

The Preface.¹

The singing of Psalmes, though it breath forth nothing but holy harmony, and melody: yet such is the subtilty of the enemie, and the enmity of our nature against the Lord, & his wayes, that our hearts can finde matter of discord in this harmony, and crotchets of division in this holy melody. -for- There have been three questions especially stirring concerning singing. First. what psalmes are to be sung in churches? whether Davids and other scripture psalmes, or the psalmes invented by the gifts of godly men in every age of the church. Secondly, if scripture psalmes, whether in their owne words, or in such meter as english poetry is wont to run in? Thirdly · by whom are they to be sung? whether by the whole churches together with their voices? or by one man singing alone and the rest joyning in silence, & in the close saying amen.

Touching the first, certainly the singing of Davids psalmes was an acceptable worship of God, not only in his owne, but in succeeding times. as in Solomons time *2 Chron. 5.13.* in Iehosaphats time *2 chron. 20.21.* in Ezra his time *Ezra 3.10,11.* and the text is evident in Hezekiahs time they are commanded to sing praise in the words of David and Asaph, *2 chron. 29,30.* which one place may serve to resolve two of the questions (the first and the last) at once. for this commandement was it cerimoniall or morall? some things in it indeed were cerimoniall, as their musicall instruments &c but what ceremony was there in singing prayse with the words of David and Asaph? what if David was a type of Christ, was Asaph also? was every thing of David typicall? are his words (which are of morall, universall, and perpetuall authority in all nations and ages) are they typicall? what type can be imagined in making use of his songs to prayse the Lord? If they were typicall because the ceremony of musicall instruments was joyned with them, then their prayers were also typicall, because they had that ceremony of incense admixt with them: but wee know that prayer then was a morall duty, notwithstanding the incense; and soe singing those psalmes notwithstanding their musicall instruments. Beside, that which was typicall (as that they were sung with musicall instruments, by the twenty-foure orders of Priests and Levites. *1 Chron 25.9*) must have the morall and spirituall accomplishment in the new Testament, in all the Churches of the Saints principally, who are made kings & priests *Rev 1.6.* and are the first fruits unto God. *Rev. 14.4.* as the Levites were *Num. 3.45.* with hearts & lippes, in stead of musicall instruments, to prayse the Lord; who are set forth (as some iudiciously thinke) *Rev. 4.4.* by twenty foure Elders, in the ripe age of the Church, *Gal. 4.1,2,3.* answering to the twenty foure orders of Priests and Levites *1 chron. 25.9.* Therefore not some select members, but the whole Church is commaunded to teach one another in all the severall sorts of Davids psalmes, some being called by himselfe מזמורים: psalms, some תהילים: Hymns, some שירים: spirituall songs. soe that if the singing Davids psalmes be a morall duty & therefore perpetuall; then wee under the new Testament are bound to sing them as well as they under the old: and if wee are expresly commanded to sing Psalmes, Hymnes, and spirituall songs, then either wee must sing Davids psalmes, or else may affirm they are not spirituall songs: which being penned by an extraordinary

¹*Editor's Note: This text comes from the first edition of 1640. We have modified the original in only two ways: 1) we have modernized the type, so that letters such as s and n appear in their modern forms; where the consonantal i appears in the original, we have retained it here; 2) we have corrected minor irregularities of spacing (as when spaces appear before a period).*

gift of the Spirit, for the sake especially of Gods spirituall Israell; not to be read and preached only (as other parts of holy writ) but to be sung also, they are therefore most spirituall, and still to be sung of all the Israell of God: and verily as their sin is exceeding great, who will allow Davids psalmes (as other scriptures) to be read in churches (which is one end) but not to be preached also, (which is another end) soe their sin is crying before God, who will allow them to be read and preached, but seeke to deprive the Lord of the glory of the third end of them, which is to sing them in christian churches.

obj. 1 If it be sayd that the Saints in the primitive Church did compile spirituall songs of their owne inditing, and sing them before the Church. I Cor. 14,15,16.

Ans. We answer first, that those Saints compiled these spirituall songs by the extraordinary gifts of the spirit (common in those dayes) whereby they were inabled to praise the Lord in strange tongues, wherin learned *Paraus* proves those psalmes were uttered, in his Comment on that place *vers 14* which extraordinary gifts, if they were still in the Churches, wee should allow them the like liberty now. Secondly, suppose those psalmes were sung by an ordinary gift (which wee suppose cannot be evicted) doth it therefore follow that they did not, & that we ought not to sing Davids psalmes? must the ordinary gifts of a private man quench the spirit still speaking to us by the extraordinary gifts of his servant David? there is not the least foot-step of example, or precept, or colour reason for such a bold practise.

obj. 2. Ministers are allowed to pray conceived prayers, and why not to sing conceived psalmes? must wee not sing in the spirit as well as pray in the spirit?

Ans. First because every good minister hath not a gift of spirituall poetry to compose extemporary psalmes as he hath of prayer. Secondly. Suppose he had, yet seeing psalmes are to be sung by a joynt consent and harmony of all the Church in heart and voyce (as wee shall prove) this cannot be done except he that composeth a psalme, bringeth into the Church set formes of psalmes of his owne invention; for which wee finde no warrant or president in any ordinary officers of the Church throughout the sciptures. Thirdly. Because the booke of psalmes is so compleat a System of psalmes, which the Holy-Ghost himselfe in infinite wisdom hath made to suit all the conditions, necessityes, temptations, affections, &c. of men in all ages; (as most of all our interpreters on the psalmes have fully and perticularly cleared) therefore by this the Lord seemeth to stoppe all mens mouths and mindes ordinarily to compile or sing any other psalmes (under colour that that the ocasions and conditions of the Church are new) &c. for the publick use of the Church, seing, let our condition be what it will, the Lord himselfe hath supplied us with farre better; and therefore in Hezekiahs time, though doubtlesse there were among them those which had extraordnary gifts to compile new songs on those new ocasions, as Isaiah and Micah &c. yet wee read that they are commanded to sing in the words of David and Asaph, which were ordinarily to be used in the publick worship of God: and wee doubt not but those that are wise will easily see; that those set formes of psalmes of Gods owne appoyntment not of mans conceived gift or humane imposition were sung in the Spirit by those holy Levites, as well as their prayers were in the spirit which themselves conceived, the Lord not then binding them therein to any set formes; and shall set formes of psalmes appoynted of God not be sung in the spirit now, which others did then?

Question. But why may not one compose a psalme & sing it alone with a loud voice & the rest joyne with him in silence and in the end say Amen?

Ans. If such a practise was found in the Church of Corinth, when any had a psalme suggested by an extraordinary gift; yet in singing ordinary psalmes the whole Church is to ioyne together in heart and voyce to prayse the Lord. -for-

First. Davids psalmes as hath beene shewed, were sung in heart and voyce together by the twenty foure orders of the musicians of the Temple, who typed out the twenty foure Elders all the members especially of christian Churches *Rev* 5.8. who are made Kings and Priests to God to prayse him as they did: for if there were any other order of singing Choristers beside the body of the people to succeed those, the Lord would doubtlesse have given direction in the gospell for their quallification, election, maintainance &c. as he did for the musicians of the Temple, and as his faithfullnes hath done for all other church officers in the new Testament.

Secondly. Others beside the Levites (the chiefe Singers) in the Iewish Church did also sing the Lords songs; else why are they commanded frequently to sing: as in *ps.* 100, 1,2,3. *ps.* 95,1,2,3. *ps.* 102 · title. with *vers* 18. & *Ex.* 15.1. not only Moses but all Israell sang that song, they spake saying (as it is in the *orig.*) all as well as Moses, the women also as well as the men. v.20 21. and *duet.* 32. (whereto some thinke, Iohn had reference as well as to *Ex.* 15.1. when he brings in the protestant Churches getting the victory over the Beast with harps in their hands and singing the song of Moses. *Rev.* 15.3.) this song Moses is commanded not only to put it into their hearts but into their mouths also: *deut.* 31.19. which argues, they were with their mouths to sing it together as well as with their hearts.

Thirdly. Isaiah foretells in the dayes of the new Testament that Gods watchmen and desolate lost soules, (signified by wast places) should with their voices sing together, *Isa.* 52. 8,9. and *Rev.* 7. 9,10. the song of the Lamb was by many together, and the Apostle expresly commands the singing of Psalmes, Himnes, &c. not to any select christians, but to the whole Church *Eph.* 5.19. *coll.* 3.16. Paule & Silas sang together in private *Acts.* 16.25. and must the publick hear only one man sing? to all these wee may adde the practise of the primitive Churches; the testimony of ancient and holy *Basil* is in stead of many *Epist.* 63. When one of us (saith he) hath begun a psalme, the rest of us set in to sing with him, all of us with one heart and one voyce; and this saith he is the common practise of the Churches in Egypt, Lybia, Thebes, Palestina, Syria and those that dwell on Euphrates, and generally every where, where singing of psalmes is of any account. To the same putpose also *Eusebius* gives witnes, *Eccles. Hist. lib.* 2. *cap.* 17. The objections made against this doe most of them plead against joyning to sing in heart as well as in voyce, as that by this meanes others out of the Church will sing as also that wee are not alway in a sutable estate to the matter sung, & likewise that all cannot sing with understanding; shall not therefore all that have understanding ioyne in heart and voyce together? are not all the creatures in heaven, earth, seas: men, beasts, fishes, foules &c. commanded to praise the Lord, and yet none of these but men, and godly men too, can doe it with spirituall understanding?

As for the scruple that some take at the translation of the book of psalmes into meeter, because Davids psalmes were sung in his owne words without meeter: wee answer- First · There

are many verses together in several psalmes of David which run in rithmes (as those that know the hebrew and as Buxtorf shows *Thesau.* pa. 629.) which shews at least the lawfullnes of singing psalmes in english rithmes.

Secondly. The psalmes are penned in such verses as are sutable to the poetry of the hebrew language, and not in the common style of such other bookes of the old Testament as are not poetically; now no protestant doubteth but that all the bookes of the scripture should by Gods ordinance be extant in the mother tongue of each nation, that they may be understood of all, hence the psalmes are to be translated into our english tongue; and if in our english tongue wee are to sing them, then as all our english songs (according to the course of our english poetry) do run in metre, soe ought Davids psalmes to be translated into meeter, that soe wee may sing the Lords songs, as in our english tongue soe in such verses as are familiar to an english eare which are commonly metricall: and as it can be no just offence to any good conscience to sing Davids hebrew songs in english words, soe neither to sing his poetically verses in english poetically metre: men might as well stumble at singing the hebrew psalmes in our english tunes (and not in the hebrew tunes) as at singing them in english meeter, (which are our verses) and not in such verses as are generally used by David according to the poetry of the hebrew language: but the truth is, as the Lord hath hid from us the hebrew tunes, lest wee should think ourselves bound to imitate them; soe also the course and frame (for the most part) of their hebrew poetry, that wee might think ourselves bound to imitate that, but that every nation without scruple might follow as the graver sort of tunes of their owne country songs, soe the graver sort of verses of their owne country poetry.

Neither let any think, that for the meetre sake wee have taken liberty or poetically licence to depart from the true and proper sence of Davids words in the hebrew verses, noe; but it hath bene one part of our religious care and faithfull indeavour, to keepe close to the originall text.

As for other obiections taken from the difficulty of *Ainsworths* tunes, and the corruptions in our common psalme books, wee hope they are answered in this new edition of psalmes which wee here present to God and his Churches. For although wee have cause to blesse God in many respects for the religious indeavors of the translators of the psalmes into meetre usually annexed to our Bibles, yet it is not unknowne to the godly learned that they have rather presented a paraphrase then the words of David translated according to the rule *2 chron. 29. 30.* and that their addition to the words, detractions from the words are not seldome and rare, but very frequent and many times needles, (which we suppose would not be approved of if the psalmes were so translated into prose) and that their variations of the sence, and alterations of the sacred text too frequently, may iustly minister matter of offence to them that are able to compare the translation with the text; of which failings, some iudicious have oft complained, others have been grieved, wherupon it hath bin generally desired, that as wee doe inioye other, soe (if it were the Lords will) wee might inioye this ordinance also in its native purity: wee have therefore done our indeavour to make a plaine and familiar translation of the psalmes and words of David into english metre, and have not soe much as presumed to paraphrase to give the sence of his meaning in other words; we have therefore attended heerein as our chief guide the originall, shunning all additions, except such as the best translators of them in prose supply, avoiding all materiall detractions from words or sence. The word *and* which wee translate *and* as it is redundant sometime in the Hebrew, soe sometime (though not very often) it hath been left out, and yet not then, if the sence were not faire without it.

As for our translations, wee have with our english Bibles (to which next to the Originall wee have had respect) used the Idioms of our owne tongue in stead of Hebraismes, lest they might seeme english barbarismes.

Synonimaes wee use indifferently: as *folk* for *people*, and *Lord* for *Iehovah*, and sometime (though seldome) *God* for *Iehovah*; for which (as for some other interpretations of places cited in the new Testament) we have the scriptures authority ps. 14. with 53. Heb. 1.6. with psalme 97.7. Where a phrase is doubtfull wee have followed that which (in our owne apprehension) is most genuine & edifying:

Somtime we have contracted, sometime dilated the same hebrew word, both for the sence and the verse sake: which dilatation wee conceive to be no paraphrasticall addition no more then the contraction of a true and full translation to be any unfaithfull detraction or diminution: as when wee dilate *who healeth* and say *he it is who healeth*; soe when we contract, *those that stand in awe of God* and say *Gods fearers*.

Lastly. Because some hebrew words have a more full and emphaticall signification then any one english word can or doth sometime expresse, hence wee have done that sometime which faithfull translators may doe, *viz.* not only to translate the word but the emphasis of it; as אֱלֹהִים *mighty God*, for *God*. בָּרַךְ *humbly blesse* for *blesse*; *rise to stand*, psalm 1. for *stand*; *truth and faithfullnes* for *truth*. Howbeit, for the verse sake wee doe not alway thus, yet wee render the word truly though not fully; as when wee sometime say *reioyce* for *shout for ioye*.

As for all other changes of numbers, tenses, and characters of speech, they are such as either the hebrew will unforcedly beare, or our english forceably calls for, or they no way change the sence; and such are printed usually in an other character.

If therefore the verses are not alwayes so smooth and elegant as some may desire or expect; let them consider that Gods Altar needs not our pollishings: Ex. 20. for wee have respected rather a plaine translation, then to smooth our verses with the sweetnes of any paraphrase, and soe have attended Conscience rather than Elegance, fidelity rather then poetry, in translating the hebrew words into english language, and Davids poetry into english meetre;

that soe wee may sing in Sion the Lords
songs of prayse according to his owne
will; untill hee take us from hence,
and wipe away all our teares, &
bid us enter into our masters
ioye to sing eternall
Halleluiahs.