

THE SEVERN FORUM

*Church Music Today:
Is Henry VIII really responsible?*

by

Greg Abrahams

*Organist and choir master,
St Michael's Church, Bishops Cleeve*

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I want to focus on the progress of church music at Parish level, but before I do that I want to cover the background to this as it will have some relevance to my talk.

At a Songs of Praise last year held in St Michael's, Bishop's Cleeve, with members from the Methodist, Catholic, Free Church and Anglican congregations, I gave short talk and demonstration on "Do we really sing the right tune to the words of a hymn?". I demonstrated how we can use one set of words to a well-known tune and change it to another well-known tune. For the demonstration I used the words and music from *The Lord's My Shepherd, O God Our Help in Ages Past* and *Amazing Grace* and put the words to the other's tune. This surprised many in the congregation.

My intention was to focus on the Hymn *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* to the tune **Rockingham**. I deliberately played the hymn badly and asked how many had sung the hymn as I had played it. To my surprise more than half of the seventy in the congregation were prepared to put their hands up.

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss and put contempt on all my pride.

Last verse:

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

When sung to a different tune, **Truro**, the words can take on a different meaning. It was after this that I was asked to prepare a talk for the Winchcombe Arts Festival on Church Music, and this is the basis of this talk.

Music is important to some people in a church service, to others it is superfluous. Hymns are the mainstay of parish congregational worship. So what is a hymn?

To describe what a hymn is, let's make a comparison.

A farmer was in the city on business one weekend. While he was there, he attended one of the city's churches. Upon returning home, his wife asked him what it was like at the city church. "Oh, it was a lot like our country church, except they sang these things called 'praise choruses' instead of hymns."

"Praise choruses? What are those?" asked the wife.

"Well, they're sort of like hymns, just different.

"Different how?"

"Well... it's sort of like this. If I said, Martha, the cows are the corn, it would be a hymn.

"Now if I said, 'Martha, Martha, Martha, the cows, the white cows, the brown cows, the black cows, the cows, the cows, the cows, are in the corn, in the corn, the corn. Oh, Martha, the cows are in the corn,' that would be a praise chorus!"

It just so happened that the same weekend a businessman from the city was in the country and went to a country church. Upon returning home, his wife asked him how the service was. "Pretty much the same as ours, except we sang hymns instead of praise choruses."

"Hymns?" his wife replied, "I think my mother told me about those! What were they like?"

"Oh, sort of like a praise chorus except different."

"And that difference would be?"

"All right, if I were to say, Mary, the cows are in the corn Mary, the cows are in the corn", that would be a praise chorus.

"On the other hand, if I said: 'O Mary, wife of my youth with whom I shall all of my days abide, Incline thine ear and hearken unto my cry! For the cows of varying shades and hues - who can explain their ways? Have left the fields in which they graze and have traversed yonder into the fields of golden corn that gleams in the sun.'

THAT would be a hymn!"

I'd like to point out also that music is a component of the Liturgy - not the Liturgy.

Am I qualified to discuss this potentially sensitive topic? Do people think that being the organist in the Anglican Church I am just passing on the party line? Australian – some people can be territorial about this subject. Son of a Methodist minister. Organist for the monks at Prinknash Abbey for three years. More than fifty years experience as church musician including playing for services in people's homes, prison chaplaincy organist (ten years), university chaplaincy organist (fourteen years), some cathedral experience including organist for visiting choir to cathedrals, training my own parish choir to sing in cathedrals, but my feet are firmly planted in parish work.

The more things change . . .

When I came into this game of church musician some fifty years ago, I was playing Merbecke. Merbecke's setting was written in 1549. You'd think that during the past 450 years there was no change in what happened to church music. 500 years ago at the start of the Reformation, Henry VIII proclaimed himself head of the Church in England (1534) effectively sacking the Catholic Church.

Music was the collateral damage . . .

Up until 1850, you'll be interested to know that the Church of England was not really functioning musically, that the Catholic Church never went away, and it is thanks to the Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterians and Pentecostals, that the Anglican Church has music – and has been playing catch-up ever since.

As a result:

Three main changes:

1. Changes to liturgy and rules for use of music
2. Loss of existing books and manuscripts
3. Destruction of choirs and worshipping communities.

At the time of the Reformation, being a musician was a risky profession, some were burnt at the stake – today it is not so fashionable to cremate their musicians, they just resort now to social media.

I need to stress I am talking about parish music – not cathedral. And I'll try and include as much local content as possible.

Can I have a show of hands Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Clergy, Lay...?

Kyrie XI.

(Orbis Factor)

(X.) XIV.-XVI. s.

1. **K** Y-ri- e * e- lé- i-son. *ijj.*

Chris-te e- lé- i-son. *ijj.*

Ký-ri- e * e- lé- i-son. *ij.*

Ký- ri- e * e- lé- i-son.

The problem with this is that there are 18 notes to 7 syllables

So enter John Merbecke

John Marbecke re-wrote this into a more manageable and singable version.

Lord have mer - cy up - on us Lord have mer - cy up - on us Lord have mer - cy up - on us.

Christ have mer - cy up - on us Christ have mer - cy up - on us, Christ, have mer - cy up - on us

Lord, have mer - cy up - on us, Lord, have mer - cy up - on us, Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

Bishop Hooper – Bishop of Gloucester complained that although it was in English – it still sounded like a Latin Mass. I understand how he feels – after Vatican II I was asked to help a large Catholic church in Brisbane to convert to “the Vernacular”. It still sounded very much like a Latin Mass to me. Interesting reading about Bishop Hooper – he as an advocate of an extreme form of Protestantism – bordering on Puritanism. He didn’t have Graham Kendrick.

Why is one more Catholic than the other, why is it considered that some music should sound more Catholic than other music?

They had a novel way of dealing with this – there will be no music.

Problems with the music

- Difficult for congregation to join in
- Bishop Cranmer in a letter to Henry VIII “In my opinion, the song that should be made there for every syllable a note”. Bishop Cranmer advocated one syllable per note, as later did Bishop Laud.
- Music was more for music than anything else
- Music leads to moral decay (!)
Criticisms still about music today

It is worth noting two facts: The Chapel Royal remained Catholic, and Henry VIII was buried with full Latin Mass with Te Deum.

John Merbecke (whom I mentioned earlier) nearly got burned. On 16th March 1543 his house was searched and some writing of Calvin were seized. Two days later he was summonsed to appear before the Privy Council. Next day he was sent to prison. The charge against Merbecke was that he described the Mass, to which he had contributed with such skill and devotion just few years earlier, as “polluted, deformed sinful and open robbery of the glory of God . . . And that certain and sure is that Christ himself is made in the Mass men’s laughing stock”. The Dean of St George’s acted as judge, jury and executioner, along with various bishops and others whom he later described as “good workers for my dispatch”. He was condemned to die. But on 4th October, some weeks after his co-accused had been burnt at the stake, he was pardoned.

We have a first hand account of the closure of every abbey or monastery. Evesham has a Bible in the Almonry Museum where the closure of the monastery is recorded. John Alcester recorded in his Bible an account of what happened in real time:

“On 30th January in 1539 at Evensong time (Vespers – the sixth of the seven Canonical hours commencing about 6pm). The Magnificat would be approaching thirty minutes into the service. The troops entered the abbey church during the singing of the Magnificat at the point ‘He shall put down the mighty’ and stopped the service at that point. The monks were not allowed to continue any further with the service. The singing was forcibly stopped in the middle of a verse.” This is a fairly vivid illustration of the planned destruction of the music.

The dismantling of Evesham Abbey demonstrates the extent to which the reformation and dissolution were not just about religion, but about power. John Alcester became the Vicar of Hampton, just across the river – now a suburb of Evesham. It is worth a visit to the Almonry Museum to see this bible, to also see a model of the Abbey with *two* parish churches – and both were in use until recent times.

In 1539 the Abbeys were being dismantled, yet in 1543, it was an offence to be in possession of the writing of Calvins – a Protestant. The Abbey closed in 1539 – but Vicars recorded from 1535.

Lincoln Cathedral – 1548: “The choir shall henceforth sing or say not anthems of our Lady or other saints, but only of our Lord, and them not in Latin but choosing out the best and most sounding to Christian religion, that they shall turn the same into English, setting thereunto a plain and distinct note, for every syllable one. They shall sing them and none other.”

Closing down of places with choirs had come to an end. Forty remained, 29 Cathedral, colleges and chapels, private chapels. The biggest and best funded was the Chapel Royal.

January 1550, Parishes were ordered to surrender their libraries. One Winchester church sold its library for waste paper for 9s for 1.5 hundred weight – less than half the fine of they kept just one book. 168 pounds. The authorities finally realised that the parish church needed someone to regularise what was do-able in the parish – hence the setting by John Merbecke. Also 1550, Sternhold introduced the metrical psalm. The modern day version of the metrical psalm is 23rd Psalm to Crimond. The metrical psalm was initially written for private devotions.

Tallis's Third Mode Melody – written for Psalm 2 for Archbishop Parker's Psalter 1557

Vaughan Williams wrote a Fantasia on this theme. I need to stress, this was not allowed in worship.

Why fum'th in fight, the Gentiles spite, In fury raging stout?
Why tak'th in hand the people fond, vain things to bring about?
The kings arise, the lords devise, In counsels met there-to,
Against the Lord with false accord, against his Christ they go.

Taken from the Bible

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together
against the Lord (and against his anointed, saying,
'Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles'.)

Pronunciation would be different – HAND = FOND (found). This is really nursery rhyme stuff. Mary had a little lamb/Mary, Mary, quite contrary.

In 1584, Sternhold & Hopkins released another edition – 23rd Psalm Psalm 22 for the Catholics. In this Psalter, there is no music for this Psalm but the reader is referred to another Psalm for its music. Remember how I talked earlier about swapping the music and words. A system was devised where the words were written to a certain metre, and if a tune is also written to the same metre, then the words and tune should be interchangeable.

Declaration of Sports, order issued by King James I of England for use in Lancashire to resolve a conflict, on the subject of Sunday recreations, between the Puritans and the gentry, many of whom were Roman Catholics. Being gentry and more than likely land owners, they were able to maintain their own chapel – much the same as the now parish church in Southam. Permission was given for dancing, archery, leaping and vaulting, and for “having of May games, Whitsun ales and Morris dances, and the setting up of May-poles and other sports therewith used, so as the same may be had in due and convenient time without impediment or neglect of divine service, and that women shall have leave to carry rushes to church for the decorating of it.” On the other hand, “bear and bull-baiting, interludes, and (at all times in the meane sort of people by law prohibited) bowling” were not to be permitted on Sunday. In 1618 James ordered all English clergy to read the declaration from the pulpit, but so strong was the Puritan opposition to Sunday amusements that he prudently withdrew his command. In 1633 Charles I not only directed the republication of his father's declaration but insisted upon the reading of it by the clergy. Many of the clergy were punished for refusing to obey the injunction. When Charles was overthrown during the English Civil Wars, Puritan prohibitions against sports and games on the Sabbath again prevailed until Charles II was restored in 1660.

Matthew, Mark & Luke's account of Jesus walking through the corn fields and his disciples were accused of working on the Sabbath as they picked the corn to eat. “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”

“Puritan” became a term of insult. Compare with Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* – Sit Toby Belch called Malvolio a Puritan for trying to stop him waking up the entire house with his boozy partying.

Does anyone watch *Upstart Crow*? – apparently what Shakespeare was called when he was putting on his plays. In a recent episode Shakespeare’s take on the Reformation “One lot of men in silly hats persecuting another lot in equally silly hats while worshiping the same God.” More seriously was Shakespeare giving his take on the Reformation in the play *The Merchant of Venice*.

My name is about as Jewish as you can get. I traced the name back to the Lincoln area where there was a large Jewish community. At the time of the Reformation, a lot of Jews thought it better to convert to Christianity. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock the Jew was asking, why is he any different to others just because he was a Jew. If we change Jew to Catholic, it really is much the same dialogue.

Things keep deteriorating – church music was somehow expected to be dull, lasted well into the Victorian period. Arthur Sullivan who wrote the music for many light musical (Gilbert & Sullivan) was also the organist at St Paul’s Cathedral – yet his church music was dull and boring in comparison to his light musical productions.

Worship Experience

1760

- **Still no organ** Orchestral instruments were used. When the Psalm was sung – actually chanted - the vicar left the service – run by the clerk. Apparently the vicar changed or added something to his robes.
- **Three Decker Pulpit** Music duties were run by a clerk. The psalm was sung as call and response. The clerk would call a line and the congregation would respond. These weren’t sung but chanted as singing was not really permitted. Compare with today’s modern worship led by a worship leader and the screen with people singing out as opposed congregations with hymn book and private worship.
- **West Gallery Choir** Amusing anecdote – spat between the choir and vicar. Vicar replaced his regular choir with school girls. In the meantime the adult singers decamped to the Meeting House where they were very welcome and the gallery was enlarged to accommodate them – they had joined the Methodists – here comes the Cavalry – thank God for the Methodists. Charles Wesley wrote some 6,000 hymns – 9,000 if you count the devotional poems – it is difficult to describe a Methodist hymn, but it was a change from the short words and nursery imagery of the Sternhold and Hopkins. The metres used were more complex. It was still any words to any tune. Isaac Watts and the Wesleys were the most important people in hymn writing yet they were not musicians. Their words were written for recognised tunes.

Early 1800s

- 1814 Psalms still only legitimate form of singing in the CoE
- 1819, Revd Thomas Cottrill published his own hymn book .His parishioners took him to court – and lost. Hymns were now legal.

1850

- Catholicism re-established
- The model of service for Anglicans comes from this period
- Variety of services
- High/Low church
- Where to start to introduce music into Anglican Worship

Low Church – St Pancras congregation of 2000 led by Parish Clerk

High Church – St Anne’s Soho – choir of 64, not much congregation involvement.

War broke out between organists and congregations – problems in reconciling the differing aims of choirs and congregations. Should Psalms and Canticles be sung by the choir or the congregation – should Anglican Chant or Gregorian Plainsong be used. The Vicar of St Alban’s Holborn was prosecuted for kneeling, facing east, using candles and incense. And a few clergy even went to prison. Even more Anglican Psalters appeared but with no rules on how to use them.

Census of 1851 – C o E 50%, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists – 48%, Catholic – 2%
Choirs and Organs installed.

1864 – College of Organists – now Royal College of Organists

1872 – College of Church Music – now Royal College of Church Music - up till now articles about church music written in magazines.

Musicians – Elgar, Parry, both reasonably local but well known.

Westminster Hymnal , Beneath this veil, Tune St Catherine – Faith of our Father’s Meth,

O Sacred Heart –Catholic Hymnal,Rockingham – Catholic hymnal.

Contemporary Worship

- 1957
- Geoffrey Beaumont, Richard Appleford
- 20th Century Light Music.
- Instead of the ancient, grave, solemn music . . . a concert was introduced . . . better suiting a tavern . . . than a church (1662)
- A thoroughly alien importation and self conscious parasite . . . together with the incidental noise and ironmongery which seems to be a necessary part of its presentation, can be quickly dismissed as an irrelevant and mercifully transient stunt. (1970)

Change has its critics

Can you date when these were written?

The Methodist Times asked if beat services and pop hymns were turning services in entertainments. “If such services are organised effectively and efficiently, they need not necessarily be entertainments.”

The Grail Community and their Psalms – Catholic congregation will be familiar with these.

Initially translated from the Hebrew and arranged for singing to the psalmody of Joseph Gelineau – first published in 1963

On very much a personal opinion, this is where I feel the Catholic church has the edge when it comes to worship music. The Anglican church seems stuck on the idea of putting non-metrical words to metrical and it is not a successful mix. Service music only works within an act of worship.

Demonstrating it out of an act of worship makes it a performance, which it is not meant to be.

This is taken from Catholic worship music and we sing it in an Anglican service very successfully. I have repointed the words here to give it more flow and there is a response for the congregation to sing. The Psalm can be sung by a cantor or choir with the congregation singing the response. By way of introduction, the response is played over on the organ, the choir then sing the response, the

congregation then sing the response, the choir then sings a verse, the congregation then sing the response.

Joseph Gelineau (Champ-sur-Layon, Maine-et-Loire, 31 October 1920 – Sallanches, 8 August 2008) was a French Catholic Jesuit priest and composer, mainly of modern Christian liturgical music. He was a member of the translation committee for *La Bible de Jérusalem* (1959). Having entered the Society of Jesus in 1941, Gelineau studied theology at a Catholic seminary in Lyon and music in Paris. He was one of the founders of the international study group on music and liturgy *Universa Laus*. Heavily influenced by Gregorian chant, he developed his Gelineau psalmody which is used worldwide. Later he composed numerous chants for the ecumenical French Taizé Community.

Summary

- **Reformation started during Henry VIII's reign** – is he responsible? I don't think so, a Reformation would have happened either then or within a short time after.
- **Elizabeth I managed to calm things down a bit** After a rocky period during Edward's and Mary's short reigns, Elizabeth seemed to calm things for a period of fifty years.
- **Civil wars and Puritan influence** Then we had Civil Wars and the Puritan influence to really stifle progress.
- **1850 onwards the church has tried to reform and find a place for music.** Since the 1850's we have seen some of the old music return and some experiments with modern music and worship. Sadly today we still have the arguments from 500 years ago

In conclusion

The more things change the more they stay the same Over the past 500 years, in some areas there has been considerable change, introduction of the Metrical Psalm and Hymns, but the arguments we have about church music have been the same for that period of time.

Music was the collateral damage . . . For some reason, some people think if it sounds "Catholic", then we can't have it. I wasn't aware that the Catholic Church had a monopoly on "church music"

Three main changes:

1. Changes to liturgy and rules for use of music – some of which some people consider central to our worship. In some places the wearing of vestments is frowned on.
2. Loss of existing books and manuscripts.
3. Destruction of choirs and worshipping communities.

With the enforced destruction of the music pre-Reformation, we have lost a great heritage of the Church's music. With the destruction of choirs and worshipping communities, even at Parish level, quality worship has not yet been re-instated.