the Psalms be paraphrased in this manner:

I would like You to avoid any new words or the language used at court. In order to be understood by the people, only the simplest and most common words should be used for singing; at the same time, however, they should be pure and apt; and further, the sense should be as clear and as close as possible to the psalm. You need a free hand here: maintain the sense, but don't cling to the words; [rather] translate them with other appropriate words.⁶⁷

Luther's theology around the First and Second Commandments — you shall have no other gods before me, and you shall not make a graven image — led him to focus on the heart of the issue in relation to Biblical fidelity. This thought spread into his theology of worship, where he baptized secular tunes with Biblical lyrics. Joshua K. Busman describes Luther's beliefs about the use of music in his Master's Thesis:

For Luther, the regulative power of the first commandment was not in its ability to dictate which practices could and could not be used in worship, but rather in its ability to remind congregants to whom worship should be directed. Music itself is morally neutral and only gains moral status from its object of adoration. Luther advocated the teaching of spiritual songs, especially to youth, in hopes that it would help “to wean them away from love ballads and carnal songs and to teach them something of value in their place.”⁶⁸

Luther strongly critiqued those who used the First Commandment as a means to condemn the arts, saying, “Nor am I of the opinion that the gospel should destroy and blight all the arts, as some of the pseudo-religious claim. But I would like to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of Him who gave and made them.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ IBID, 23.

⁶⁸ Joshua K. Busman, “For God and His Angels or Men at Their Tables?” in *The Context and Usage of Psalm-Singing in Francophone Calvinism, 1539-1565*. January 10, 2023, 19.

⁶⁹ IBID, 10.

Luther had a comprehensive understanding of the music of his time and its stylistic virtues. He had a clear preference for the compositions of Josquin des Prez and said this of the French-Flemish composer: “God also proclaimed the Gospel through music, as it appears in Josquin, whose composition flows out joyfully, willingly, tenderly, like the song of the finch, and is not forced or restrained by rules.”⁷⁰ This high view of music along with a deep appreciation and understanding of composition was an attribute that was pivotal in his thoughts on religious musical practices. These elements along with his theological training prepared him to compose the hymns that would feed the Reformation.

With Luther’s goal of providing liturgy in the regional German, he begins composing Psalms, as he knew their meaning extensively. Beginning around 1524, Luther wrote rhyming translations, each with the same meter of four Psalms, Ps. 12: *Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein* (O Lord, look down from heaven behold); Ps 14, *Es spricht der unweisen Mund wohl* (The mouth of fools doth God confess); Ps 124, *War Gott nicht mi tuns diese Zeit* (If God had not been on our side); and Ps 130, *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* (Out of the depths I cry to you). Luther wrote all four using a standard meter, now called a ‘Lutherstrophe,’ so that the texts could be combined with various tunes. It is interesting to note that the last of these four, *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*, has a melody credited to Luther in the Phrygian mode, known as one of his finest. He also wrote metrical versions of 128, *Wohl dem, der in Gottesfurcht steht* (Happy the man who feareth God); 67, *Es woll uns Gott genädig sein* (May God bestow on us his grace); and 46, *Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A mighty fortress is our God). Published in 1524,

⁷⁰ Freidrich Blume, “The Period of the Reformation,” in *Protestant Church Music: A History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974), 8.

The “Lutheran” hymnbook *Eyn geystlich Gesank Buchleyn* (Spiritual Hymn Booklet) contains thirty-seven polyphonic chorales arranged by Johann Walter; thirty-two of the hymns are German, the other five are in Latin, and twenty-four of the collection are from Martin Luther. He writes in the foreword “That it is good and God pleasing to sing hymns is, I think, known to every Christian; for everyone is aware not only of the example of the prophets and kings in the Old Testament who praised God with song and sound, with poetry and psalter, but also of the common and ancient custom of the Christian church to sing psalms.”⁷¹

Within a few short years of the start of the Reformation, the changes in liturgy began to impact Wittenberg and other areas of Europe very quickly. Cities and towns that advocated for the Reformation soon introduced these liturgical reforms in their churches with predictable results. As Europe was still in the early stages of literacy, most congregations had a substantial amount of people who were illiterate and uneducated in any form of musical notation. The issue of teaching new lyrics and new music to congregations was frustrating and without easy solutions. This problem of teaching the congregation new songs also confounded the souls of Martin Luther’s congregation in Wittenberg. To assist with this education, he used a designated choir of young boys to teach the congregation, but many were resistant to the idea of congregational singing. In an Advent sermon from 1526 he addressed the congregation, “The songs have been composed and are sung for your sake so that you can sing them here and at home, but you sit here like blocks of wood. Therefore, I beg you, learn these songs from the children and

⁷¹ Scott A. Moore, “Martin Luther,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 25.

sing them yourselves at the same time, as Paul teaches [in Ephesians 5:18–19].”⁷² As time went by, the public learning to read the psalters and hymnals became more accepted by the populace; the main solution to this issue was time and patience.

6.2 Jean Calvin (1509-1564)

As important as Martin Luther’s influence was on singing Psalms, Jean Calvin left the most lasting imprint on Reformed congregational singing. The singing of Psalms was not only a vital part of Protestant worship, but it also impacted the life of French Protestants, specifically the Huguenots. Thus, the French or Huguenot psalter may first refer to a range of manifestations with ecclesiastical and artistic connotations associated with the singing of Psalms by the French Protestants. These occurrences were in various social and political contexts, such as in public marches as a display of communal faith or even as demonstration of personal faith before execution. Professor Corneliu C. Simut describes the use of Psalm singing by the French Huguenots:

In this respect, the French psalter does not only refer to a specific published work, but to the psalms that were sung by the Huguenots either as they marched in various cities to publicly show their faith and defend it in battle against Catholics or as they were executed by Catholics having been accused of heresy.⁷³

The French Huguenots built their religious practice and liturgy on the singing of Psalms and began to collect metrical Psalms and hymns into psalters before Calvin’s collective work. The theological musical combination of Psalm singing was a powerful instrument

⁷² Daniel Trocmé, “The Psalms as a Mark of Protestantism,” in *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 20, no. 2 (2011): 145–63. doi:10.1017/S0961137111000039.

⁷³ Corneliu C. Simut, “John Calvin and the Complete French Psalter,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 50.

that proved extremely effective in countering the Huguenot's Catholic adversaries. While both French Catholics and Protestants endured persecution, it was more severe for the Huguenots and claimed many more lives. The most famous event took place on August 24, 1572, and is called the Night of Saint Bartholomew. The assault on Huguenot lives would claim thousands — commoners, nobles, political and military leaders such as admiral Gaspard de Coligny — in Paris and other major cities. Despite this ordeal, the singing of Psalms was a principal manner in which the Huguenots dealt with the intense and fiery persecutions by their Catholic adversaries. With this practice in mind, it is easy to understand why one of the proposed actions taken by French Catholics against Protestants was to limit their freedom to worship and to ban the practice of Psalm singing. This action was taken years before the Genevan psalter was published when King Henry II was convinced that Psalm singing should be outlawed in public. The Huguenots resisted and refused this mandate and continued their practice of singing Psalms in private and in public.

In 1524 the protestant pastor Jean Leclerc sang verses from Psalm 115 as he walked to be burned at the stake. Following him were many other executions of protestants, all reported to have joyfully sung Psalms as they awaited their deaths. The French psalter also referred to the various printed editions that had previously existed in France and Switzerland prior to Calvin's theological oversight. The most famous French collection was that of Jean Calvin, known as the Genevan psalter, sometimes referenced as the Huguenot psalter as well with a more extensive cultural meaning.

Jean Calvin was forced to leave Geneva in 1538 by the city authorities because of his extreme zeal and insistence that the worship service be ordered as he interpreted from

scripture. He then went to Basle and on to Strasbourg where he met Martin Bucer who influenced his musical ideas. In Strasbourg, Bucer had been a leader in establishing the worship service and it had become a tradition that the only music in the service was the unison congregational singing. This obviously impacted Calvin's thoughts and tastes as to what was appropriate for reformed worship. This formation of worship seemed to be shaped entirely on a theological position in contrast to a personal or emotional response to music. In fact, it is clear that he held to the ancient belief of the Greeks that music possessed a certain power to impact human behavior, calling it "*A tous chretiens et amateurs de la parole de Dieu*" (an impact on all Christians and lovers of the Word of God). He also agreed that the origins of music were divine and believed it should be used "pour invoquer Dieu d'un zèle plus véhément et ardent" (music should cause you to invoke God vehemently with an ardent zeal).⁷⁴ He wanted to minimize the impact of music psychologically and emotionally, but instrumental music could be treated differently as it belonged in the Old Testament. He strictly believed that congregational singing was suitable to worship but only in a monophonic form, as polyphonic music would distract and take away the meaning of the words.⁷⁵ For this reason, as with Luther, he insisted on using the provincial dialect in all singing. He honored music and was disappointed that church leaders in Geneva had removed all music from the church services. He believed that the congregation should sing, and while he was exiled to Strasbourg pastoring refugees from France, he experienced congregational singing regularly. When he was invited back to Geneva, he went to work on compiling his French psalter, enlisting poets and composers to complete the task.

⁷⁴ Dunning, Albert. "Calvin [Cauvin], Jean." *Grove Music Online*. 2001.

⁷⁵ IBID.

One of the most important *solas* of the Protestant Reformation was *sola scriptura*, the belief that the holy scriptures should be the sole authority for faith and practice. It is easy to see how this fed the philosophy of singing Psalms for both Luther and Calvin. However, the Reformed practice under Calvin took it a step further saying only Psalms singing should be practiced. The term for this practice is called “exclusive psalmody” and is still practiced by a few denominations today. This view of *sola scriptura* was carried out in congregational singing in different ways by Luther and Calvin; Luther paraphrased Psalms, but he also sang them right out of scripture. Calvin on the other hand came to a pragmatic decision and decided that metrical versions of the Psalms needed to be created and should be sung. As to the Genevan psalter, Calvin held less to a principle of dynamic equivalence than Luther. The reason for this is that Calvin believed that true worship must aim at glorifying God through words and songs and to do this faithfully, there are no better lyrics than to use the words of God himself. This explains the Huguenot conviction that sincere worship is based on singing praises to God through Psalms.

The principal creators of the Genevan psalter were the French poet Clément Marot (1496-1544.), Louis Bourgeois (1510-61), Claude Goudimel (1505-72), Theodore de Bèze (1519-1605), and Jean Calvin. The poet Marot was in charge of versifying the Psalms into French from the original Hebrew, a task later taken over by de Bèze. Louis Bourgeois provided the melodies and rhythms and was followed by Goudimel. Calvin was in authority for the theology contained in the whole psalter. Since the main participants in creating the Genevan psalter had a humanist education, most notably Marot and de Bèze, they were concerned that the people in the pew, regardless of education, could understand the word of God. Musically, Calvin had an aversion to

instruments and polyphonic singing; later editions gradually succumbed to tunes in parts. This final step in the development of the Genevan psalter “transformed the Huguenot liturgy into one of the most unvarnished, engaging, and captivating types of Protestant worship.”⁷⁶

Calvin’s study and understanding of the Book of Psalms was the force behind the development of Psalm singing in Geneva. Professor Marten Tel describes Calvin’s admiration for the Book of Psalms:

He calls the book of Psalms “An Anatomy of all the parts of the Soul,” for, he writes, there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not represented as in a mirror. As Jesus taught us to pray through the words of the Lord’s Prayer, the book of Psalms, in an expansive way, molds the church in the life of prayer. There is no need to look elsewhere. Indeed, argues Calvin, why allow the potential for heresy by introducing songs of human composure?⁷⁷

Daniel Trocmé also observes, “The notion of praising God through song was evidently close to Calvin’s heart, and the depiction of David as a king and as a fighter evidently made him a suitable role model for later generations of Huguenots. David reflected their desire for freedom and for an end to the discrimination they experienced at the hands of French regimes.”⁷⁸ Much of the vision and energy behind Calvin’s development of the French Psalter was in response to the practices of the Catholic Church. Reformers issued two charges against the Catholic Church: first, that the congregation of believers understood little or nothing of the service as it was spoken in Latin or quite often at an audible level that was too low for people to hear; second, that the Catholic Church had

⁷⁶ Corneliu C. Simut, “John Calvin and the Complete French Psalter,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 58.

⁷⁷ Martin Tel, “Calvinist and Reformed Practices of Worship,” in *Historical Foundations of Worship: Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Perspectives*, ed. Mark A. Lamport and Melanie C. Ross, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 181.

⁷⁸ Daniel Trocmé, “The Psalms as a Mark of Protestantism,” in *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 20, no. 2 (2011): 145–63. doi:10.1017/S0961137111000039.

deceived people into believing that only the Church and clergy were the mediums through which the people could have communion with God.

The final edition of the French Psalter in 1562 was especially important for three reasons: first, by the quality of its poetic texts; secondly, in the variety and number of its tunes, which was 125; and thirdly, in the impact it had on so many countries and for such a long a period of time. Among the tunes in the French psalter, we find 110 distinct “meters.” This diversity of musical form makes the French psalter stand out from the German hymnody of the period and is quite contrasting to the dullness of the English Psalter. In the melodies used, we find hints of older ecclesiastical songs and roots of modified folk-music of secular chansons. None of them appear to be lifted from originals and all of the Gregorian modes are used in their construction. There are thirty-five tunes that are major, and the rest are either modal or minor. The Dutch translated the French psalter in 1564 and it became the official songbook of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. The German translation appeared in 1573 and circulated for two centuries or more. In England a full translation was completed in 1592, but it did not enjoy acceptance there as it did in other countries.

Calvin was not against music per se, but he saw it as a theological tool to accomplish *sola scriptura*.⁷⁹ His goal was to use music as a means of improving worship and prayer among the common people. With this goal in mind, he insisted upon new music, rejecting the setting of new vernacular texts to existing plainchant. This new music was to aid the congregation in singing by almost always having one syllable per

⁷⁹ Emily R. Brink, “A Reformed Approach to Psalmody: The Legacy of the Genevan Psalter,” January 9, 2023. <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/a-reformed-approach-to-psalmody-the-legacy-of-the-genevan-psalter-emily-brink/>.

note. It was Calvin's hope that these new tunes would cause people to not just sing at church but to sing as they went about their daily activities. To help realize this goal he formed musical education for the children of Geneva.

In the Genevan schools, music lessons occurred four times a week and focused on teaching the children the melodies of the Psalms. Through this method, the children sang during worship to assist in teaching the congregation the new songs. It was not always easy to teach the new tunes and without instrumental accompaniment it became even harder. The result of the endeavor was not always positive: "Louis Bourgeois requested that those members of the congregation 'who understand nothing in music and who nevertheless wish to be heard above all others ... be content to listen to the others and learn in silence, until they can sing in tune with those who sing well.'"⁸⁰

6.3 Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Isaac Watts, an English Congregational minister, hymnist, theologian, and logician was born in Southampton, England to non-conformist parents. Persecution of the religious non-conformists (those who did not conform to the Church of England) was customary and Watt's father was imprisoned twice for his religious views. It wasn't until Watts was twenty-four that King James granted the "Declaration of Indulgence" that allowed the free churches to worship publicly. In his childhood, the Church of England and non-conformist churches practiced singing Psalms with the increasing addition of hymns based on scripture. However, the Calvinists and Presbyterians believed that the

⁸⁰ Daniel Trocmé, "The Psalms as a Mark of Protestantism," in *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 20, no. 2 (2011): 145–63. doi:10.1017/S0961137111000039. January 11, 2023.

Psalms were the only appropriate texts to be used in congregational worship, and they strongly emphasized metrical Psalm singing as part of their liturgy. During this time the quality of Psalm singing had declined, as the average church attendee only knew about twelve tunes, so the same melodies were being used regularly with different texts. As a young man, Watts began to develop strong opinions about the congregational singing of the churches. Dr. Rochelle Stackhouse describes the circumstances that led to Watts pursuing a solution to these problems:

Watts entered the musical fray slowly, and mostly out of frustration with the lack of beauty and sensibility in the psalms sung at his home congregation in Southampton. When he complained to his father, the elder Isaac suggested he try to do better! He wrote his first hymn, “Behold the Glories of the Lamb,” in response, a hymn that would later appear in his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707).⁸¹

In 1679, with Watts still in his childhood, John Patrick published his psalter, *A Century of Select Psalms and portions of the Psalms of David, especially those of praise*. Patrick attempted something that Watts would later perfect by undertaking to paraphrase the Psalms in a New Testament Christian context, a practice that Watts would acknowledge in the preface to his own adaptations of the Psalms. Isaac Watts was greatly encouraged by the acceptance of *A Century of select Psalms and portions of the Psalms of David, especially those of praise*, published by John Patrick in 1679. Even Richard Baxter in 1681 commented that the psalter was able to reconcile the many different non-conformist congregations who found agreement in the use of his more Christianized paraphrases. Watts thought that this acceptance was because Patrick had incorporated the present-day

⁸¹ Rochelle A. Stackhouse, “Isaac Watts,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 199.

language of Christians and left out many of the ‘Judaisms.’ Dr. Louis F. Benson, in his book, *The English Hymn*, recalls the influences that helped to shape Watt’s thinking:

“This,” he says, “is the Thing that hath introduced him into the favor of so many religious Assemblies. Even those very persons that have an aversion to sing anything in worship but David’s Psalms have been led insensibly to fall in with Dr. Patrick’s performance by a Relish of pious Pleasure; never considering that his Work is by no means a just Translation, but a Paraphrase; and there are scarce any that have departed farther from the inspired Words of Scripture than he hath often done, in order to suit his Thoughts to the State and Worship of Christianity. This I esteem his peculiar Excellency in those Psalms wherein he has practis’d it.”⁸²

Watts was thoroughly captivated by the work of Dr. Patrick and its influence on Watt’s own work was astounding. Many of the lines in Watt’s psalter are identical to Patrick’s and some are used with alteration; there are even entire stanzas borrowed and essentially unchanged. Watts announced that it was his goal to apply the method of Dr. Patrick and to improve upon it with his own versification or imitations.

After moving to London to prepare for ministry, Watts continued to write poetry while pursuing his ministerial education. Isaac Watts was unique and his thirst for a change to the way congregational singing was conducted was formed in his youth. Louis F. Benson notes, “He planned and began his work in the ardor of youth, its singleness of conviction, its preference of radical remedies over compromise, its comparative disregard of other people’s feelings.”⁸³

Congregational singing in England during this time was a difficult and painful exercise to listen to. The singing was not at all what most modern congregations imagine when they think of mass singing of hymns. The song was led by a precentor or cantor in a process known as “lining out.” The precentor would begin the song, either by reading the

⁸² Louis F. Benson, “The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship,” (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1915), 53.

⁸³ IBID, 108.

lyrics or a line, and then sing a line from the Psalm. The congregation would respond by singing the single line as the precentor had sung it. This presented several uncomfortable moments for all involved, the first being that because the older psalter texts often broke up the lines without completing a thought, it seemed you never sang a complete idea. The most obvious weakness in this process was the musical skill of the precentor, of whom many were not musically trained. Watts complained that most did not know or have the ability to sing with skill or lead others in singing. In this piecemeal way of singing, congregations stumbled week after week to sing and understand what they were singing. Watts believed that the pitiful state of Psalm singing had sunk so low that the solution was not in revisions or just adding New Testament hymns as some were suggesting. He believed that the causes were the substance and the lyrics being sung. His solution was to propose renovating the entire Psalmody, and he put forth three steps to the process:

- *First*, it should be *evangelical*: not in the sense that New Testament songs be allowed to “supplement” Old Testament Psalms, but so that the whole body of Church Song be brought within the light of the gospel.
- *Second*, it should be *freely composed*, as against the Reformation standard of strict adherence to the letter of Scripture or the later paraphrasing of Scripture.
- *Third*, it should *express the thoughts and feelings of the singers*, and not merely recall the circumstances or record the sentiments of David or Asaph or another.⁸⁴

In 1700, his brother Enoch wrote him a letter complaining about the congregational singing in the church at Southampton and added “that both John Patrick and Tate and Brady’s versions of the psalms had a ‘mighty deficiency of that life and soul,’ which is necessary to raise our fancies and kindle and fire our passions. I have been persuaded to a great while since, that were David to speak English, he would choose to make use of your

⁸⁴ IBID, 110.

style.”⁸⁵ The letter from his brother, along with support from his congregation at the Mark Lane Chapel, caused him to begin his “System of Praise,” and in 1707 he published the first edition of *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. This edition included 212 hymns that included paraphrases of scriptures and “free composesures” such as “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” The second edition would be published two years later in 1709. Music in English congregations was suffering at the time from declining attendance and poor singing, and it was in this setting that Watt’s hymns gained popularity throughout England. Watts followed up his *Hymns* and in 1719, he published the *Psalms of David Imitated*, a popular work with seven editions published in ten years.

Watts “imitated” all of the Psalms except twelve with the goal of making the Psalms sung not only as a Christian but as an Englishman. The work was enormously popular, with people purchasing personal copies for use at home. By the mid-eighteenth century the *Hymns* and *Psalms of David* were bound together and were known as *Psalms and Hymns*. Soon, Watts’ *Hymns* and *Psalms of David* both found their way across the Atlantic to the Colonies and Benjamin Franklin published the *Psalms of David* in America in 1729, only becoming popular during the First Great Awakening in the 1730s. The prominent voices of the Great Awakening, George Whitfield and Jonathan Edwards, used and promoted both *Hymns* and the Psalter, and the latter quickly overcame the Bay Psalm Book in popularity. Watts understood that his practice of Christianizing the Psalms was a radical departure from previous paraphrases. He understood this and expressed assurance in the reliability of his “great Principal”:

⁸⁵ Rochelle A. Stackhouse, “Isaac Watts,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 199.

But still I am bold to maintain the great Principle on which my present work is founded; and that is, That if the brightest Genius on Earth or an Angel from Heaven should translate David, and keep close to the Sense and Style of the inspired author, we should only obtain thereby a bright or heavenly Copy of the Devotions of the Jewish King; but it could never make the fittest *Psalm-Book for a Christian People*.⁸⁶

Watt's views on worship and liturgical theology were pivotal for Protestant congregations and marked a turning point. His "System of Praise" was meant to bring the singing by the people in the free church in line with the liturgical theology that had been applied to preaching and praying. Watts addressed the current form of congregational singing, line by line, by trying to paraphrase his Psalms so that each line contained a complete sense or idea. He also believed in singing in the "regular" way, with the congregation joining their voices together at the same time as opposed to lining out. He felt that by singing in unison the congregation could more easily understand the text and enter into heart-felt praise. By the mid-eighteenth century, singing schools, especially in Scotland, sprang up to train people to sing from their psalters, provide trained leaders for the church services, and prepare church choirs. Watt's desire and work were to make the Psalms accessible in the language and sensibilities of the everyday Christian. He took a view that the Psalms should be paraphrased in light of the gospel and Christ's work on the cross. Therefore, he took the view that David was a forerunner of Christ, and his paraphrases resound as a Christian singing of Christ the king. In this effort, he was careful not to re-interpret the Psalms, and sometimes the changes were subtle. In his theology of "imitation" he desired to re-write the text so that it had the same effect for his

⁸⁶ Esther Rothenbusch Crookshank, "We're Marching to Zion," in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, ed. Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 19.

people and time as it did for David. He also desired that singing be joyful, full of passion and praise, so he made use of exclamation marks, i.e., “Joy to the World!”⁸⁷

Beyond the Psalms, he believed that there was a need for new, free-composed hymns on Biblical themes. He also made a theological break from the current views on the purpose of music in worship. Dr. Rochelle Stackhouse describes the process by which he proceeded:

Watts began to pair sermons with hymns, thus moving toward a theology of hymns as proclamation of the gospel and not simply words of praise. Hymns became words to the congregation, to teach and inspire, and not only words from the congregation to God. Thus, a worship service began to have a theme that developed not only in preaching and praying, but also in congregational song.⁸⁸

Watts also argued that the textual integrity of scripture must be maintained in public readings, and that the response by the congregation should not be literal, but in their own common words. The result of this principle revealed that he adapted his language when writing poetry for the congregational use for the understanding of the common worshipper. He concluded with the thought that congregational song does not represent God’s word to people, but instead, it represents the people’s word of response to God. The Psalms could only be properly used in worship when the people could make them their own.

6.4 Transitions in Translations and Language

The most obvious transitions that have taken place have been the evolution of languages. In specific regard we can apply this to both English translation of the Bible

⁸⁷ Rochelle A. Stackhouse, “Isaac Watts,” in *Hymns and Hymnology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 204.

⁸⁸ *IBID*, 204.

and how vernacular language has evolved over time as well. Beginning with Luther and Calvin, they both looked to the original Hebrew texts of the Psalms to build their adaptations, Luther having a broad focus on the text and Calvin seeking to follow the literal words. However, as time passed and especially with the 1611 King James version of the Bible, most English versifications of the Psalms have used the English translation as the starting point. Of course, this presents poetic challenges, as the Hebrew poetic form is lost in translation, but it is also a form that English speakers would find strange and without meaning. So, the challenge remains to take the English translation and build it into metrical rhyme that can then adapt to metered tunes, both old and new.

6.4.1 Table 1 Development of Psalm 23 in Translations and Songs

Popular Bible Translations	Psalter or Song adaptations
<p>1611 King James Version, Psalm 23</p> <p>¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. ³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. ⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.</p>	<p>1650 Scottish Psalter, Psalm 23</p> <p>¹ The LORD's my shepherd, I'll not want. ² He makes me down to lie In pastures green: he leadeth me the quiet waters by. ³ My soul he doth restore again; and me to walk doth make Within the paths of righteousness, ev'n for his own name's sake. ⁴ Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, yet will I fear none ill: For thou art with me; and thy rod and staff me comfort still. ⁵ My table thou hast furnished in presence of my foes; My head thou dost with oil anoint, and my cup overflows. ⁶ Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me: And in GOD's house for evermore my dwelling-place shall be.</p>

Table 1 Continued

<p>Douay-Rheims Bible published in 1752</p> <p>¹ A psalm for David. The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing.</p> <p>² He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up, on the water of refreshment:</p> <p>³ He hath converted my soul. He hath led me on the paths of justice, for his own name's sake.</p> <p>⁴ For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.</p> <p>⁵ Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil; and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!</p> <p>⁶ And thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days.</p>	<p>Isaac Watts 1710</p> <p>¹ My shepherd will supply my need, Jehovah is his name; In pastures fresh he makes me feed, Beside the living stream.</p> <p>² He brings my wand'ring spirit back When I forsake his ways; And leads me, for his mercy's sake, In paths of truth and grace.</p> <p>³ When I walk through the shades of death, Thy presence is my stay; A word of thy supporting breath Drives all my fears away.</p> <p>⁴ Thy hand, in sight of all my foes, Doth still my table spread, My cup with blessings overflows, Thine oil anoints my head.</p> <p>⁵ The sure provisions of my God Attend me all my days: O may thy house be mine abode, And all my work be praise!</p> <p>⁶ There would I find a settled rest, While others go and come; No more a stranger or a guest, But like a child at home.</p>
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Table 1 Continued

<p>The Living Bible a paraphrastic translation 1971 ¹ Because the LORD is my Shepherd, I have everything I need! ²⁻³ He lets me rest in the meadow grass and leads me beside the quiet streams. He gives me new strength. He helps me do what honors him the most. ⁴ Even when walking through the dark valley of death I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me, guarding, guiding all the way. ⁵ You provide delicious food for me in the presence of my enemies. You have welcomed me as your guest; blessings overflow! ⁶ Your goodness and unfailing kindness shall be with me all of my life, and afterwards I will live with you forever in your home.</p>	<p>Presbyterian Psalter 1912 ¹ The LORD my Shepherd holds me Within His tender care, And with His flock He folds me, No want shall find me there. In pasture's green He feeds me, With plenty I am blest; By quiet streams He leads me And makes me safely rest. ² Whatever ill betides me, He will restore and bless; For His Name's sake He guides me In paths of righteousness. Thy rod and staff shall cheer me In death's dark vale and shade, For Thou wilt then be near me: I shall not be afraid. ³ My food Thou dost appoint me, Supplied before my foes; With oil Thou dost anoint me, My cup of bliss o'erflows. Thy goodness, LORD shall guide me, Thy mercy cheer my way; A home Thou wilt provide me Within my house for aye.</p>
<p>The New American Standard Version published in 1971 ¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I will not be in need. ² He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. ³ He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For the sake of His name. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. ⁶ Certainly goodness and faithfulness will follow me all the days of my life, And my dwelling <i>will be</i> in the house of the LORD forever.</p>	<p>Psalter Hymnal Reformed Church of America 1977 ¹ The LORD, my shepherd, rules my life And gives me all I need; ² He leads me by refreshing streams; In pastures green I feed. ³ The Lord revives my failing strength, He makes my joy complete; And in right paths, for His name's sake, ⁴ He guides my faltering feet. Though in a valley dark as death, No evil makes me fear; Your shepherd's staff protects my way, for you are with me there. While all my enemies look on, ⁵ You spread a royal feast; You fill my cup, anoint my head, And treat me as Your guest. ⁶ Your goodness and your gracious love Pursue me all my days; Your house, O LORD, shall be my home Your name, my endless praise.</p>

Table 1 Continued

<p>The New King James, updated in 1982. ¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. ³He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. ⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. ⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.</p>	<p>Scottish Psalter, 2003 ¹The LORD is my shepherd; no want shall I know. ²He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow; He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow. ³My wandering steps he brings back to his way, In straight paths of righteousness making me stay; And this he has done his great name to display. ⁴Though I walk in death's valley, where darkness is near, Because you are with me, no evil I'll fear; Your rod and your staff bring me comfort and cheer. ⁵In the sight of my en'mies a table you spread. The oil of rejoicing you pour on my head; My cup overflows and I'm graciously fed. ⁶So surely your covenant mercy and grace Will follow me closely in all of my ways; I will dwell in the house of the LORD all my days.</p>
<p>The English Standard Version (ESV) published in 2001 ¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.</p>	<p>Shane Bernard 2015 ¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In green pastures He makes me lie down. He restores my soul and leads me on for His name, for His great name. Refrain: Surely goodness surely mercy right beside me all my days. And I will dwell in Your house forever and bless Your holy name. ²You prepare a table right before me in the presence of my enemies. Through the arrow flies and the terror of night is at my door, I'll trust You, LORD. Bridge: And even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. And even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death You are on my side.</p>

6.4.2 Table 2 Scottish and Presbyterian Psalter Development of Psalm 1

<p>Scottish Psalter 1635 (with corrections to Old English)</p>	<p>¹That man is blest, that hath not bent to wicked read his ear: Nor led his life as sinners do, Nor sit in scorners chair ²But in the Law of God the LORD doth set his whole delight: And that Law doth exercise Himself both day and night. Upon GOD's law, and meditates on his law day and night. ³He shall be like the tree that grows safe by the river side: Which bringeth forth most pleasant fruit In her due time and tide. Whose leaf shall never fade nor fall, but flourish still and stand: Even so all things shall prosper well That this man taken in hand. ⁴So shall not the ungodly men, They shall be nothing so: But as the dust, which from the earth The wind drives to and fro. ⁵Therefore shall not the wicked men In judgment stand upright: No yet the sinners with the just shall come in place or fight. ⁶For why? the way of godly men unto the LORD is known: And also the way of wicked men Shall quite be overthrown.</p>
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Table 2 Continued

<p>Scottish Psalter 1650 This text remained unchanged in Psalters even into the 20th century.</p>	<p>¹That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray In counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way, Nor sitteth in the scorner's chair: ²But placeth his delight Upon GOD's law, and meditates on his law day and night. ³He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, Which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never: And all he doth shall prosper well. ⁴The wicked are not so; But like they are unto the chaff, which wind drives to and fro. ⁵In judgment therefore shall not stand such as ungodly are; Nor in th' assembly of the just shall wicked men appear. ⁶For why? the way of godly men unto the LORD is known: Whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown.</p>
<p>The Psalter, 1912 (Presbyterian)</p>	<p>¹That man is blest who, fearing God, From sin restrains his feet, Who will not stand with wicked men, Who shuns the scorners' seat. ²Yes, blest is he who makes God's law His portion and delight, And meditates upon that law With gladness day and night. ³That man is nourished like a tree Set by the river's side; Its leaf is green, its fruit is sure, And thus his works abide. ⁴The wicked like the driven chaff Are swept from off the land; They shall not gather with the just, Nor in the judgment stand. ⁵The Lord will guard the righteous well, Their way to Him is known; The way of sinners, far from God, Shall surely be o'erthrown.</p>

Table 2 Continued

<p>Scottish Psalter 2003</p>	<p>¹ Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, Who does not stand in sinners' paths or sit with those who mock. ² Instead he finds God's holy law his joy and great delight; He makes the precepts of the LORD his study day and night. ³ He prospers ever like a tree that's planted by a stream, And in due season yields its fruit; its leaves are always green. ⁴ Not so the wicked! They are like the chaff that's blown away. ⁵ They will not stand when judgment comes or with the righteous stay. ⁶ It is the LORD who sees and knows the way the righteous go, But those who live an evil life the LORD will overthrow.</p>
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From viewing the development of these two well-known texts, we see that change has been attempted quite slowly. However, it is my contention that this is the area of transformation that needs the most aggressive efforts to sustain the singing of Psalms. With the evolution of Psalm 23 lyrics, the text that shows the most lyrical development, is that of Shane Bernard in 2015. There is no metrical rhyming scheme, but the music does follow a simple song form containing verse, refrain and bridge. The words and syllables then adhere to the melody that allows for the lyrics to shift and flow in a contemporary sense. Yet, change in the area of versifications is still slow to occur, for probably a few reasons. First, many are still trying to adhere to the old tunes that were set to the words, and in this case, there can only be minimal updating to words. Secondly, there is an economic factor that impacts those lyricists and musicians who write new music for liturgical use. Now that printed music, specifically hymnals and psalters has declined, there just is not money to be made in writing something for print. At the most a song writer may get a couple of cents per printed copy for their song. Attention is therefore given to writing music that will receive the most play time and downloads on streaming

platforms. We need song writers and publishers that can bridge the two worlds of the music industry to assist in developing future Psalm singing and use.

CHAPTER 7. IMPACT OF HYMNS ON PSALM SINGING

The singing of hymns has been a part of religious practice since the dawn of time across different faiths. The merging of poetry and music for sacred purpose has been well documented throughout human history. Homer's reputation was in part created by the beauty of his hymns, and many remain in his poetry. The Greeks, who were poets and sought to use their creativity in divine praise, offered rewards at some Greek games for the best hymns. The emperor Julian, in his desire to re-establish paganism, argued that the old Greek hymns were the products of divine inspiration, as was the case with the Psalms of David. The development and use of Greek hymnology directly impacted the development of hymns in the early Christian Church.

Hebrew hymnology begins in the Biblical book of Exodus, chapter 15, with the Song of Moses or the Song of the Sea. What made Hebrew hymns different from the pagan nations is they were directly employed in the worship of Yahweh. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we have hymn-like texts that were probably sung in Judaism and by the early Christian church as hymn-like compositions. Some scholars believe that there are texts from the Biblical books of the Song of Solomon (also known as The Song of Songs) and Lamentations. From among these we can see that they appear in a more narrative structure than the Book of Psalms, and this has led to classifying them as Hymns. A few of the notable biblical songs are:

- The Song of Moses (Song of the Sea)
 - In Exodus 15, after the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian army, Moses and Miriam lead the men and women of Israel in a song of praise.
- The Song of Wells in the Wilderness
 - In Numbers 21 as Israel wanders through the wilderness, they come to a place called "Beer," the Hebrew word for "well," and they are refreshed

by this supply of water. In thanks to God, they offer up a song of praise for the well in the wilderness.

- Song of Moses and Joshua
 - In Deuteronomy 31 and 32, Moses offers his final commissions to the children of Israel, to love and obey God. He and Joshua lead the people in a song affirming God's covenant to Israel.
- The Song of Songs
 - King Solomon is credited with over 1,000 songs, but the most well-known is the love book of The Song of Solomon.
- The Five Lamentations
 - The biblical book of Lamentations does not claim to be a songbook, but when it was translated into Greek for the Septuagint, it was referred to as the book of dirges. In this work there are poems that mourn for the city of Jerusalem that has fallen to the Babylonians.

There are many other Old Testament texts considered to be songs as well as New Testament texts. The use of narrative poetry in praise of the divine has been a part of religion throughout all of history and continues to be. It is also notable that the singing of hymns has gone hand in hand with the singing of Psalms, as the practices are the same, even if the structure and forms are different. It is from these early examples that we can see the pattern of hymn practices, the use of a text to relate a personal testimony regarding the divine, and then performing that story as a vehicle for worship of the divine.

After the resurrection of Christ, Jewish traditional hymns and Psalms were initially used, but very soon Christian hymns began to appear. Some of the most ancient of Christian hymns are:

1. The *Gloria in Excelsis* or *The Greater Doxology* with its opening words taken from the angel's song at Bethlehem announcing the birth of Christ.
2. The *Gloria Patri*, also called *The Lesser Doxology*. "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost," with the latter portion "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen," added in response to the Arian controversy.
3. The "*Ter Sanctus*," also called the *Cherubical Hymn*, is based on the thrice holy declaration from Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8.

4. The *Hallelujah*. A response of the people to the call of praise. Originally said in Hebrew, now some use it as “Praise ye the Lord”.
5. The *Benedicite* or *Song of the Three Hebrew Children* is taken from the Apocrypha and is a paraphrase of Psalm 48.
6. The *Nunc Dimittis* was generally sung in the evening and known as the *Evening Hymn*. It is taken from the words of Simeon in Luke 2:29 when he saw the baby Jesus at the temple.
7. The *Magnificat*, Mary’s song sung after the news that she would bear the Christ child from Luke 1:46.
8. The *Te Deum* or *Te Deum Laudamus* from the opening lines. The authorship remains unknown, and the Latin verse is based on an early Greek original.⁸⁹

The first Christian hymns grew out of the need to theologically confront various heresies that began to challenge the new church. The oldest hymn writers were the Gnostics and following them the Arians who sought to use music to propagate their teachings, as Luther later did in the Reformation. These hymns of false teaching were numerous, popular, and initially went unchallenged by the orthodox church. After Emperor Constantine made Christianity the religion of the state, a movement commenced to write hymns for the Christian Church. This era began with Ephrem of Syrus (307-373 AD) who was a champion of the faith. Ephrem wrote his hymns in the same meters as the Gnostic hymns to go directly against the heretical music that had been widely spread. From this came many Syriac and Greek hymn writers who provided songs for the new religion. With this early use of hymns sung in both pagan and Christian religious ceremonies, the writing of hymns developed in each generation. We can trace the early Latin hymns of the patristic church fathers, some of which have continued to influence liturgical worship even today. From there we move forward to the German hymnwriters and their influence on the German Chorale form. We can also trace modern Christian

⁸⁹ Rev. David R. Breed, *The History and Use of Hymns and Hymn-Tunes*, (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903).

hymns to the influence of Isaac Watts and after him John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism. In America, the revival movements of the early 20th century gave us hymn writers such as the blind Fanny Crosby. Still today we have modern hymnwriters who strive to present stories of religious affections and doctrine in musical settings.

Of course, this practice does influence the use of and development of Psalm singing as the new texts have a certain appeal and relevancy. This is inevitable as the texts for the Psalms are ancient and even the best paraphrases can still retain that context. Still others have sought to lay the blame squarely on Isaac Watts for the decline of Psalm singing, but that is hardly accurate given his paraphrasing of the Book of Psalms for singing. The reality is that there have always been hymns, from early in ancient history, that have been written for use in religious liturgy. It is historically inaccurate to say that these compositions were created as a reaction to Psalm singing, but it rather appears that each generation desired its musical expressions to be in their vernacular, both linguistically and musically. There will always be hymns or a form of them that are used to express one's faith, regardless of the use of Psalm singing.

CHAPTER 8. MODERN PSALTER DEVELOPMENT

With the evidence that we have considered, it is worth addressing the issue of modern psalter development and what the future may be. Observing the data might cause one to think that the growth of Psalm singing is stagnant with small attempts for renewal at best. No major Protestant denomination seems to have pursued Psalm singing in the present day, and it seems that Christian Contemporary Music holds sway over both Protestant and some Catholic musical practices. We live in the age of entertainment and instant musical satisfaction with our ears conditioned by the consumerist mentality of music. Sentimentality and the emotive power of performance are the driving forces behind what is used in the music of Western religious practices.

The internet and the accessibility of streaming music has provided some insight into the possible future of Psalm singing. Technology has made composition, singing and recording accessible to many more people, but it is not a substitute for metrical poetry and musical artistry. For years, there has been an effort by professional and amateur composers to set the Psalms to music, regardless of the artistic outcome. There are those who have attempted to put all 150 Psalms to music using one of the many Bible translations, and there are many musical versions of any chapter of the Psalms. However, I notice that most of them are not conducive to congregational singing or of any quality that would be viable to publish. What is clear from these attempts at singing the Psalms, is that there are individuals who value Psalm singing and would like to impact its future development.

The other inquiry is, if any major denomination or publishing company has pursued Psalm singing as an important project. A quick study of this would provide no

evidence that this has happened on a large scale although there are varied and isolated attempts. The Free Church of Scotland has continued to use the 1650 Scottish Metrical Psalter and has updated the language in 1994, 1996, 1999, 2002, and 2003. While they have updated their texts, they adhere to the literal principal of translating every verse and noting its number. They also are not updating tunes or harmonies from past generations, lest those that remember becoming offended. What we are left with in this modern day are attempts that are based on historical works that have been around for centuries.

Considering our current cultural moment, there is an opportunity for authors and composers to come together and create new paraphrases set to new tunes that could completely modernize Psalm singing for generations to come; such an endeavor would require investment and coordination. Yet the question that looms over an undertaking of this remains, is it possible and is it economically feasible? The answer is *yes* to both issues, but it is a daunting project that would require a visionary to lead the charge. In short, we need another Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, or Isaac Watts, not necessarily someone with all their gifts, but someone who possesses a uniqueness that can be committed to the vision and completion of a monumental challenge.

CHAPTER 9. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The historical observations regarding the practice of singing the Psalms have given some clear conclusions and issues to inform future practice. In hermeneutical studies there is a phrase that is sometimes used when interpreting scripture that says something like this: “All scripture is given to us, but not written specifically for us.” What this means is that the words of scripture have a specific historical context that they were written for, and that this context cannot be disregarded in interpreting and applying scripture. In the case of the Biblical book of Psalms, they were written to the Jews for Jewish liturgical and personal use. It is therefore probable that their peak of use and understanding was in the first temple period, declined during the captivities, increased with the re-building of the temple and then plateaued until the destruction of the second temple. They contained language and references to Jewish history, geography, and ceremony that only a person with links to the historical context would understand and relate to. This principle not only applies to the words of the Psalms, but also their musical presentation and accompaniments. What this means for modern attempts at singing the Psalms is that there are limitations to remaining authentic to their original design and practice. These limitations cannot overcome the chasm of time, historical context, and missing musical details.

In conclusion, I believe my research has provided a bit of a roadmap for the preservation of Psalm singing. In learning the history of this ancient practice, from first implementation in Jewish worship, through the early church, the Reformation and to the publishing of the Presbyterian 1912 Psalter, there is much to discern regarding its use and adaptability. The obstacles that tradition and time presented have shown us that with new

approaches and creativity what was once old can be realized in a contemporary context. I believe that some of the same issues that have been detrimental to the singing of Psalms throughout history are similar to the demise that English Psalms singing has seen over the last century. Through visionary personalities and fresh approaches to both lyrics and musical settings, Psalm singing can become a valuable part of liturgical practice. With fresh and insightful approaches these texts can have relevancy to modern worshippers, for some very important reasons. First, the texts of the Psalms have great personal and theological benefits to any reader who will use them to address issues that may perplex the soul. Language and societies change, but human nature remains the same and experiences the same temptations, emotions and struggles throughout history. The use of Psalms in devotion and prayer continues unabated by faithful Christians and will continue to be a vital part in the sanctity of believers.

Secondly, the Psalms are not tied to one historical setting or its musical practices, as they are a living, breathing text applied by the Holy Spirit to the hearts of believers. They remain popular as texts and still contribute greatly to the worship of many denominations and faiths. There is still a desire to use these texts in musical forms for liturgical settings and personal inspiration. Third, the Psalms can be paraphrased and translated in a way that is appropriate for the vernacular of modern day. These ancient texts are extremely practical and can be used in linguistic context of any culture or time period. When one applies the truths of Jesus Christ from the New Testament to the texts of the Psalms, they can be applicable to any theological application and are not restrained by ancient Jewish religious understanding. Read and sung in the context of the gospel from the New Testament brings a new understanding that may be obscured in the ancient

languages. Fourth, the singing of the Psalms and their imitations can be treated in a variety of musical expressions, both in melody and their accompaniment. Fifth, there is a need to pursue the creation of new vernacular settings of these texts, both lyrically and musically. We cannot just sit and watch them be bludgeoned by the progression of culture; we must take steps to keep them in our devotions, public and private.

Finally, we cannot overlook the immense role that these sacred texts have played in the lives of faithful across denominations and faith for thousands of years. Their impact on humanity cannot be denied, and those who continue in their exercise will find great satisfaction. Nahum Sarna, a Biblical scholar, put the significance of these texts into perspective for readers:

God reaches out to man. The initiative is His. The message is His. He communicates, we receive.... In the Psalms, human beings reach out to God. The initiative is human. The language is human. We make an effort to communicate. He receives.... The human soul extends itself beyond its confining, sheltering, impermanent house of clay. It gropes for an experience of the divine Presence.⁹⁰

When we take all the historical data and analyze the progressions and revitalizations of Psalm singing over time, we can see what lies ahead to reshape this ancient practice. There is nothing sacred or admirable about singing poor lyrics to bad melodies and thinking that it is of no real consequence. Isaac Watts was right when he commented that the musical presentation of the Psalms in his day was executed so poorly that neither the singer could benefit from it, nor was God glorified by it. In searching scripture, there is not a theological position that as long as the words are scriptural, the music can be offered poorly. Yet, this seems to be the goal for some who label

⁹⁰ Wyner, Yehudi. *The Book of Psalms and its Musical Interpretations*, Milken Archive, January 11, 2023, <https://www.milkenarchive.org/articles/view/the-book-of-psalms-and-its-musical-interpretations/>.

themselves as modern proponents of Psalm singing. I have listened to hundreds of hours of music that contain awkward lyrics and poetry, melodies that are mostly composed with no memorable or even a singable attribute to them. Quite often the use of a simple cadence is abandoned, leaving one to wonder how long the wandering tune may continue, with musical form to signal an ending. Added to this is sometimes the vocal presentation of the composition, as some performers think that singing involves the impersonation of some style that they have heard from other contemporary artists. This means as you listen to several songs from one artist, you will hear several caricatures of other artists, leaving you to wonder which one is their voice and an accurate representation of their soul. The other side of the Psalm singing spectrum is the adherence to tradition and resistance to the development of musical tastes and harmonics. In this area, you have those who still will only sing from the 1912 Psalter, or even older texts with the firm commitment that this is what is the best practice. This in and of itself can be helpful and rewarding, but there is also with it usually a strict adherence to singing the old tunes, along with the old harmonic voicings. The result produces sound and lyrics that are dated, less memorable and would still fall into the category of Isaac Watt's observation. What makes this practice so challenging is a staunch adherence to a music philosophy that strives to separate itself from that of modern composers. For those in this particular fashion of Psalm singing, they often hold to the view that singing the old texts with the old accompaniments is somehow a preferred or even superior method of singing the Psalms, often ignoring the lack of spiritual connection that many have with this dated usage.

With this in mind, we face the obstacles of both change and the need for new creativity if Psalm singing is going to endure in our liturgical practices. Let us begin by

focusing on the same goals that Luther, Calvin and Watts were attempting to complete in their own historical settings. First, let us put the Biblical texts into the vernacular; let us make adaptations that fit into modern English and rhythmic sensibilities. Yes, song form with a bridge works, but we need to be flexible with syllabic fluctuations in regards to rhythmic values: verse 1 may not exactly match up with verse 2, but if it is singable, we need to accept this melodic structure. Poets and composers need to spend time focusing on several translations of the Biblical Psalms, perhaps even studying the original Hebrew to get a solid understanding of what is being communicated. We cannot rely on simply lifting the words of an English translation and trying to adapt them to a melody, more intense poetic work is required for Psalm singing to re-emerge. Lyricists should not be afraid to arrange adaptations in contemporary song forms, as long as they can retain a solid paraphrase of the Biblical text. Secondly, we must use language that captures the essence and point of the Psalms, but we do not have to include the geography of Israel as sometimes described in the Biblical texts and other ancient descriptions. My point here is that the Psalms speak of antiquated Old Testament symbols and events, as primitive Jews would relate to. We need to find ways to summarize and understand what the point of these texts are, much like Watts accomplished in his imitations. Songwriters need to fully study and understand the text, using commentaries and others study helps to assist them in communicating the ancient Jewish context of the Psalter.

Thirdly, let us see these new lyrics as a method of teaching doctrine, as both Luther and Calvin proposed. We are not writing music to be in the top ten of Contemporary Christian Music, we are taking ancient texts that provide timeless truth; our goal should be to organize them in a way as to make them memorable upon the mind

and heart. Yes, they need to be musically relevant and beautiful, but they need to be authored to be retained mentally. The melodies that are composed should be memorable and singable to comfortably conform to the lyrics. The more easily a song is sung and recalled, the more the lyrics will find their way into hearts and minds. Fourthly, let us be intentional about teaching these songs in our congregational gatherings, just as Luther and Calvin did by first teaching the children.⁹¹ Our churches need to have a plan and practice for teaching children to sing new compositions of the Psalms and so influence the acceptance of the older generations. It may not be satisfactory to just introduce a Psalm on a rotating basis of use but making it a part of generational practice will have a longer application and will seem less of an oddity to the regular liturgy.

Fifthly, like Watts, we need to understand the Psalms in light of Christ and the New Testament. The Old Testament prophets understood that Christ was the King and the Messiah addressed in the Psalms. Yet when we sing the Psalms just as they are in their original translated form, we can easily miss this important truth. This meant for Watts that he was seeking to both gospelize and modernize the psalter for both Great Britain and primarily the Dissenting churches.⁹² Watts believed that the New Testament Church had a more completed revelation of God than of David or the prophets, that many of these texts were fulfilled in Christ. We must not forget that this applies to the texts of the Psalms, that we cannot just sing of unrealized truth; we must include the comprehension that many of the truths contained in Psalter texts are found in Jesus

⁹¹ Daniel Trocmé, “The Psalms as a Mark of Protestantism,” in *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 20, no. 2 (2011): 145–63. doi:10.1017/S0961137111000039.

⁹² Esther Rothenbusch Crookshank, “We’re Marching to Zion,” in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, ed. Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 20.

Christ. So, when we sing of Psalm 23, The Lord is My Shepherd, we can also sing that Christ is our Shepherd, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep as stated in John 10:11. For Watts, it was vital that believers understand the Psalms and sing of them with a connection to the gospel awareness in their hearts. In this regard, Esther Crookshank quotes Harry Escott, “For Watts, as Escott explains, “it is the breath of reality in our praises that matters most of all to God....before using [the Psalms] we must make them our own. Nothing less could be true covenant worship.”⁹³

Sixthly, in observing the characteristics of Psalm singing over time and the key innovations, we can conclude it is not enough to just stake a new position for change. At each crossroads of the development of Psalm singing, change was initiated by more than just a new shift of liturgical convention. Each of the key transitions involved methods and the means of instituting this new path. I believe that anyone who takes a position on the priority of singing Palms, should also have a plan and the designated resources for achieving this objective. That is why there must be an emphasis on teaching and developing lyrists who understand ancient texts and have a vision of how to paraphrase them into contemporary culture. We also need composers who will share this concept of singing Psalms and be comfortable with providing melodies that are constructed around the practice of congregational singing and not only performance. By focusing on the development of resources we can secure a foundation that will encourage our ultimate purpose, to encourage congregational participation in the singing of Psalms.

Finally, we must recapture beautiful, meaningful congregational singing in our religious music. In this age of 4 bar phrases that repeat over and over, can we train

⁹³ IBID, 20.

musicians to write beautiful melodies as a priority of their compositions? This final point brings up the need for training lyricists and composers to both appreciate and develop the musical structure needed for singing Psalms in this modern context. Writing music for the sole purpose of mass participation is becoming rare, as we see choral music take a lesser role in our own education system. This demise of groups of people singing together, whether in harmony or not, is in danger of fading from our culture and our churches. What this means is that music is being composed for performance and not participation, using technical manipulation and reducing the role of humanity in our singing. This often means that we need texts that are in meter, not ones that are freely composed without regard for the musical component. While free verse may serve as a valuable expression in a culture, it is resulting in the restricting of people from joining their voices in song. We need both forms of musical expression, and it means that we must invest the time and effort into training musicians to create new music for this purpose.

We should encourage and continue to educate writers to write in metrical poetry, even with today's linguistic challenges. The tune from the Genevan Psalter, called the Old 100th, has survived for centuries, yet it is neither complex nor long. Still there is an inherent beauty to it and this testifies to its endurance. How often have you heard the doxology sung in your life and marveled at how easily the human sound can meld together as one with this music? It will be a great loss to humankind if we lose this expression of our souls' humanity. If we can focus on these things, we can begin to see Psalm singing revived and enhanced. The result will be that we can only be enriched by including these lyrics in private and corporate worship practices. The creator God of the Psalms calls us to lift our voices and in doing so we give voice to the depths of our souls,

and reveal the sincerity of our devotion to His divinity. As the Psalms close in chapter 150, we are reminded that everything that has breath, should employ their humanity to praise Him.

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- Vienna Staatsoper, Vienna
- The Bregenz Festival, Austria
- Chicago Lyric Opera, Chicago
- San Francisco Opera, San Francisco
- National Center for the Performing Arts, Beijing
- Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona
- New York City Opera, NY

Music Editor

- Hymns of Grace – hymnal published 2015
- Himnos de Gracia – hymnal published 2020
- Psalms of Grace – hymnal published 2023