

# Music of the Reformation Era

October 11, 2020  
Metrical Psalms of Calvinism

“Calvinism” describes a major division of Protestant Christians who follow the theological traditions and practices of John Calvin and his successors. Calvin’s teachings expand on Martin Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith alone and emphasizes the grace of God and the doctrine of predestination. Calvin held that “if the Word of God is the sole basis for faith and practice, then congregational singing should not merely be 'based' on the words of scripture, but should incorporate the very words of scripture as God gave them to holy men of old.”



French composer and music theorist Loys “Louis” Bourgeois is famous as one of the main compilers of Calvinist hymn tunes in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is one of the three main composers of the hymn tunes in the Genevan Psalter. In Bourgeois’ original version of the Genevan Psalter, the music was monophonic<sup>1</sup>, in accordance with the dictates of John Calvin, who disapproved not only of counterpoint<sup>2</sup>, but of any multiple parts. He later provided four-part harmonizations, but they were reserved for singing and playing at home.

This morning’s prelude will be sung and accompanied by organ. You should recognize the tune fairly quickly as it is one of the best known melodies in all Christian musical traditions. We know it today as *Old 100<sup>th</sup>* or the *Doxology*. The text is a metrical<sup>3</sup> version of Psalm 134, written for the Genevan Psalter in ca. 1551. *Old 100<sup>th</sup>* is written in “long metre.” Long metre is understood to mean that there are four lines in each stanza, consisting of 8 syllables for each line. You may notice a series of numbers at the bottom of a hymnal page noting this as “8.8.8.8.”

## ORIGINAL FRENCH

*Or sus, serviteurs du Seigneur  
Vous qui de nuit en son bonneur  
Dedans sa maison le servez,  
Louez-le, et son nom eslevez:*

*Levez le mains au plus saint lieu  
De ce tressaint temple de Dieu,  
Et le los qu’il a merité  
Soit par vos bouches recité.*

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Arise, you servants of the Lord.  
you who by night in his honor.  
serve him in his house,  
praise him, and lift up his name.

Lift up your hands to the holiest place  
of this most holy temple of God,  
and may the praise that he deserves  
be recited by your mouths.

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## NEXT WEEK’S PRELUDE ANTHEMS OF ANGLICANISM

*If Ye Love Me*  
by Thomas Tallis

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1. Monophonic – consisting of a single musical line, without accompaniment.
  2. Counterpoint – the relationship between two or more musical lines (or voices) which are harmonically interdependent yet independent in rhythm and melodic contour.
  3. Metrical – relating to or composed in a poetic meter.