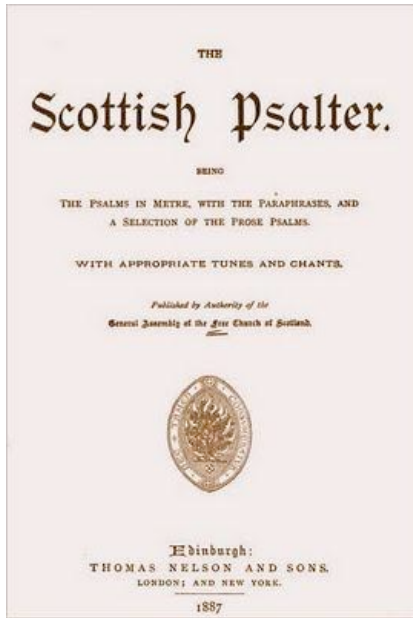


## CFBC Hymns Class 8

### Psalmody in the Church- The 1650 Scottish Psalter (and more recent Psalters)



**“The distinctive musical contribution of the Reformed Churches to Christendom has been the congregational singing of the Psalms.**

**The Lutherans sang hymns. The late-medieval church choirs sang Latin renderings of the Psalms using Gregorian tunes. The early Swiss Reformers (Zwingli, Farel) did not sing at all.**

**The movement to promote Psalmody in the Reformed churches was in this sense unprecedented. It also had ‘no element of spontaneity’ says hymnologist Louis Benson. ‘It was not even a popular movement, but the conception of one man’s mind and the enterprise of one man’s will.’ That enterprising, innovative man was none other than John Calvin.”**

Terry Johnson, Senior Pastor of Independent Presbyterian Church (Savannah, GA)

<http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Twin%20Lakes%20Fellowship%20Archive/Terry%20Johnson%20-%202004%20-Background%20of%20the%20Trinity%20Psalter.pdf>

“Moreover, that which St. Augustine has said is true, that no one is able to sing things worthy of God except that which he has received from Him. Therefore, when we have looked thoroughly, and searched here and there, we shall not find better songs nor more fitting for the purpose, than the Psalms of David, which the Holy Spirit spoke and made through him. And moreover, when we sing them, we are certain that God puts in our mouths these, as if He Himself were singing in us to exalt His glory. ”

John Calvin, Preface to the Psalter, 1543

***If it were asked, “What have the Psalms done?” I would answer, for one thing they have made men – men of heroic mold, of lofty faith, of fearless soul, who bowed the knee to none save God, and loved their liberty more than they loved their lives. Of them it might be said, as Lelievre, the Frenchman, writes of the Huguenots – for the character of Puritan and Huguenot was of the same fine moral fiber: “the effect of the Psalms on the character of the Huguenots was wonderful. They nourished the moral life of a race of men such as the world will perhaps never see again.” Yes, the world would be infinitely poorer without these Puritans – worshipers of God, haters of unrighteousness, singers of Psalms, great nation-builders.***

– The Psalms in Worship, p. 515-516

In the religious wars of France the Psalms became the Huguenots “Marseillaise.” They sounded as the war-cry above all the battlefields of Coligny and Henry of Navarre. Before the battle of Courtras, falling upon their knees, the Huguenots chanted the One Hundred and Eighteenth Psalm:

“This day God make; with cheerful voice In it we’ll triumph and rejoice.  
Save now, O Lord, we plead with Thee; Lord, send us now prosperity.”

Pointing to the kneeling host, a certain young gallant said to the commander of the Catholic forces, “See, the cowards are afraid; they are confessing themselves.” To which a scarred veteran made answer, “Sire, when the Huguenots behave like that, they are getting ready to fight to the death.” And as if to make good the veteran’s declaration, leaping from their knees, with Henry at their head, they swept on to decisive victory.

The Psalms in Worship, p.513

## Hymn and poetic meter

In the English language poetic meters and hymn meters have different starting points but there is nevertheless much overlap. Take the opening lines of the hymn *Amazing Grace*:

**Amazing grace**, how **sweet** the **sound**  
that **saved** a **wretch** like **me**.

Analyzing this, a poet would see a couplet with four iambic metrical feet in the first line and three in the second. A musician would more likely count eight beats in the first line and six in the second.

Completing that verse:

**Amazing grace**, how **sweet** the **sound**  
that **saved** a **wretch** like **me**.  
I **once** was **lost**, but **now** am **found**,  
was **blind**, but **now** I **see**.

The hymnist describes it as 8.6.8.6 (or 86.86)

In practice many hymns conform to one of a relatively small number of meters (syllable patterns).

## Representation

All meters can be represented numerically. In addition, some of those most frequently encountered are named:

- **C.M.** - Common Meter, 8.6.8.6; a quatrain (four-line stanza) with alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter, which rhymes in the second and fourth lines and sometimes in the first and third.
- **L.M.** - Long Meter, 8.8.8.8; a quatrain in iambic tetrameter, which rhymes in the second and fourth lines and often in the first and third.
- **S.M.** - Short Meter, 6.6.8.6; iambic lines in the first, second, and fourth are in trimeter, and the third in tetrameter, which rhymes in the second and fourth lines and sometimes in the first and third.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meter\\_\(hymn\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meter_(hymn))

## **1: All People That on Earth Do Dwell**

*(From Genevan Psalter...music by Louis Bourgeois, 1551 Old Hundredth LM  
Based on Psalm 100, words by William Kethe, 1561)*

To Tune of “The Doxology”

1 All people that on earth do dwell,  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.  
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell;  
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

2 The Lord you know is God indeed;  
Without our aid He did us make;  
We are His folk, He doth us feed,  
And for His sheep He doth us take.

3 O enter then His gates with praise;  
Approach with joy His courts unto;  
Praise, laud, and bless His Name always,  
For it is seemly so to do.

4 For why? the Lord our God is good;  
His mercy is for ever sure;

His truth at all times firmly stood,  
And shall from age to age endure.

## **Calvin’s Implementation of Metrical Psalm-Singing in Geneva**

***“The distinctive musical contribution of the Reformed Churches to Christendom has been the congregational singing of the Psalms..***

Calvin’s program of reform was disrupted by his banishment along with William Farel in April of 1538. He appealed to the Synod which met at Zurich, compromised on a number of points, but held fast on two. First, communion should be administered more frequently. Second, the singing of Psalms should be made a part of public worship.

His return to Geneva was contingent on the acceptance of these two principles. “It excites a certain surprise,” says Louis Benson, “. . . that at such crisis in church affairs he should make the inauguration of Psalmody the *sine qua non* of his return to Geneva.” ***For Calvin, the singing of the Psalms was an essential element in the life and health of the church.***

***The congregational singing of Psalms was central to Calvin’s whole program of liturgical reform. Yet as Benson points out, “it was the element of the program for which he found least sympathy among his colleagues and least preparation among the people.”***

***Strategically then, he proposed to begin with the children. In 1542, a “singing school” was established and a teacher hired to teach the children of Geneva “to sing the Psalms of David.” Beginning with the children the Reformed church learned to sing the newly rhymed and metered words, and newly composed music.***

***When Calvin returned from banishment in Geneva in 1541, he immediately obtained permission from the Town Council to introduce Psalm-singing into the public worship.*** The task of putting the Psalms in singable form, having already begun a few years before, was continued. ***Clement Marot***, a court poet and leading lyricist of that day, provided renderings for the first 30 Psalms, ***Theodore Beza*** the remaining 120. ***Louis Bourgeois*** wrote 83 original melodies. An unknown hand contributed tunes for most of the remaining Psalms, and the goal was nearly achieved of providing one tune for every Psalm. The work progressed slowly. ***Not until 1562, some 24 years after its inception, was the Genevan Psalter finally complete.***

***One could argue that the Genevan Psalter, the prototype of all subsequent of Psalters, has been the most used “hymnbook” in the history of the church. As Calvinistic Reformation spread, so did the practice of congregational Psalm-singing. The Reformed churches in France, the Netherlands, and Germany, as well as the Presbyterian church in Scotland and later the Puritan churches in America, were all exclusively Psalm singing until the beginning of the 19th Century.*** In the French and Dutch churches, the old Genevan settings and tunes are still used extensively four hundred and fifty years later!”

Terry Johnson, Senior Pastor of Independent Presbyterian Church (Savannah, GA)

<http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Twin%20Lakes%20Fellowship%20Archive/Terry%20Johnson%20-%202004%20-Background%20of%20the%20Trinity%20Psalter.pdf>

## **The Scottish Metrical Version of the Psalms (1650)**

Philip Rainey, Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC), Ballymena, Northern Ireland

“Do we appreciate what a treasure we have in the Scottish Psalter of 1650? Just as the Authorized Version of the Bible did not appear in a vacuum but was the perfecting of a textual tradition revived at the time of the Reformation, so ***the Scottish Metrical Version of the Psalms was the ripest fruit of a long and painstaking labour to produce in the English language an accurate versification of the church's manual of praise.***

***Psalm singing has been and is a feature of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. As Reformed Christians we believe that the worship of God is not left to man's imagination but is regulated by God Himself. This is what we call the Regulative Principle: God makes known in His Word how His people are to worship Him.*** But even those of us who accept this principle and sing only the Psalms, do we ever stop to think about the Psalter—the version of the Psalms—which we sing? It is a sad fact that all too many Reformed Christians today do not. We fail to appreciate the treasure we hold in our hands, when we worship God, in the form of the Scottish Metrical Version of the Psalms. This short article is an attempt to rectify this failure.

### **1. Historical Background**

***The Scottish Metrical Version of 1650 (SMV) has a noble pedigree. It can trace its lineage right back to the Protestant Reformation and to the very first Psalters of the Reformation.*** This is one of the reasons why Presbyterians ought to value their Psalter. This point is confirmed by the fact that some of the versions in our Psalter were carried over from the Reformation Psalters.

***In 1539 John Calvin printed nineteen Psalms in Strasbourg. This was the Strasbourg Psalter, the fountain-head from which Reformed Psalmody flowed forth. It was the Reformer's desire to give the people their rightful place in worship that the Romish Church had denied them. When Calvin returned to Geneva he saw to it that the Psalter was completed, as it was in 1562.***

***Calvin's Geneva became a refuge for those persecuted for their faith during the reign of Mary Tudor (1553-1558). One of these was the Scottish Reformer John Knox, who along with other exiles produced a Book of Order for use in the English Congregation at Geneva.***

***This included fifty-one Psalms, this number growing to eighty-seven in the third edition of the Psalter. This Psalter is known as the Anglo-Genevan Psalter. The preface to the Psalter makes it clear how it was the Reformers' concern to translate the Psalms as literally as possible.*** Bearing in mind they had some Psalm-versions already to hand, they declared,

In this our Enterprize we did only set God before our Eyes; and therefore weighed the Words and Sense of the Prophet, rather considering the Meaning thereof than what any Man had written. And chiefly being in this Place, where as most perfect and godly Judgement did assure us, and Exhortations to the same encourage us, we thought it better to frame the Rhyme to the Hebrew Sense, than binde the Sense to the English Meeter.

The eighty-seven versions of the third edition of the ***Anglo-Genevan Psalter*** were the basis for the ***First Scottish Psalter***. Knox brought these Psalms back with him from Geneva and in 1562 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland directed that the Psalter should be completed. The Psalter was completed in 1564, it being the direct forbear of our present Psalter.

Our present Psalter (SMV, 1650) arose out of the conviction that although the Psalter of 1564 was a faithful translation of the original, its variety of metre was too difficult for the common people. As a consequence of the Second Scottish Reformation it was decided to reform religion in the three kingdoms, hence the Westminster Assembly of Divines 1643-1647. ***The Westminster Assembly produced a new Psalter which was a revision of one by Francis Rous. But before accepting it the Kirk subjected it to a thorough examination and revision taking some two years and four months. The result was our present Psalter, the SMV of 1650.***

## **2. Appraisal**

There are three things we may say in appraisal of the SMV of 1650.

### **a. Faithfulness to the Original**

***The most important point about our Psalter is its faithfulness to the original Scripture. Unlike modern Psalters the SMV is not a paraphrase, but a translation.*** This is the case with all the Reformation Psalters. We have already noted the attitude of Knox and his associates to the translation of the Psalms. Consciously and deliberately our Reformed forefathers produced translations of the Psalms. ***The fact that they were translations into verse (or metre) does not mean paraphrase.*** What it does mean is contraction and dilation of Hebrew words and phrases. For example, "For he

hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted" was contracted to "For he despis'd not nor abhorr'd th' afflicted's misery" (Ps. 22:24).

The preservation of the force of the Hebrew is the outstanding feature of our Psalter and the reason why we should prefer it above all others.

### **b. Authorization**

The SMV received the sanction of the civil power in 1650 as well as that of the Church. This sanction, which excluded the use of any other version in Scotland, was confirmed by the Revolution Settlement of 1688-90 which re-established Presbyterianism in Scotland.

### **c. Unity in Doctrine and Worship**

The SMV has been a powerful force for liturgical and doctrinal unity in both Scotland and Ireland where it alone was the Church's songbook for over two centuries. It is surely no accident that when the Churches began to produce their own revisions we have seen "individualism" win the day with the Presbyterian Churches each having their own Psalter, and worse still in some cases their own collections of uninspired songs.

### **3. Conclusion**

What then ought we to do? It is our fervent hope that if you are a member of a church which still uses the SMV of 1650 you will have a greater appreciation of the spiritual treasure you hold in your hands. You may be sure that when you sing praise from it, you sing the words of God. And you need not be ashamed of its connections. This is truly a Reformed Psalter. *These were the songs of the martyrs, the songs of our Reformed and Presbyterian forefathers. May God grant that they will continue to be our songs today.*"

<http://www.cprf.co.uk/articles/scottishmetricalpsalter.htm>

## **Psalms 23 A Psalm of David (NASB 1995)**

1 The Lord is my shepherd,  
I shall not want.

2 He makes 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 His name's sake.

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 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



## **The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want**

(From 1650 Scottish Psalter...Based on Psalm 23)

Traditional Tune...St. Columbia ("How Sweet and Awesome Is The Place") CM

1The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; he leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.

2 My soul he doth restore again;  
And me to walk doth make  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
E'en for his own name's sake.

3 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.

5 Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me:  
And in God's house for evermore  
My dwelling place shall be.

## **Psalm 1- The Book of Psalms for Singing**

Crown and Covenant Publications (RPCNA)

Traditional Tune...Azmon ("O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing") CM

O greatly blessed is the man Who walketh not astray  
In counsel of ungodly men, Nor stands in sinners' way,

Nor sitteth in the scorner's chair, But placeth his delight  
Upon GOD's law, and meditates On His law day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows Set by the waterside,  
Which in its season yields its fruit, And green its leaves abide;

And all he does shall prosper well. The wicked are not so,  
But are like chaff which by the wind Is driven to and fro.

In judgment therefore shall not stand Such as ungodly are,  
Nor in th' assembly of the just Shall wicked men appear.

Because the way of godly men Is to Jehovah known;  
Whereas the way of wicked men Shall quite be overthrown.

### **More Quotes on Psalm-singing....**

***"The Psalter is the first hymn-book of the Church, and it will outlive all other hymn-books. Its treasury of pious experience and spiritual comfort will never be exhausted."***

Dr. Philip Schaff

***"The distinctive form of church song coming out of the Reformation was metrical Psalm-singing without musical accompaniment. One should not think that this practice was eccentric in itself. The Psalms have been the dominant "hymnal" of the Church since the time of Christ."***

Terry Johnson, Pastor of Independent Presbyterian Church (Savannah, GA)

***“The Fathers of the Early Church, like Origen, and Jerome, and Ambrose, and Augustine, loved them; through the Dark Ages the monk in his monastery cell as he gave himself unceasingly to their chanting was comforted by them; martyr after martyr as they went to the flames or the rack leaned upon them. They have been the home-songs of countless multitudes whose names history does not record; they have been the heart-songs of humanity.***

***They have lived longer than any other songs; they have broken through the limitations of age and race and creed to a greater degree than any other songs; they have comforted more saints amid the fires of persecution than any other songs; they have interwoven themselves into more characters than any other songs; they have formed the dying utterances of more of God’s people than any other songs. As we join our voices in the singing of them to day we are indeed joining our voices with a great multitude such as no man can number – a multitude of the most godly and the most heroic souls this world has ever known.”***

The Psalms in Worship

***“Above all this, the book contains divine and helpful doctrines and commandments of every kind. It should be precious and dear to us if only because it most clearly promises the death and resurrection of Christ, and describes His kingdom, and the nature and standing of all Christian people. It could well be called a ‘little Bible’ since it contains, set out in the briefest and most beautiful form, all that is to be found in the whole Bible, a book of good examples from among the whole of Christendom and from among the saints, in order that those who could not read the whole Bible through would have almost the whole of it in summary form, comprised in a sing booklet.”***

Martin Luther, Preface to the Psalms, 1528

***“Moreover, men, women, and children should be exhorted to exercise themselves in Psalms, that when the Kirk doth convene and sing they may be the more able together with common hearts and voices to praise God.”***

The First Book of Discipline of the Kirk of Scotland, 1560

***“With additional light which has been under the Christian revelation, the Psalms have not been superseded. The Christian looks to the Psalms with an interest as intense as did the ancient...The Psalter may be regarded as the heart-echo to the speech of God, the manifold music of its wind-swept strings as God’s breath sweeps across them.”***

Alexander Maclaren

***“I want a name for that man who should pretend that he could make better hymns than the Holy Ghost. His collection is large enough: it wants no addition, it is perfect, as its author, and not capable of any improvement. Why in such a case would any man in the world take it into his head to write hymns for the use of the Church? It is just the same as if he was to write a new Bible, not only better than the old, but so much better, that the old may be thrown aside. What a blasphemous attempt! And yet our hymn-mongers, inadvertently, I hope, have come very near to this blasphemy; for they shut out the Psalms, introduce their own verses into the Church, sing them with great delight, and as they fancy with great profit; although the whole practice be in direct opposition with the blessing of God.”***

William Romaine, “An Essay on Psalmody,” Works (London: T. Chapman, 1796), Vol. VIII, p. 465.

***“The Book of Psalms instructs us in the use of wings as well as words; it sets us both mounting and singing. Often have I ceased my commenting upon the text, that I might rise with the Psalm and gaze upon visions of God.”***

The Treasury of David, by C. H. Spurgeon

***“In these busy days it would be greatly to the spiritual profit of Christian men if they were more familiar with the Book of Psalms, in which they would find a complete armor for life’s battles and a perfect supply for life’s needs. Here we have both delight and usefulness, consolation and instruction. Of every condition there is a Psalm and suitable and elevating. The Book supplies the babe in Christ with penitent cries and the perfected saint with triumphant songs. Its breadth of experience stretches from the jaws of Hell to the gates of Heaven. He who is acquainted with the marches of the Psalm country knows that the land flows with milk and honey, and he delights to travel therein.”***

C. H. Spurgeon

***“For Protestant England the history of missions to the heathen begins with John Eliot, the son of a Hertfordshire yeoman. By means of his metrical version of David’s Psalms in their own dialect he sang his way into the hearts of the Indians of the New England forests. From Eliot and Brainerd, William Carey traced his spiritual lineage; from them Henry Martyn caught his inspiration and David Livingstone drank in long draughts of his spiritual enthusiasm.***

The Psalms in Worship, p. 523

## Appendix...

### Why Sing the Psalms in Worship? 10 Reasons (Edited)

Brian Cochran

Here are 10 reasons why I believe it is vital to the Christian life that we sing the Psalms in worship:

#### Why Sing the Psalms in Worship?

1. They are inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).
2. It is an excellent way of hiding God's word in your heart and letting the word of God dwell in you richly (Ps. 119:11; Col. 3:16).
3. The Psalms present the Biblical pattern for properly balancing the objective and the subjective aspects of the Christian life.
4. The Psalms give us a comprehensive presentation of Christian emotion.
5. The Psalms give us hope by anticipating the return of Christ and the age to come.
6. The Psalms are a great way to express our unity with God's people from thousands of years ago.
7. The wisdom of church history.
8. The Psalms will help you understand the New Testament better.
9. The Psalms testify of Christ (Luke 24:27, 44) and were frequently cited by Him.
10. You will come to know the heart and mind of Christ better (e.g. Matt. 27:46; cf. Ps. 22).

