

N^o 8
*The Use and Benefit of Church-Musick,
towards quickning our Devotion.*

A ✓

S E R M O N

Preach'd in the Cathedral-Church of

G L O U C E S T E R,

At the Anniversary Meeting of the
Three Choirs, *Gloucester, Worcester,*
and *Hereford.* September 9, 1724.

By HENRY ABBOT, *M. A. Chaplain to the
Right Honourable ALLEN, Lord BATHURST.*

Publish'd at the Request of the Audience.

L O N D O N: Ⓟ

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and *Hereford,* 1724.

To the Right Honourable
A L L E N,
Lord BATHURST.

My LORD,

TO oppose my own Judgment to the favourable Opinion of my Audience, I thought would savour too much of Self-sufficiency; and break that Harmony I so much Recommend.

Being therefore influenced to publish this Discourse, I was naturally led to your Lordship's Patronage; and knowing you to be not only an Admirer, but a great Encourager of Musick, and to be a true Son of the Established Church, (where God is Worshipped in the Beauty of Holiness,) I presume to offer this small Essay upon that Subject to your Lordship: humbly hoping, that as the Author never has been, so his poor Labours never will be denied Your Protection.

When

The DEDICATION.

When I have had the Honour of attending your Lordship ; the entire Affection I observed between You, and your noble Consort, and that filial Duty and Respect towards that pious Lady your Mother, mixed with an impartial Love towards all your most accomplish'd Children, (Virtues too often wanted amongst the Great) I always thought an undeniable Proof of the Harmony of your Mind, and what most justly entitles you to an Essay of this Nature.

That the blessing of Health may long continue to your Lordship ; that you may see your beautiful Off-spring proceed in those principles of Virtue and Greatness, press those Footsteps you so happily mark out to them, and prove additional Blessings to your Country, in the Interest of which, you have so eminently distinguished yourself, is the hearty Prayer of,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's most Dutiful,
and most Obedient Chaplain,

Gloucester, Nov. 3. 1724.

HENRY ABBOT.

PSALM 81. 1, 2.

*Sing we merrily unto GOD our
Strength, make a chearful Noise
unto the God of Jacob. Take
the Psalm, bring hither the Ta-
bret, the merry Harp with the
Lute.*

TH E Excellence and Usefulness of
the Book of *Psalms* seems recom-
mended by the Wisdom of our
Church, with a distinguishing
Concern, to our Study and Remembrance;
by having a much greater Share in divine
Worship, than any other Part of the Holy
Scriptures. Here the Foundations of Chri-
stianity are so perspicuously laid, that no
Book in the Old Testament is referred to
so often, throughout the whole Course of the
New;

New: No Exigence of our Souls, no Condition of Person or Fortune, no Mercy we can desire, none that we would return thanks for, no posture of Affairs in Church or State, of our Friends, or of our Enemies; but these Psalms will regulate our Behaviour under them, and suggest seasonable Supplications for them.

Without any farther Preface therefore I shall make no Apology for the Choice of my Text; because these annual Meetings, which are chiefly designed to support the Dignity and Benefit of Church-Musick, as well as to propagate Friendship and Charity, * naturally lead me to such a Subject.

And here I shall endeavour to speak,

I. Of Harmony, or Musick in general.

II. Of what Use it is towards exciting our Devotion, and to answer some Objections that are made against it. And,

I. Of Harmony or Musick in general:

Praises and Thanksgivings are the natural Tribute of a Creature to his God; no

* Between 30 and 40 l. collected at the Church-doors, for the Use of poor Clergymens Widows and Children.

Day nor Hour passes, but affords an ample Subject for these pious Exercises. The ordinary Course of Providence, and the daily Refreshments of Nature call for these Duties; which never ascend to the Throne of Grace in so acceptable a Manner, as from the united Voices of Christian Assemblies. By them the vast Expanse of Heaven is perfumed with Incense; by them we shew forth a Communion of Saints: And however they are disesteemed by some melancholy Divines, they most certainly become the Altar. Harmony is coæval with Eternity, derives its Foundation from the blessed Trinity, and is beautifully expressed in all the Orders of Beings. By Harmony, the grand Materials of the World were drawn from their confused Retirements, and placed in that Regularity so visible in every Part of the Creation. By Harmony, the rich Furniture of the Heavens keep their proper Stations, so as not to invade one another's Orbs, but roll on in the same Friendship and Brightness as when they first began their Course. Look round the World, turn over the large Volume of the Universe; and you will see nothing but Harmony, which looks like an Emanation from the fountain of divine Love:

Musick (which is Harmony expressed by Sounds) is the very Voice of Nature; by which

which the little Birds communicate their Sentiments of Love, they warm the Passions in each others Breasts by their warbling Notes, and according to their Skill make as different Impressions upon those of their own Kind, as the Eloquence of an Orator upon a rational Audience. Here the *Nightingale* seems remarkable for Love, as the *Thrush* for Loyalty ; the rebel Flock of *Ravens* and *Daws* by their hoarse Croaking shew they are Enemies to Musick, and Emblems of those unharmonious Souls that delight in nothing but Blood and Rapine.

To enter into a philosophical Disquisition of the Nature of Sounds, and how differently they raise, or operate upon the Passions, is not within the Compass of my Time : yet 'tis manifest, to every common Observation, that as softer Musick inspires Love and Devotion, the martial Sounds of the Drum and Trumpet enflame the Soldiers breasts with Courage, and so emboldens them, that no Danger can stop their Enterprizes ; but they Fight even in, and for their Graves.

The Ancients differ so much about the first inventors of Musick, some ascribing it to *Terpander*, others to *Clonus*, others to *Apollo* ; that I shall not enter upon the enquiry nor consider what Analogy sounds bear to arithmetical Proportion, least I wade beyond

yond my Depth. Those who are curious about these Matters, and desirous of knowing the original of Sounds, and progress of the Gamut, I refer to the learned *Plutarch*; who will much better satisfy their Curiosity, than can be expected from the Pulpit.—

But thus far I must observe, that, let who will be the first Inventer of Musick, the impulsive Cause was the same in all, *viz.* To sing Praises to their Gods, and to encourage their Soldiers in the Day of Battle. From these primary Observations the Art has been so improved, as to touch the tenderer Passions; even Demoniacs themselves have been forced to confess the powerful Charms of Musick, or *Saul* had never felt such Relief as he did from *David's* Harp.

That there is something of Majesty, something great, and divine in Musick; *Aristotle* thus labours to convince the World. Harmony (says he) descended from Heaven, and is of a noble and divine Nature; by Harmony the Senses operate in the Body, being of celestial and divine Extraction; insomuch that the slow *Adagio* so lulls the Passions, that you could even die upon the Sound, whilst the brisk *Allegro* in another Strain shall carry you to the very Top of Gallantry.

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The Consideration of these different Movements might occasion *Pythagoras*, and the ancient *Greeks*, to be so careful in teaching their Children Musick ; thinking it requisite to form and compose their Minds, to what was decent, sober, and virtuous. But *Plato* complain'd in his Days, (I will not pretend to say how applicable it is to our own,) that the Men of Art contemning the ancient Majesty of Musick, instead of those manly, grave, and heavenly Notes, so acceptable to their Deities, brought into their Theatres a sort of effeminate, musical Tattling, meer Sounds without Substance, which he utterly rejects; as inefficacious to the original Design of inciting Men to all sober and serious Actions. Thus far the Heathens had a Notion of this divine Art.

But a Christian that will give himself Time to reflect, will find that Praises and Thanksgivings, so recommended in my Text, are the most necessary Parts of Devotion; and that the Blessings of each Day, whether ordinary or extraordinary, do in some Proportion demand them. *e. g.* The constant rising and setting of the Sun, by which Day and Night have their alternate Returns, the one for Labour, the other for Rest and Sleep, by which our Bodies are refreshed to renew their Toil: The regular
Motion

Motion of that great Luminary thro' the Signs of the Zodiack; the strength of whose refreshing Beams distinguishes Spring and Summer, Autumn and Winter; the different Temperatures of which Seasons contribute as much to the Health of the Body, as their variety to the Entertainment of the Fancy. This View likewise represents the several Stages of Life; Spring shews the verdure of Infancy and Childhood; Summer the gaiety and vigour of Youth; whilst Autumn ripens us into the maturity of Wisdom and Judgment; and Winter carries us leisurely into our Declensions, grey Hairs, old Age, and the Grave: These, tho' the ordinary Revolutions of Nature, call for our daily Praises. But when some extraordinary Deliverance from imminent Danger, or some unexpected Blessing happens to us; how much more ought we to exert ourselves in Praises and Thanksgivings! A Deliverance from the Ruin, Destruction, and Havock of a bloody War; a Deliverance from a raging Pestilence by a destroying Angel, the blessing of a plentiful Crop, and a joyful and seasonable Harvest, when the Vallies shall stand so thick with Corn, that they shall laugh and sing; these, and other Favours of the like extraordinary Nature, call both for our Praises and Thanksgivings.

In short, to praise God is acknowledged by all devout Christians, to be the Top and Flower of divine Worship; 'tis the Religion of happy Creatures, and the natural Homage due to infinite Goodness, which is the most glorious Perfection of the Deity. It exercises the best Passions of our Souls in the most perfect Manner, Love, Joy, Reverence, and Admiration, which are most proper for Devotion, and the only Acts of Religion we shall perform, when we arrive at the Regions of Happiness, when we shall have put off Mortality and Corruption, and all other Wants with them; when a complete and consummate Happiness shall leave no more place for Desire; when we shall have nothing to ask of God, nothing more to expect, but the secure Possession and Enjoyment of those immortal Pleasures, which satisfy every Faculty of the Soul, are eternally repeated, and eternally new. I say in such a State as this, where Faith will be turned into Sight, and Hope into Enjoyment, the petitionary Part of Prayer, which is so great a part of the Worship of Sinners, and indigent Creatures, will all be turned into Praise and Thanksgiving. Now, as St. *Paul* for this Reason prefers *Charity*, before *Faith* and *Hope*, because tho' they are admirable Graces for the State of Christians

in this World, and absolutely necessary to carry them to Heaven; yet they cannot enter into Heaven themselves, where Charity attains its greatest Glory and Perfection; so by the same Reason it appears that Praises and Thanksgivings are the most excellent Part of Divine Worship, because they are the Religion of glorified Spirits; and therefore ought to be the chief Delight and Entertainment of those that hope to bear a part in the heavenly Choir: for we daily Pray, that God's Will may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

II. Having spoken thus much of Musick in general, I crave your Patience, while in the second Place, I say something of our Cathedral Worship, and of what Use, and Benefit, Musick is towards exciting, and quickning our Devotion; and to answer some Objections that are made against it.

The Reason, which the judicious *Hooker* gives for introducing Musick into our Worship, (without any Reference to the Primitive Practice) is, that we may be thereby incited to the greater Ardency of Devotion; and that People, who have not Zeal enough for Religion, to bring them into the Courts of Praise, might be drawn thither by the Chords of Musick: whose grave majestick
Notes

Notes (as may still be seen in the ancient Compositions) move not upon the Feet of abated Appetite, but enkindle such a solemn Devotion, as will admit of no Avocation, till it arrives at the Throne of Grace.

Man being a compound Creature, consisting of Soul and Body, receives strong Impressions from the Body, whilst united to the Soul. Words and Sounds, have very powerful Charms, and by their Variety, are fitted by Nature, to express and excite very different Passions; which give such distinguishing Notes, and Accents to the very Voice, as betray the Passion you endeavour to conceal. Now, this is a great Secret in Nature, and shews an unaccountable Sympathy between Sounds and Passions, which are mutually the Causes and Effects of each other; so that let a Composer be never so well skill'd in the Proportion of Sounds, if he be not fully acquainted with what Effect they have upon humane Nature, a piece of fine Musick, will be like a parcel of fine Words injudiciously put together, they may indeed please the Ear, but will never affect the Understanding.

Since then it cannot be denied, but that there is a natural Sympathy, and mutual Causality

ality between Sounds and Passions; why should we not think that devotional Musick will excite, or heighten our devotional Passions, as well as amorous Airs kindle wanton Fires? For Nature will always act like itself, whether we apply it to good or evil Purposes. Why then should any Man think Musick improper for the Worship of God? It is indeed a natural Power, though improved by Art, as most other natural Powers are; and all such are made for the Worship and Service of God, as far as they are capable; of which Musick is, in a very high Degree.

The first Song we Read of in Scripture, is that of *Moses*, at the Destruction of *Pharaoh*, and the safe Passage of the *Israelites* through the *Red-Sea*: And throughout the Old Testament we find, that the chief, if not the only Use of Vocal, and Instrumental Musick, was in the Worship of God. Though this be acknowledg'd by all, yet some will not allow it to be a Pattern for Christian Worship. They reckon Musick among the Ceremonies of the Jewish Law, fitted to the carnal State of that People, and abrogated with the other legal Ceremonies, by the more perfect dispensation of the Gospel, which requires a more spiritual Worship. But a few Words will shew how

how unreasonable this Pretence is. The Song of *Moses*, and *Miriam*, was before the giving of the Law, and therefore no part of it. But suppose Singing had been a part of the *Mosaical* Law; the Gospel of our Saviour abrogates nothing of that Law, but such Types as receive their Accomplishments in Christ, or such appendant Ceremonies, as were meer Signs, and Figures of an Evangelical Righteousness. But what is singing a Type of, any more than speaking? 'Tis indeed a more harmonious and emphatical way of speaking; but I see no Reason, why Men may not as well reject vocal Prayer, as vocal Musick, because they were both used by the *Jews*. So that whatever Objections are now made against Church-Musick (which I have not time particularly to examine) were as good in *David's* time, as now; and yet then Prophets composed Hymns, and Prophets set Tunes; and therefore, methinks, our Cavillers should not give themselves such presumptuous Airs; but speak more favourably of such Practices, as were under the Direction and Government of Men, inspir'd by the Holy-Ghost.

In the Vision of the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 6. the *Seraphims* are represented crying one to another, *Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, Heaven and Earth are full of his Glo-*
ry.

17. This is acknowledg'd to be a great Example of Antiphonal Singing, in which one answers another. But then, those sad Souls, who are Enemies to all Harmony, and delight in nothing but Howling and Lamentations, object again ; this plainly refers to the ancient Temple Worship, and must not be admitted a precedent for Christian Practice. But if the Temple Worship be a fit Pattern for the Worship of Angels, why may it not be a precedent for the Worship of Christians? whose Worship, as pure and spiritual as it is, falls vastly short of Angelical Worship. But do not the Angels then thus Worship God in Heaven? This would be a new Objection against our Liturgy, never thought of before, which, in the *Te Deum*, teaches us to Sing—*To thee all Angels cry aloud, the Heavens, and all the Powers therein. To thee Cherubin, and Seraphin, continually do cry; Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabbaoth, Heaven and Earth, are full of the Majesty of thy Glory.*

And if the Angels thus Sing in Heaven; surely the precedent is not unworthy the Christian Church on Earth.

The like Representation we meet with of the four Beasts, and four and twenty Elders,

ders, *Rev.* 4. And the same Answer is given to it, that the Images, in the Apocalyptic Visions, are taken from the Law, and not from the Gospel. But whence so ever these Images were originally taken; this Book was directed to the Christian Churches, and therefore was a Rule and Precedent for them. It all along describes the State of the Christian, not of the Jewish Church, and therefore their Worship too. And if we look into the fifth Chapter; we shall find these four Beasts, and four and twenty Elders, were Christians, who were redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, and sung the Song of the Lamb--*Thou art worthy to take the Book, and open the Seals thereof; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, out of every Kindred and Tongue, and People, and Nation; and hast made us unto our God, Kings and Priests, and we shall reign upon the Earth.* This I take to be a Christian Hymn, and therefore a Pattern for Christian Worship. *St. Paul* likewise exhorts us to admonish one another, in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, singing and making Melody in our Hearts to the Lord. Now, though these Words be not the Apostolical Institution of a Choir, nor do prescribe the particular Forms of Cathedral Worship; yet

yet they justify it all, as far as 'tis fitted to true Devotion. And though this practice was not for some time in the Christian Church, while it was under a State of Persecution; 'tis no more an Argument against Cathedral Worship, than against Cathedral Churches. The poverty, and afflicted State of the Church at that time would allow neither; but Prosperity by degrees introduced them both: As it reviv'd them in the Jewish Church; though under the Babylonish Captivity, they hung their Harps upon the Willows, and refused to sing the Songs of *Sion* in a strange Land.

But setting aside the afflicted State of the Christian Church, the professed Enemies of Cathedral Worship, allow us as great, and early Authorities as we desire. *St. Basil*, *St. Ambrose*, and *St. Chrysostom* will always be venerable Names. The Church was restored to Peace, but in the fourth Century; and then this Worship revived; and that by the Authority, and Example of as great and good Men, as any of the Fathers of our Church.

Erasmus indeed, and many Reformers, were great Enemies to this way of Wor-

ship, as it was then practic'd in the Church of *Rome*; when their Hymns, as well as their Prayers, were performed in an unknown Tongue; so that their Singing was mere Noise, and could contribute nothing to Devotion. But this is no more an Argument against *English* Hymns, and Anthems, than against *English* Prayers. If they mean any more, we must demand their Reasons: For, as for Authority; our own Reformers, and our own happy Establishment upon the Reformation, have (and that very deservedly) a much greater Authority in the World.

Thus, I hope, I have in some Measure, vindicated, and set forth the Use and Benefit of Church-Musick; but considering, that hearing a Sermon is the least part of the occasion of the meeting of this Audience, I shall hasten to a Conclusion.

If Singing be the Employment of Angels, and Eternity must be spent in Praises and Thanksgivings; if Cherubs and Seraphs are to be our future Companions, and the happiness of Society consists in agreeableness of Temper; methinks it should be the utmost endeavour
of

of every Soul, that desires to be a Member of that blessed Choir, to take all opportunities of joining in Chorus with those here below ; where he will have a foretaste of those immortal Pleasures, whose Continuance will never satiate, nor whose Perpetuity lessen the Enjoyment.

When the Strings are touch'd by a masterly Hand, or that grand Machine, which can at once express the different Chords of the whole Scale of Musick; what extatic Joy: do they create? What pleasing Convulsions in the Audience? Inso-much that one can hardly believe the Stories of *Orpheus*, or *Amphion* to be fabulous.

If Woods may be said to be Loquacious from the whispering of their Leaves, and Waters to be Querulous from the murmuring of their Streams ; by the same Poetical License we may allow them to be Obsequious too, and follow the Voice of Melody ; and though *Arion's* Musick could not silence the Rage of the Mariners, yet it so pleased one of the Scaly Nation, that upon his leaping into the Sea, he offered his kind Assistance to support him, and carried him Triumphant through

through the Waves from the Hands of his merciless Robbers.

I know no Philosophy, that gives any satisfactory Account of the mechanical Operation of Sounds ; but that they do operate very powerfully, is manifest to every harmonious Soul. I own, 'tis possible that some may be of such an ill-favoured Make, such a dismal Complexion, as not to taste that Harmony, which will put another into an Exstasy ; but I pity their Misfortune, and think a greater Evil could hardly happen to them. How will they join in Chorus with those, who Rest not Day and Night, saying, *Holy, Holy, Holy, to the Eternal God, and to the Lamb that sits upon the Throne?*

To Conclude ; There has been a Time when these Holy Places were Defecrated, and the House of God turned into a Den of Thieves.

May the like of those Days never return, to cast a darker Shade upon the *English* Kalendar ; nor this daily Sacrifice be discontinued. May these annual Meetings of Ours give Birth to such over the whole Nation ; and may these Heavenly
Con-

Consorts so influence our unruly Passions,
 that our Light may shine before Men.
 May our Conversation be so sweet, so af-
 fable, so harmonious ; that we may be re-
 markably distinguish'd from others, by be-
 ing Members of this happy Society. God
 grant this Christian Fellowship may be
 transmitted by us to the most distant A-
 ges of Futurity : Thus God will be served
 in the Beauty of Holiness ; and may all
 true Lovers of God and Divine Musick say
Amen.

E R A T A.

Dedication Line 2. read *Opinion*. Serm. p. 8. l. 2c. r.
Martial, l. 23. r. *embolden*.

F I N I S.

