

THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

VOLUME VII

OCTOBER 1909

NUMBER 4

MUSIC IN THE WORK OF CALVIN.*

I have been brought before you this evening, ladies and gentlemen, by circumstances at once encouraging and intimidating,—odd and yet logical,—such as would suggest a long introduction. The response which I bring you to lectures delivered, respectively, four months ago and one month ago, was in point of fact worked out and prepared at least eighteen months ago. I can do little more, at best, than adjust it to the situation.

Yet, in view of the length of our road and the shortness of the time at our disposal, I feel bound to sacrifice all retrospective or personal explanations. I shall not even try to take advantage of that fellow-citizenship with you in heart, if not in blood, to which more and more frequent and pleasant visits to you, and friendships among you every year growing older and more numerous, seem to give me a

* [An Address delivered by Professor Émile Doumergue, now Dean of the Protestant Theological Faculty of Montauban, in the "Salle de la Réformation", at Geneva, in April, 1902. The allusions at the opening of the Address are explained by the circumstance that there had shortly before been delivered at Geneva, by MM. Brunetière and Münz, similar but sharply critical Addresses on phases of Calvin's work. It is pleasant to be able to record that the harsh judgments of these lecturers were rapidly modified, and in the opening words of a second Address delivered shortly afterwards, Professor Doumergue was able to advert gracefully to their change of heart.—*Translator.*]

claim. I shall set aside the classical and useful *captatio benevolentia* altogether and confine myself to four preliminary remarks, which I shall make as brief as possible.

First of all I make my compliments to M. Brunetière and I congratulate him on having impressed on the discussion a character so grave, elevated and altogether urbane. His example has been followed by M. Münz, and I shall endeavor to imitate it in my turn.

Then, I thank the innumerable adversaries of Calvin for having made Calvinism such a living question, for having recovered for our Reformer something which almost looks like popularity. Nothing like this has been seen for centuries.

Next, I felicitate myself that, by a mysterious sort of preëstablished harmony, leading to identical conclusions from opposite points of view, assailants and defenders have found ourselves at one in drawing the attention of the public to the *intellectualism* of Calvin. The eminent critics who have addressed you—as well as others—have thought that, this point being universally reputed the weakest, it would be by it that it would be easiest to attack the whole system: just as I have thought that, this point being universally reputed the weakest, if I could show that it is sufficiently strong to resist all attacks, it would be precisely by it that it would be easiest to defend the whole system.

Finally, very respected hearers, I take the liberty to say to you frankly that my lively desire is to interest you; but that my more lively desire still is to convince you. Now, in history there is no true proof except authentic documents. I am going to bring them to you: texts, songs, pictures. Possibly these documents will seem to you sometimes too numerous, and even a little wearisome. But it has seemed to me that in a question so eminently Protestant, I ought to follow the Protestant method; which consists in placing the auditors in a position to decide for themselves,—against error, for the truth.

I shall commence by reading to you the very terms in

which there has been brought against our Reformer the general accusation of anti-artistic intellectualism.

The honorable member of the Institute, a most competent critic, no doubt, in artistic matters, and the last you have heard speak on art and Protestantism, M. Münz, in his articles in the *Revue des Revues* of two years ago, after having gladly made an exception of Luther, has brought his criticisms to bear on "the haughty and cruel Calvin", on "the most fanatical of the leaders of the Reformation", on "the most implacable of iconophobes", who "at one blow has withered both heart and soul". "Where and when do we see the author of the *Institutes* manifesting the least interest in any branch of art whatever?"

M. Münz is a Protestant. He is not, however, a pastor. Now, a pastor, M. Douen, writes: "The Pope of Geneva, that dry and hard spirit, Calvin, lacked the warmth of heart which makes Luther so loveable. . . . His theology without bowels . . . is the foe of all pleasure and of all distraction, even of the arts and of music. . . . Calvin is the type of authoritative dogmatism, anti-liberal, anti-artistic, anti-human, and anti-Christian."

If a Protestant layman and a Protestant pastor speak thus, the language on Geneva of a free-thinker like Voltaire should no longer astonish us:

Ah, noble city, rich and proud and shrewd,
 Where men can reckon, but can never smile,
 You take your pleasure in Genevan psalms,
 The ancient concerts of the goody king,—
 In faith that God delights in wretched verse.
 By preachers of the dull and deadly sort
 Is sadness stamped upon the brows of all.

And we shall be, if possible, still less astonished to hear Father Maimbourg repeat: "Calvinism is a skeleton of religion . . . having no life, no unction. . . . Calvin made a religion utterly dry and conformed to his own temperament."

Jesuits, Voltaireians, Protestants, even pastors, are all in accord: there is only one opinion, it is an axiom.

An axiom, or a legend? To reach a decision, let us ask to-day, first, what Calvin *thought* of art in general and of music in particular; then what Calvin *did* for music.

I.

What did Calvin think of art?

Well, gentlemen, to suppose that he gave it no thought at all—this absence of artistic preoccupation could find at least excuses.

I call the first of them, *the evil of the times*. Calvinism has sadness stamped on its brow. Its visage is pale. Sometimes all its being is tense with an inexpressibly heavy strain. It is even draped in weeds. It is all true. Calvinism is not the religion of the poor woman, mother of the gay Villon, who kneels in the midst of the gold and bright colours of a vaulted and brilliantly lighted chapel, and in her comfortable ignorance, addresses her prayers to the "exalted goddess". It is nevertheless the religion of a poor woman,—but the mother of the pastor Le Clerc, who, present at the torture of her son, at the moment when the red-hot iron scorched his brow, cried in the enthusiasm of her Biblical faith, "Hail to Jesus and His standard-bearers!" Calvinism is a religion of martyrs. And these Calvinists, able to meet, between two massacres, only in the forest or the desert, are asked why they have not ornamented their sanctuaries with statues and pictures, why they have not built Romanesque or Gothic Cathedrals!—I certainly feel the right to respond with the Dutch Calvinist, Dr. Abraham Kuyper, alluding to the death of Goudimel at Lyons on the night of St. Bartholomew: "The wood is reproached for its silence, when they have killed the nightingale."

There is, however, a second excuse of a different nature. I mean *the inevitableness of reaction*—not only from the abuse of ecclesiastical painting and sculpture, but from the abuse, less known but perhaps even more scandalous, of music.

Examples. While one portion of the choristers intoned a *Sanctus* or an *Incarnatus*, others, accompanied by the crowd, sang words like these: *Robin loves me, Love presses me too hard*. And in the Vatican, the choir-leader would speak to the Holy Father of the *Magnificat*, "Margot, in a garden", or of the Mass, "O Venus, the beautiful".

Moreover, the very decrees of the Council of Trent sufficiently attest these aberrations, in the attempt to correct them,—but without success, as the historians most favorable to that great assembly, recognize. The exertions of Palestrina against "the lascivious and impure music" (these are the expressions of the Fathers) were powerless. And how could it have been otherwise, when the Papacy itself continued to provide certain voices for its choir by the commission of a special and here unnamable crime?

A very significant proof of the persistence of these strange musical manners is found in a *Collection of Spiritual Songs*, taught by the royal missionaries to the converts of the diocese of Alais, in 1735, two hundred years after the Reformation. The booklet has no music, but in its place there are given in each instance such indications as these. At Songs V, VI, VII, the *Pater*, the *Ave Maria*, the *Credo*: "to the air of Birenne, my love." At Song XI, the Passion of Jesus Christ: "to the air of Follies of Spain." At Song XVI, in honor of the Holy Virgin: "to the air of Take my Phyllis, take thy Glass." At Song XXVIII, Paradise: "to the air of Charming Gabrielle." At Song XLV, Sentiments of a Converted Sinner: "to the air of Let us follow, follow Love." At Song LI, sentiments of a heart which finds nothing but God to love: "to the air of Big Gosier said to Gregory."

Was it not, indeed, in the full light of Louis XIV's century, in 1670, that Colletet composed "to airs often immodest" (these are his own expressions) Nowels like this:

“There was not great nor small
Who did not bring his all,
Who did not, not, not,
Who did not give, give,
And offer alway
All he could pay.”

These Nowels were reprinted throughout two centuries; even in 1874.

Assuredly, if Calvin had had the same feeling as many of the members (and those certainly not the least clear-sighted) of the Council of Trent, and had believed there was only one way to extirpate such abuses,—absolutely to proscribe modern music, to wit,—what reproach could be brought against him even—or particularly—by the Catholics?

I have pointed out these possible excuses, gentlemen, that you may feel more strongly the merit of Calvin in rendering them needless.

In his *Institutes* and in his *Commentaries* Calvin sets before us what is in effect a very original and very beautiful theory of art. This is it: Art is the gift of God's Common Grace to man.

Common Grace! So much has been said of special grace (that which is the result of predestination), that the theologians themselves have ended by ignoring common grace, which nevertheless is not less real, and the rôle of which is not less considerable. In effect, it is by this common grace that God dispenses “the excellent gifts of His Spirit to all the human race”,¹ and “casts some rays of His light even upon unbelievers”. Even the most accursed, the sons of Cain, are not deprived of this common grace, which, on the contrary, distributes to all “some gifts and graces”, “graces which are to be highly prized”, which enrich the pagans “liberally with excellent graces”, “evident testimonies of the goodness of God”, even with “the admirable light of truth”

¹ *Opera Calvini* (Brunswick ed.), xxiii, pp. 99, 100: *Commentarius in Genesim*, ch. vi, vers. 20.

the brilliancy of which astonishes.² Briefly, it is this common grace, distinct from special grace, which is the basis of civil society—distinct in its turn, and for this reason, from religious society—with its science, its industry, its philosophy, and its politics.

Theologians and historians, it has been said, have undertaken simply to amputate from Calvinism this common grace. And there certainly is no room for astonishment that, after two or three such amputations, nothing will remain in the sight of the public but a mutilated body, hideous and very repellent. Only, this is no longer Calvinism.

Very well, gentlemen, among the gifts of this common grace are the arts which are “instilled by God into our understandings”, and which make us “contemplate the goodness of God”. “God is the sole author and master of all these arts.”³ “All arts proceed from God, and ought to be held as divine inventions.”⁴

The objection is made, it is true, that by this word “arts” Calvin means only the liberal arts and the mechanical arts. But this is inexact. Calvin does not exclude from the number of arts the arts properly so-called, those which serve not only “common use” or “commodity”, but simple pleasure. The declaration is formal: “Because the invention of the harp and other musical instruments serves rather for pleasure and delight than necessity, it is not nevertheless to be considered altogether superfluous and still less does it deserve to be condemned.”⁵

You have fully understood, gentlemen? Calvin does not condemn either pleasure or delight: he even declares that pleasure and delight are not *superfluous* things. All that he condemns is “the pleasure which is not united with the fear of God, and the common needs of human society”.

² *Opera Calvini*, iii, pp. 315, 316: *Institution Chrétienne*, II. ii. 15.

³ *Opp. Calv.* xxxvi, p. 483: *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam*, xxviii. 29.

⁴ *Opp. Calv.* xxv, p. 58: *Commentarius in quinque libros Mosis*, Exodus, xxxi. 2.

⁵ *Opp. Calv.* xxiii, p. 100: *Com. in Gen.* iv. 20.

But there is no Christian socialist who would disavow such a restriction; and all other artistic pleasure is legitimate.

From art in general let us pass at once to music, and let us take into our hands the famous preface to the Psalter.

"In truth, we know by experience [by experience and not by theory] that singing has great force and power to *move* and *influence* the *heart* of men to invoke and praise God with more *vehement* and *ardent* zeal. . . . Among other things adapted for men's recreation and for giving them *pleasure* [artistic pleasure again], music is either the foremost, or one of the principal; and we must esteem it a gift of God designed for that purpose. . . . There is scarcely anything in this world which can more turn or bend hither and thither the ways of men. . . . And in fact we know by *experience* [the facts of experience again] that music has a *secret and almost incredible power to move hearts* [still, the heart]. . . . When melody goes with it, every bad word penetrates much more deeply into the *heart* . . . just as a funnel conveys the wine into the depths of the decanter, so venom and corruption *are distilled into the very bottom of the heart by melody.*"⁶

The heart again, and always the heart! And in the dogmatic pages of the *Institutes*, the heart reappears, we must remark, with a frequency more and more singular. The word, it is said, and song are good on one condition,—“that they follow the sentiment of the heart”,—“that they come from the sentiment and the depths of the heart”. Then,—“Singing is a good means of *inciting* and *influencing* the *heart*”.⁷ But “the tongue without the *heart* is very displeasing to God”.

How could M. Douen speak of a theology without bowels? How could M. Münz ask: “Where and when do we see the author of the *Institutes* manifesting the *least* interest

⁶ *Opp. Calv.* vi, p. 120: *La forme des prieres et chantes ecclesiastiques*: Epître au lecteur.

⁷ *Opp. Calv.* iv, pp. 418-421: *Institution chrétienne*, III. xx. 31, 32, 33.

in *any branch* of art whatever?" How could M. Brunetière contend: "Horror of art is and will remain one of the essential traits of the spirit of the Reformation in general, and of the Calvinistic Reformation in particular"? I cannot tell. And in place of seeking curiously to unravel it, I propose to you, as a transition between what Calvin *says* and what Calvin *did*, simply to listen to the music of Bourgeois for the Thirty-eighth Psalm. . . .

II.

What did Calvin *do* for art?

Calvin *made the Psalter*.

Before Calvin, the French Reformation had no ecclesiastical singing. The idea of the Psalter dates from 1537, and from the memorial which Calvin, with Farel, presented to the Council of Geneva. Finding that the prayers of the faithful were "so cold that it ought to turn to great shame and confusion", he asked that the Psalms might be sung, that *the hearts* of all might be *moved and incited*".

Troubles—exile—paralyzed the activity of the Reformers. But scarcely was Calvin established at Strasburg than he set himself to carry out his programme. Arrived in *September*, he announces to a friend, *in the month of December*, that he is about to send the Psalter to the press.

Whence did he obtain the words? He became a poet; and, finding in manuscripts more or less correct, a dozen Psalms translated by Clément Marot, he availed himself of them.

Whence did he obtain the music? Struck by the beauty of certain Strasburg melodies, which, he said, "pleased him very much", he availed himself of them also.

And this was the first Psalter, the Psalter of 1539, the single remaining copy of which, that is known, is now to be found in the library at Munich.

For the *further* translation of the words, Calvin adopted, as they appeared, the Psalms of Marot, whom he was accused of having "Calvinized" at Ferrara. Then Theodore

Beza finished the work of Marot, and Calvin, as impatient in 1551 as thirteen years before, in 1538, sent on the translations of his friend, one by one, "by the first courier", as he specifies.⁸

And, finally, for the *further* composition of the melodies? Ah, here we find a legend in possession, even in the most scientific Protestant books. According to it, the composer Bourgeois had to flee to Paris (but this erroneous; he withdrew to Lyons), to escape the bickerings of Calvin (this, too, is erroneous; he left because the Council refused to increase his insufficient salary), because Calvin was furious at Bourgeois for setting the Psalms in four parts (which also is erroneous, since, shortly afterwards, it was Calvin himself who requested the Council for an authorization for Bourgeois to publish a new work). To execute justice on this legend and to illustrate the relations of Calvin and Bourgeois, only one word is needed, a little word which I have found in the old records of your archives,—yellow, dust-covered, hard to read, but often so eloquent, so vivid.

Bourgeois had displeased the Council, who were unjustly incensed with him, and condemned him to prison. The Minutes note the decision, and then, at the same meeting, the same Minutes begin, a half-page further on, another paragraph: "Afterwards Master Calvin came in." *Afterwards!* Now, this is what this little word means. At once upon the Council's making its strange decision, one of the councillors, no doubt a friend of Calvin's, knowing his sentiments toward Bourgeois, left the court-room and ran to the Rue des Chanoines. He explained the situation in two words. Calvin, who was dictating a letter or some commentary, stopped in the middle of a sentence: his memory was sure to take it up again and complete it an hour or two later. In haste he put on his coat, seized his square cap, and in a few seconds was at the Hôtel de Ville. At once he had himself announced to the Council. At once he entered:

⁸ *Opp. Calv.*, xiv, p. 28.

“Afterwards Master Calvin came in.” And it was he who explained that Bourgeois was not in fault. His interruption, however, only partly calmed the Council. Bourgeois remained in prison twenty-four hours, and when he was set at liberty the Council made “gracious remonstrances” . . . to Calvin himself.

It is not hard to understand, from this, how, in spite of Calvin’s protection, Bourgeois left Geneva. But the Psalter was finished, the complete Psalter, that of 1562, the year of the massacre of Vassy; and here is Psalm 65, translated by Theodore Beza, with the melody of Bourgeois and the harmony of Goudimel. . . .

Here, gentlemen, my imagination reverts to that first, thin, volume of 1539, lying there isolated, exiled, in the Bavarian library, and I am filled with an inexpressible respect. I think of the little grain of mustard seed transformed into the immense tree, to the branches of which, growing ever stronger, the birds from every quarter of heaven gather to rest and sing. I think of the patriarch Abraham, alone, old, wasted, against all human prevision become the father of a people as the stars of the heavens for number. Growth, multiplication, veritably prodigious! It was from the Psalter of 1539 that, little by little, the Psalter of 1562 grew. The same year of its publication saw twenty-five editions of it issued. In four years sixty-two editions followed. The bibliographers tell us of fourteen hundred editions, and translations multiplied themselves as marvelously as editions. The Calvinistic Psalter was translated into English, Dutch, Danish, Polish, Bohemian, Rhaeto-Romanic, Ladin, Italian, Spanish, Portugese, Gascon, Béarnais, Malay, Tamil, Sessouto, Latin, Hebrew, Sclavonian, Zend. In less than two centuries there were issued in Holland alone more than thirty editions, and Germany, the land of the admirable choral, jealous of what it calls “the siren of Calvinism”, rivalled Holland.

The siren of Calvinism! This expresses the opinion of

enemies, systematic insulters like Florimond de Raemond. "Nothing", says he, "has so opened the way to the novelties of these new religions. . . . The new singing, sweet and insinuating, of these rhymed Psalms has been the chain and cordage . . . by which they have drawn souls."

The siren of Calvinism! Above all, this expresses the opinion of friends—friends as little sentimental as a professor, a professor of theology, and even of the theology of the seventeenth century, Moses Amyraud. "From the mingling of so many voices", he writes, "there is formed, I do not know what harmony, the sound of which has sometimes been enough to ravish passers-by—so melodious is the sound of this singing and so adapted is it to rouse in the mind *extraordinary emotions*. For ourselves, we may certainly speak of what we have experienced from it. There are times when the several words, animated in this manner, have *almost drawn our souls out of themselves*. In such sort that I do not believe there can be on earth a more beautiful image of what we hope for some day in Paradise."

In very truth, gentlemen, what book, except the Bible, has received such honor? And what imagination can picture the millions and millions of souls, of all countries and tongues, who have found consolation, joy, strength, heroism in these marvellous songs,—from the Calvinists of Geneva and France to those Calvinists of Scotland who sang them to the roar of the waves on the rocks of St. Andrews, and those Calvinists of Holland who sang them to the terrible onset of the old Spanish troopers, and those Calvinists of England who sang them on the ships sailing out to America,—down to those Calvinists who are singing them still down in the south of Africa, on the banks of the Orange River, or in the passes of the Drakenberg?

This is the Psalter which Calvin made, the Calvinistic Psalter.

III.

Here, gentlemen, let us stop and listen. Let us listen to the Psalm, not slow, dragging and lagging, monotonous,

cold, wearisome, stupid and stupifying,—not to the Psalm which, little by little, like a wornout piece of furniture, decrepit, displeasing, unsuited to our modern parlors, we have clipped, restored, mended, abridged and finally cast out of our apartments, and our books of songs, to relegate to some lumber-room,—but to the Psalm, true, vital, young, and strong, sung as a word which has a meaning, which expresses a deep and lively sentiment, which bursts from a heart vibrant with ardor, with assurance, with hope, with joy, with enthusiasm, . . . in short, let us listen to the true Psalm of Calvin.

Here we are, gentlemen, on a fine afternoon in May, 1558, on the great promenade of the students of Paris, the Pré-aux-Clercs, on the banks of the Seine. Some students are singing the Psalms, and their singing is so fine that their comrades gather and sing with them. The same scene is repeated the next day. Only, the lords of the court—Chatillon, Condé, the King of Navarre—mingle with the singers. It is a procession of seven or eight hundred people which unrolls itself, and the immense and delighted crowd listens with transport. What is it? The apparition of the Psalm, sung in chorus—“that unexpected harmony”, as Michelet puts it, “that sweet, simple and strong singing, so strong as to be heard a thousand leagues away, so sweet that everyone thought he heard in it the voice of his mother”. And while to the echoes of the Pré-aux-Clercs, there were answering the echoes of the Pré Fichaut of Bourges or of the promenades of Bordeaux, the old historian of the University of Paris, Bulée, said: “In the singing of the Psalms, the Protestants laid the foundations of their religion”; and Florimond de Raemond said: “It is from this event [the apparition of the Psalms] that the Church of Calvin may be dated”—the Church of the Psalms.

Here is Psalm I, the melody and harmony by Bourgeois. . . .

From that moment, the Psalms have been indissolubly

bound up with the life, public and private alike, of Calvinists, and, as has been remarked, it would be possible to make a calendar, in which all the salient events of the history of French Protestantism should be recalled by a verse of a Psalm.

Here is that famous verse, for example, of Psalm 118:

This is the happy day
That God Himself did make;
Let us rejoice always
And in it pleasure take.

Now, in describing the battle of Coutras (1587), won by Henry of Navarre, the son of Jeanne d'Albret, from the Duke de Joyeuse and the Catholic army, D'Aubigné expresses himself thus:

“Of the two artilleries, the last to come, that of Huguenots, was the first in position, and commenced to play before nine o'clock. Laverdin, seeing the damage which it did, rode towards his general and cried out, while still some distance off: ‘Sir, we are losing by waiting: we must open up.’ The response was: ‘Monsieur the Marshal speaks the truth.’ He returned at a gallop to his place, gave the word and charged.

“On the other side, the King of Navarre having had prayer offered throughout the army, some began to sing the Hundred-and-eighteenth Psalm: ‘*This is the happy day.*’ Many Catholics of the White-Cap cried out loudly enough to be heard: ‘S’Death! They are trembling, the poltroons; they are making confession.’ Vaux, lieutenant of Bellegarde, who had more frequently rubbed knees with these people and who alone rallied for the combat, said to the Duke: ‘Sir, when the Huguenots take this figure, they are ready to lay on with a will.’” And some hours later the victory was theirs.

But this same song, “*This is the happy day*”, has sustained the Calvinists in other combats, more dangerous, more difficult. It is heroic to cast ourselves at a gallop

without fear into the midst of the battle. It is more heroic, laid on a bed of agony, to receive, calm and smiling, the assault of the last enemy which man has to conquer on this earth. Such a hero, the author whose narrative we have just read showed himself. His widow relates: "Two hours before his death, he said with a joyful countenance and a mind peaceable and content, '*This is the happy day*.'" There is something more heroic still. Listen! Far from the excitement of the combat, unsustained by the affections and care of friends, face to face with the mob howling with rage and hate, on the scaffold, at the foot of the gallows, here are the martyrs of the eighteenth century,—the Louis Rancs, the François Bénézets, the François Rochettes,—who, with their glorious souls, raise towards the heavens where their Saviour listens to them, the song of triumph: "*This is the happy day!*"

Yes, gentlemen, Psalms and martyrs go together, just as the Word and the heart from which it flows; and it is through the sound of the Psalms that we are able to follow all this incomparable history.

The martyrs are arrested.—Here are the fourteen men of Meaux, who were surprised in the room where they were celebrating the Lord's Supper. They are hurried into carts: they are borne away to the most terrible sufferings. But, forgetful of everything but the outrage done to their God, trembling with a holy indignation, they cast to the fanatic people the words of the Seventy-ninth Psalm:

The heathen into Thine own heritage,
 O Lord, have come; and by their foul outrage
 Defiled Thy holy House; Jerusalem
 Is made a heap of scattered stones by them.
 Slain are Thy people, Lord,
 Slain by the cruel sword,—
 Their bodies, for the meat
 Of ravening birds cast forth,
 And to the beasts of earth
 Their flesh flung out to eat.

The martyrs are in prison.—Anne du Bourg put upon bread and water, separated from all her friends, even shut up in a cage, set herself to sing Psalms; and it is the sigh of the Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm which escapes from her soul:

From the bottom of my heart,
 From all my sorrow's deep,
 To Thee I raise my plaint,—
 Lord, hear me as I weep:
 O, surely, Lord, 'tis time,—
 I cry both night and day—
 O bend Thy ear to hear
 The while to Thee I pray.

The martyrs are on the fatal cart.—Here are five young students, treacherously arrested on their return from Geneva to their post of evangelization. On the road which led from the dungeon to the funeral-pyre, what word could express their overflowing joy but that of the Ninth Psalm,—which the Psalter describes as “a triumphant song in which David returns thanks to God for a certain battle which he had won, and magnifies the righteousness of God, who avenges His people in His own good time and way”:

With all my heart I will proclaim,
 O Lord, my God, thy glorious name;
 Thy marvellous works no equals know,
 I fain their wondrousness would show.
 In Thee alone my joy I see,
 I have no comfort but in Thee;
 O God, Most High, I fain would raise
 To Thy great Name unending praise.

The martyrs are on the platform of the scaffold.—Here is Jean Bertrand, forest-watchman: “The hangman jerked the cord about his neck rudely. But Bertrand let this insult and violence pass, and said to him: ‘God forgive you, my friend’; and began to sing from the Twenty-fifth and the

Eighty-sixth Psalms, the verses suitable to the time and state he was in." He sang:

To Thee, my God, I lift my heart,
In Thee my hope is placed.

And again:

My God, bow down Thine ear to me,
And hearken to me graciously.
O answer me! for none can be
In sorer straits and poverty.

"His countenance was beautiful, and his eyes were lifted to heaven. He placed himself with high courage on the seat that was prepared for him on the end of a piece of wood, and said these words: 'What a fine place you have prepared for me!—O happy day!' And when the fire was lighted, he cried out and said: 'My God, give thy servant thy hand: I commend to Thee my soul.'" And holding God thus by the hand, he ascended to heaven.

The martyrs are in the flames.—They have been imprisoned, tortured; their tongues have been cut out. Here is Jean Rabec, of old a minor friar: "The criminal officer . . . and others . . . came to the jail . . . and commanded that his tongue should be cut out and he be prepared for execution. The executioner took him and fastened him to a hurdle behind a cart, a pitiable spectacle. And Rabec, raising his eyes to heaven, prayed to God, . . . the blood pouring from his mouth and he being much disfigured by this blood. He was stripped, and wrapped with straw before and behind, and a quantity of brimstone was spread on his flesh. Lifted into the air, he began the Psalm: 'The heathen have come into thine own heritage', quite intelligibly, despite his tongue having been cut out. . . . And being thus lifted up, he remained for quite a number of minutes, without the fire being lighted, continuing the Psalm. . . . When the fire was lighted Rabec continued his Psalm, and was lowered and raised again several times,

so that, his entrails having partly protruded, he still spoke on, though no longer having the figure of a man."

The heathen entered have Thine heritage . . .
 Unto the heavens, let the prisoner's sighs
 Into thy holy presence, Lord, arise:
 And oh, preserve by Thine almighty power
 Those who are brought to their appointed hour.

There remains, gentlemen, the most celebrated of our Psalms, that which has received the name of the *Battle-Psalms*, the Calvinistic Marseillaise, the Huguenot Luther-choral, that supreme cry of confidence which traverses and animates this whole epoch, as moving as it is grand:

Let God but only show His face,
 And all His enemies apace
 Afar shall scattered be.
 And those who hate Him, everywhere
 Shall of His dreadful wrath be ware,
 And from His presence flee.
 As smoke before the driving blast,
 So God shall drive them, flying fast,
 And none can cause them stay:
 As wax before the burning fire,
 So shall they melt before His ire
 Allutterly away.

The melody of this Psalm, in which we find to-day the rumbling of the storm, the crash of the lightning and the far-away rolling of the thunder, has a truly curious history. It was composed, about 1525, for the pacific Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, by the gifted chorister of the Cathedral of Strasburg, Thomas Greiter, who had become a Protestant. Calvin, on becoming acquainted with it, was charmed with it, and set to this melody his own Psalm 36, which he soon replaced by that of Marot. And it was only in 1562 that Theodore Beza took this melody away from

Psalm 36 and gave it to his translation of Psalm 68. From that moment the *Battle-Psalm* was in existence.

The Huguenot armies adopted it: they took it to the battles of Dreux, St. Denys, Jarnac, Moncontour, Ivry. Then all fell silent. The Revocation, that hearts might be broken, began by closing mouths, until the time came when, the extremity of sufferings being reached, down there in our ever glorious Cévennes, men, women, maidens, children raised themselves up, seized by a mysterious enthusiasm. They heard voices, they fell into ecstasy; they prophesied. And all of a sudden, the *Battle-Psalm* sounded out on the summits of the Aigoual. Then the bravest soldiers of the great King stopped, turned their backs, seized with a sudden terror. It became necessary to treat with the insurgents, and, to human view, the Camisards, saving Protestantism, saved also liberty of conscience!

Let God but only show His face!

* * *

Such, gentlemen, is the art the theory of which Calvin laid down, and such is the song of which Calvin was the inspirer and the propagator. This is what Calvin thought of music, and did for music.

But the time has now come when a final offensive movement of the legend pushes us to a final and general conclusion.

But, in the end, cries this legend, is it not incontestable that Calvin was the foe of art, since, in his *Institutes*, this declaration is found in so many words: "The songs and melodies which are composed to please the ear *only, as* are all the quaverings and trills of Papistry and all that they call broken-music and composition, and four-part songs, in no wise accord with the majesty of the Church and cannot be other than gravely displeasing to God."⁹ Have we not here, in the end, the *confitentem reum*?

By no means, gentlemen, and decidedly the legend has been unfortunate here. This famous text is found only in

⁹ *Opp. Calv.*, iv, p. 420.

the French translation of 1560, a translation which abounds in errors, contradictions, even nonsense, and which, naturally, Calvin did not review. This text is absent from the Latin edition of 1559, the only one which has authority. Calvin said: "The songs and melodies which are composed to please the ear only in no wise accord with the majesty of the Church, and cannot be other than gravely displeasing to God." The author of the translation *intercalated*: "as are all the quaverings and trills of Papistry and all that they call broken-music and composition and four-part songs." What importance has this intercalation?

Moreover, even were the text authentic, the legend would not be advanced, for it does not at all mean what it has been made to mean. Calvin would not be condemning here *ex professo* either harmony in general, or four-part singing in particular, but only a certain harmony, which he would carefully specify—"the four-part singing . . . of Papistry". Nothing more.

In reality, gentlemen, Calvin, after the example of the Lutherans, whose musical sense is not contested, and on the advice of Goudimel, to whom no one denies artistic genius,—Calvin simply desired that in the churches, the Calvinists should sing "all and well", as M. Douen himself recognizes.

In other terms: singing in unison (this is for the music) and singing in the common tongue (this is for the words)—such is the democratic singing which Calvin confined himself to requiring with more energy and vigor than all the other Reformers. He has given expression to it himself thus: "We should sing with the heart and the tongue¹⁰ . . . not with the tongue without the heart, . . . not in the Greek language among the Latins, nor in Latin among Frenchmen and Englishmen . . . but in the *common language of the country*, which all the assembly understands."¹¹ , , . Spiritual songs *cannot be well sung*

¹⁰ *Opp. Calv.*, iv, p. 419.

¹¹ *Opp. Calv.*, iv, pp. 420, 421.

except from the heart. Now, the heart requires the understanding. And in this . . . lies the difference between the singing of men and that of birds. For a linnnet, or a nightingale, or a popinjay will sing well, but it will be without understanding. Now the proper gift of man is to sing, knowing what he sings. On the intelligence ought to follow the heart and the affection."¹²

And, gentlemen, by these great words, full of heart and of good sense (as full of heart as of good sense, and as full of good sense as of heart), our Reformer did nothing less than draft the programme of a real artistic revolution,—which, thanks to the providential conjunction of these two geniuses, so well suited to understand one another, Calvin and Bourgeois, has transformed the Catholic, aristocratic, hierarchic singing, behind the screen of the choir, into a Protestant, democratic, lay singing of the whole congregation.

Catholic singing was, in effect, without measure. It was not proper, it was said, for the devil to beat time in the sanctuary. Bourgeois composed his melodies in a two-time movement, lively and animated.

Catholic singing made monotony its law: there was no tone in the plain-song but only modes. Bourgeois introduced the two distinctive modes of popular, fluent music, and gave birth to modern tonality.

Catholic singing, finally, made no account of the words. It mingled the religious words, in Latin, of the priests with the jovial words, in French, of the people. Bourgeois restored to the melody its importance, its gravity,—the gravity of the words themselves.

And it is in the face of this revolution, inaugurating modern, democratic music, that it is said: "The work of Calvin, the intellectualist, was that of an aristocrat!"

I keep, gentlemen, to artistic, even to musical ground. I do not respond: Calvin did not aristocratise religion, because he democratised doctrine—henceforth the divine

¹² *Opp. Calv.*, vi, p. 171.

election chooses believers without distinction of class or knowledge, princes and tailors, doctors and wool-combers, and, making them superior alike to the civil and ecclesiastical hierarchy, opens to this glorious democracy the gates of eternal felicity: because he democratised theological method—henceforth the basis of religious knowledge and certitude is no more scholasticism with its erudition and its syllogisms, but the testimony of the Holy Spirit which makes the humble woman, the artisan (Calvin would say, “not merely a man of the middle class, but the most stupid and rude swine-herd”)¹³ capable of confounding the Sorbonne, its monks and its doctors: because he democratised the Church—hencefore, in no other, even Protestant, Church, will the principle of universal priesthood be pressed so far, abolishing every distinction of superiority, establishing the equality of the pastor and the people, bringing under the censure of the simplest members of the Consistory, the members of the Council of Geneva, the son of Jean d’Albret, even the Duchess of Ferrara. . . .

No, at this time I limit myself to responding: “You are wrong and the sufficient proof is that Calvin democratised religious singing, that is to say, the very voice of religion.”

Before this capital fact, stop, then, a moment and inform yourselves, *et nunc erudimini*, O you professed critics, O you great historians of our social revolutions: it will reveal to you the secret which appears to be as yet unknown to you.

This was the moment when Calvin’s friend, Hotman, published at Geneva his *Franco-Gallia*, that pamphlet which proclaimed the imprescriptible sovereignty of nations over themselves with such vigour that it would be necessary to come down to the *Contrat Social* to find in our literature a republican political work of greater influence. It was the moment when Calvin’s friend, John Knox, published at Geneva that treatise which he himself entitled *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, which made Bloody Mary tremble, and which

¹³ *Opp. Calv.*, v, p. 405: *Responsio ad Sadoleti Epistolam*.

Elizabeth never forgave. It was the moment when Calvin's friend, Goodman, published at Geneva his *How Superior Powers ought to be Obeyed by their Subjects and Wherein they may Lawfully be by God's Word Disobeyed and Resisted*, expounding the right of obedience and of revolt, in which he wrote: "Kings and governors are a part of the people." It was the moment when Calvin's friend, Duplessis Mornay, published at Geneva his *Legitimate power of the Prince towards the People, and of the People towards the Prince*, and closed by summing up the aspirations of all democracy, present and future, in these two words, thenceforth prophetic: Justice and Charity. "Justice demands that hands be laid on tyrants who outrage right; charity requires that hands be extended to the oppressed." It was the moment, finally, when Calvin's friend, disciple, successor, Theodore Beza, published at Geneva his *Rights of Magistrates towards their Subjects*, and concluded: "the people are not born for the magistrates, but, on the contrary, the magistrates for the people."

Now, certainly, this was a good deal! There were formulated the principles of modern democracy, that truly immortal charter, which, conceived in the study of the Rue des Chanoines, and sent out, like our Martyrology, from the presses of Geneva, made its way through Europe, crossed the ocean with the Plymouth Fathers, and returned to France in the giberne of Lafayette, disfigured, no doubt, mutilated, but still recognizable under the title of "Declaration of the Rights of Man", in 1789. It was a good deal: but it was not enough.

For what makes social revolutions is not merely the head of intellectualists; it is especially the heart of peoples.

My thoughts go back to Jericho. The Israelites were assembled, with all their men, with all their forces. They were powerless. The trumpet of faith, the trumpet of the Lord, sounded, and the walls of Jericho fell down.

Stronger than Jericho was in the sixteenth century the citadel of absolutist and sacerdotal aristocracy. Weaker

than the ancient Israel was the hand of that new Israel whom frightful massacres were decimating, and kings and princes were humbling on land and sea. But a sound more powerful than that of all the pamphlets, a sound mysterious and loud, rose from the very bottom of the people's heart and soul,—the Calvinistic Psalms! The King of France heard the Huguenots singing them. The King of Spain heard the Gueux singing them. The King of England heard the Puritans singing them. The Christian democracy, the true democracy, the only democracy which can not merely destroy but rebuild, the Calvinistic democracy, re-awoke all the echoes of the old world, with its notes of vengeance and of triumph. And then,—this was the part of music in the work of Calvin—then, what crumbled was not Jericho,—it was Rome.

Montauban.

ÉMILE DOUMERGUE.