

Chapter 2

The 'Puritan' view of 'right' church music.

In this chapter, I propose to identify some principles of right worship, and the role of music within it, enunciated by Puritan writers, and the extent to which this set of concerns and priorities was peculiar to the godly. For our purposes, I shall define the group as churchmen, Calvinistic in theology, who were broadly dissatisfied with the church order as defined under Elizabeth, and were keen to effect further reformation. This definition presents a number of difficulties, as it encompasses a wide range of clerics, often antipathetic to each other, ranging from radical separatists such as Robert Browne, through the more moderate writers such as those of the *Admonition to the Parliament*, to Calvinist conformist figures such as Peter Smart, Andrew Willet and Edward Elton. The picture is further complicated by the fact, as we noted in an earlier section, that figures such as Prynne could move some distance along the scale of radicalism as the national situation changed. Our task, then, is to ascertain what, if any, common concerns united such disparate figures as these.¹ A second problem we encounter is the apparent lack of general writing on music from Puritan figures. An examination of the catechetical literature of the period, for instance, reveals very little attention paid to music in such sources.² We must therefore largely rely on the responses of Puritans to perceived defects in church music, and the activities of extreme ceremonialist figures, and must be aware of the corresponding lack of systematic *prescriptive* work on music.

More generally, the sources for this section and the rest of Part One do not consist of ongoing debates over time, self-consciously addressing arguments previously published. As will become clear, an understanding of thought on church music can only be assembled from parts of other works, of liturgy, of biblical commentary, of poetics, philosophy or courtly manners, as well as from sermons ostensibly dealing with other issues. It will also become clear that, the rhetoric of the 1630s aside, the occurrence of these publications is evenly spread over the period, with few identifiable clusters of reactions to specific events or developments in

¹ On the problems of defining 'Puritans' and 'Puritanism', see the Introduction, note 9.

² Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: catechism and catechising in England c.1530-1740*; (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

musical practice. Instead we shall identify a number of commonplaces that persist in strikingly uniform terms from early in the reign of Elizabeth to the Long Parliament and beyond.

In historiographical terms, the ‘Puritans’ have been granted a less than favourable reputation with regard to their attitude to music, and the arts in general, stemming in part from the removal of organs in the 1640s. Percy Scholes, however, in his *The Puritans and Music*, set himself the task of asserting a view of the Puritans in England and in New England as considerably less hostile to music *per se*, and of rescuing the Puritan movement from the reputation that prompted Macaulay’s comment that it was ‘a sin to touch the virginals.’³ Responding to what he perceived as a great cultural prejudice against the joyless Puritan figure of lampoon, he deals at length with music, and also the dance and opera.⁴ He does however recognise, albeit briefly, a distinction to be drawn between music in the secular sphere and that used for worship, summing up the attitude in a phrase of George Bernard Shaw:

I am as fond of fine music and handsome building as Milton was, or Cromwell or Bunyan; but if I found they were becoming the instruments of a systematic idolatry of sensuousness, I would hold it good statesmanship to blow every cathedral in the world to pieces with dynamite, organ and all, without the least heed to the screams of the art critics and cultured voluptuaries.⁵

This fear of a ‘systematic idolatry of sensuousness’, the power of music to distract from, rather than focus attention on the liturgy, to stay devotion in the music itself rather than its object, is a key theme which we shall examine in due course.

It is not a difficult task to find examples of “Puritan“ use of music, both recreationally and in worship. The life of Andrew Willet by his son-in-law reported that at dinner time it was his manner ‘to recreate himself awhile, either playing upon

³ Scholes, when setting himself the question ‘Is there no evidence against the Puritans?’, concludes that ‘The response to this is pretty decidedly ‘No!’ p. 302 (London, 1934). Recent work has also placed the iconophobic tenor of English Protestantism in a more secure comparative framework: on iconoclasm, see John Phillips, *The Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England, 1535 - 1660* (Berkeley, 1973); Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Macmillan, 1988) pp. 94 - 126; also Margaret Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts* (Oxford, 1988).

⁴ See *The Puritans and Music*, pp. 91 - 104 for some 45 cited examples of this cultural prejudice, including the pioneering eighteenth century music historians Hawkins and Burney, Macaulay, and a 1926 edition of the *Radio Times*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 214 - 228; citation p. 214.

a little organ, singing to it, or else sporting with his young children'.⁶ Robert Browne was described as a 'singular good lutenist' and taught his son Timothy to play the viol.⁷ William Whittingham, the Genevan exile, when Dean of Durham, was "very carefull to provide the best songs and anthems that could be got out of the Queen's chapell to furnish the quire with all, himself being skilfull in musick."⁸ It was also reported that by the time that Richard Baxter left Kidderminster:

On the Lord's Day's there was no disorder to be seen in the Streets, but you might hear an hundred Families singing Psalms and repeating Sermons, as you passed through the Streets.⁹

Patrick Collinson has opened up the worship of the Puritan movement for us, and has emphasised the "great value" attached to communal psalmody.¹⁰ He identified from various journal accounts the use of a communal psalm before the sermon, one after and sometimes one with which to end the worship. Such psalms were useful to provide covering material for gaps in the service, and, as they were often the only opportunity for participation, they were often enthusiastically participated in. The home of Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston, Kedington Hall in Suffolk, was 'a spirituall church and temple wherein were dayly offered up the spirituall sacrifices of reading the Word and prayer, morning and evening, of singing Psalmes constantly after every meal before any servant did rise from the table.'¹¹ Scholes identified the often very personal use and application of the psalms to the life of the godly man or woman - as Horton Davies expressed it, the Psalms told of

faith hammered out on the anvil of difficulty, the unyielding controversy with God's enemies, the sacred invective and vivid vituperative ...[the Puritans were] an elect

⁶ Peter Smith, 'The Life and Death of Andrew Willet', which was prefixed to the fifth edition of Willet's *Synopsis Papismi* (London, 1634): *DNB* 61.288-292, p. 289.

⁷ *DNB* 'Browne' vii.57-61; p.60.

⁸ M.A. Green (ed.) 'Life of Mr William Whittingham' *Camden Miscellany* vi (London, 1871) p. 194

⁹ 'Confirmation and Restauration the necessary means of Reformation and Reconciliation' (1658): quoted by G.F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (London, Nelson, 1965) p. 47.

¹⁰ *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, (London, Cape, 1967) p. 359. See also his 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as Forms of Popular Religion' in Durston and Eales (eds), *The Culture of English Puritanism* pp.32-57; p. 56. See also Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, OUP, 2000) pp. 503-552.

¹¹ J.T.Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families of Early Stuart England* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) p.34.

army fighting under the banner of Christ the King and Son of David against King Charles¹²

It therefore no longer seems accurate to characterise Calvin, and his doctrinal heirs in England, as the “enemy[ies] of all pleasure and of all distraction, even of the arts and of music.”¹³ It is our concern here to examine some of the key concerns expressed in Puritan and radical Protestant writing on church music. In the process we shall discover that, in keeping with the ambiguity we have already identified in the preceding sections, all of these concerns can be seen voiced by moderate and ceremonialist figures with equal vigour.

The understanding in worship

Perhaps the single most common concern expressed in writers on music, and worship more generally, was for the engagement of the understanding of the worshipper. The *Directory of Public Worship*, the archetype of truly reformed worship, stipulated that the “chief care must be, to sing with the understanding, and with Grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord”. To this end, the whole congregation was to have a book of psalms from which to read, in order that all could be involved. Not only that, but if it were not possible for all to have a book, the psalms would be intoned line by line, in order that all could then follow.¹⁴

William Prynne, writing in 1633, was extremely critical of the worship he saw, in which the technical trickery of musicians distracted from the central Word:

¹² *Worship and Theology in England, 1603 - 1690* (Princeton, 1975) p.269: Scholes, *Puritans and Music*; pp. 270 - 274, for material on the use of psalms in military confrontation, both spiritual and literal: on psalmody generally, see Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1979): see also Brett Usher, “The Silent Community: Early Puritans and the Patronage of the Arts” in D. Wood (ed.), *The Church and the Arts* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992), pp. 287 - 302. Usher concludes, from his examination of the Culverwell family of the Vintry in London that “if the Culverwells were typical, the Godly Community of London, far from eschewing music and the visual arts, was actively promoting them”; p. 300. His examination is, however, purely of music for private devotional use. It is worth noting, however, that not all of the godly were as enthusiastic about psalm singing. Sir William Springett and his wife went so far as to tear the psalms from their Bibles; Cliffe, *Puritan Gentry* p.27.

¹³ Orentin Douen, *Clement Marot et le psautier Huguenot* (Paris, 1878-9), cited by Charles Garside Jr., “The Origins of Calvin’s Theology of Music, 1536 - 1543”, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* new series 69 (1979), part IV, p. 6.

¹⁴ Firth, Rait, *Acts and Ordinances* : p. 607.

As for the Divine Service and Common prayer, it is so chanted and minced and mangled of out costly hired, curious and nice musitions (not to instruct the audience withall nor to stirre up mens mindes unto devotion, but with a whorish harmony to tickle their eares) that it may justly seem, not to be a noyse made of men, but rather a bleating of brute beasts; whiles the choristers neigh descant as it were a sort of colts; other bellowe a tenor, as it were a company of oxen....others grunt out a bass as it were a number of hogs;

The result of all this was

that a foule evill favoured noyse is made, but as for the words and sentences, and the very matter itselfe is nothing understood at all, but the authority and power of judgement is taken away, both from the minde and from the eares utterly.¹⁵

For Smart, Cosin at Durham had turned ‘most of the service into piping and singing, so that the people understand it not, no more than they do Greek and Hebrew.’¹⁶

Elsewhere he expresses a similar sentiment

How dare they, instead of Psalms, appoint Anthems little better than prophane ballets some of them ? I say so many Anthems to be sung, which none of the people understand, not all the singers them selves, which the Preface to the Communion-booke, and the Queenes Injunction will have cut off, because the people is not aedified by them. Is it for spight they beare to Geneva, which all papists hate? or for love of Rome [?] ¹⁷

The anonymous Puritan writer of the 1643 pamphlet *The Holy Harmony* drew a striking contrast between vain outward worship and the true inner state of the worshipper:

... but we must know , that our hearty devotions are the only musick for the house of God, Psalmes and Prayers are not the heavenlier for Copes and Vestments, not the louder for wind-Instruments . Indeed, I observe at the dedication of Nebuchadnezzars image, the Cornet, Trumpet, Harp, Sackbut, Psaltery and all instruments of Musick Dan 3; 7 were alarums appointed as Ushers to the adoration of those living statues to a dead image, certainly that zeale is halfe dead the six days, that must have all that stirre to awaken his nap the seventh;

In true worship

The soule should appear to God, as God to Moses, in a soft, and a still winde, the holy and sweet sighes, or silent expressions of the soul are most acceptable, Paul knew the sweetnesse of this still Musicke, these heavenly breathings, and would have preferred one of them before a thousand crouds of sackbutts, this is the holy harmony.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Histriomastix* p. 285.

¹⁶ ‘A briefe, but true historicall Narration’ article 9.

¹⁷ *The Vanitie and Downefall of superstitious Popish ceremonies* pp.14-15.

This concern with the understanding can also be discerned in the thought of earlier radical figures, and also indeed throughout James' reign. The radical Elizabethan separatist Robert Browne dwelt at length on the need for the engagement of the understanding, as the intention of the worshipper was one key to proper worship. The frivolous and insincere nature of the worship of the Elizabethan church was indicated by 'their tossing to and fro of psalms and sentences' which was 'like tennis plaie whereto God is called a judge who can do best and be most gallant in his worship'. For Browne, this was "vain worship without knowledge or feeling", the whole liturgy a 'popish beadrow full of vaine repetitions as if seven paternosters did please the Lord better than six.' The liturgy was one 'broken, disordered, patched, taken out of the masse book.'¹⁹

The godly minister of Bermondsey Edward Elton wrote in 1615 that

in singing Psalmes and Hymnes, and spirituall songs, our hearts must goe with our voyces and tongues, our singing must not be only with the voyce, or rise onely from the throat, but it must proceed from the depth of the heart; wee must sing Psalmes and holy songs with understanding, and with an holy feeling in our hearts; our hearts must be cheerefull in singing, even possessed with heavenly joy, and affected according to the matter that wee doe sing.²⁰

George Wither, a figure often described as a 'Puritan', also asserted in strong terms the importance of the intention of those involved. Repetitious material was, in his view, bound to confound the singer's intention, and hence

his prayers are turned to sinne and hee makes harsh Musicke in the eares of God... God ought to bee praised, not with the voyce alone, but with heart also. And therefore as the Apostle counelleth the Ephesians, Sing and make you melody unto Him in your hearts²¹

¹⁸ *The Holy Harmony, or A Plea for the abolishing of Organs and other Musick out of the Protestant Churches of Great Britain* [etc.] (London, 1643): no pagination.

¹⁹ "A True and Short Declaration" (1583) in A. Peel, Leland H. Carlson (eds), *The writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne* (London, Allen, 1953) p. 415. On Browne, see *DNB* vii.57-61.

²⁰ *An Exposition of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Colossians* (3rd edition, London, 1637) p.533. Peter Lake has recently documented the posthumous ruining of Elton's reputation, and the burning of several of his publications in 1625, through the good offices of John Cosin. Lake interpreted this as part of a re-definition of 'Puritan' doctrine, and an attack on Daniel Featley, Calvinist chaplain to Archbishop Abbot and responsible for licensing Elton's books: *The boxmaker's revenge. 'orthodoxy', 'heterodoxy' and the politics of the parish in early Stuart London* (Manchester, University Press, 2001) pp.86-9.

²¹ Wither, *Preparation* p. 86. The lawyer, poet and pamphleteer Wither is a difficult figure to define as 'Laudian' or 'Puritan'. On one hand his views of free will and grace were in direct opposition to Calvinist predestinarian thought, but his constant pre-occupation with the need for national repentance, and the reform of vice, was very similar to that of many 'Puritan' thinkers. Charles S. Hensley, *The later career of George Wither* (The Hague, Mouton, 1969) pp.65, 42-3; *DNB* 'Wither' lxxxii.259-268.

It is clear that the understanding of worship was a central concern of Puritan and ‘hotter’ Protestants throughout the period under discussion. However, this should not blind us to the fact that such rhetoric could equally well be deployed by non-Puritan figures, and indeed by those figures usually described as Arminian or Laudian.

Richard Hooker, in a passage which has often been used historiographically as marking the beginning of a renewed interest in the use of music in worship, was nonetheless clear that

In the Church musique curiositie and ostentation of arte, wanton and light or unsutable harmonie, such as onlie pleaseth the eare and doth not naturallie serve to the verie kinde and degree of those impression which the matter that goeth with it leaveth or is apt to leave in men`s mindes, doth rather blemish and disgrace that we doe than add either beauty of furtherance to it.²²

Charles Butler, again in the context of a defence and justification of elaborate music, was concerned that singers should

endeavour so to moderate their voices, that their words may be plainly heard and understood of the congregation: so that, if not in Art, yet in Hart they may go along with them in like devotion. Too much quaint Division, too much shaking and quavering of the Notes, all harsh straining of the Voices beyond their naturall pitch, as these are odious and offensive to the ear; so doth they drown the right sound of the words, and thereby deprive the Hearers of the sense and meaning thereof.

Butler was also concerned with the outward decency of worship:

they should add all other outward decency. For all idle and careless gesture, all ill-favoured distorting and disfiguring of the countenance. all foul, fantastic and uncomely attire, and whatsoever dost not beseeme grave and sober Ministers of God in his Hous, is but a disgrace to the Divine Service, and a scandal to the congregation. But above all things let them be adorned with the inward beawti of holines.²³

²² W. Speed Hill (ed.), *The Folger Library Edition of The Works of Richard Hooker III: The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book 5* (Harvard, 1977) p. 152. For the use of the rest of this passage see Le Huray, *Music and the Reformation* p.45: *Temperley, Music of the English parish church* vol. 1, p.50.

²³ *The Principles of Musick* (1636); pp. 116 – 117. Butler, like Wither, is difficult to place on a spectrum of Laudians and Puritans. He spent almost all of his life in relative obscurity as vicar of Wootton St Lawrence, Hants, and published on topics as diverse as rhetoric, linguistics and bee-keeping, as well as on music. One commentator has described him as ‘a Royalist in sympathies’ and *The Principles of Musick* was dedicated to Charles. However, he was also a close friend of George Wither, by no means a Laudian, and (although it is difficult to discern why) he was not sufficiently identified with the Laudian programme to be ejected from his living, in fact remaining there until his death in 1647. *DNB* viii.44-5: Vivian Salmon ‘Tradition and innovation in the writings of Charles Butler (c.1561 – 1647)’ in V. Law, W. Hullen (eds), *Linguists and their diversions* (Munster, Nodus, 1996) pp. 99-122. The *Principles*, published only two years after a treatise on bee-keeping, and three

It is clear then that the rhetoric of understanding in worship was not confined to those figures we might call ‘Puritans’. It remains to consider two particular parts of this complex of ideas: concepts of edification, and the role of the congregation in worship.

Edification and participation

Perhaps the most important concept underlying much of this discussion (and one which, as we shall see, was hotly contested in definition and substance) was the need for edification.

The work of J.S. Coolidge has demonstrated the particular nexus of scriptural understanding and existential experience behind the Puritan concept of edification. The Puritan experience of faith was one of a people in a living, dynamic relationship with God and His Word, constantly engaged in the building of a temple of living stones, as distinct from the physical temple of the old covenant. These interlocking concepts of building and planting gave rise to a particular view of church order as one arising from the edification of individuals by each other, rather than within a larger national structure. The Whitgiftian conformist position rather saw edification as a rather narrower concept of the imparting of information and doctrine from above, and it was with Hooker that those ceremonies of the church, having the status of *adiaphora* for Whitgift, were reinvested with a positive power to edify. This stood in contrast with a Puritan view that all things in the church not explicitly and actively part of this communal process of edification were an active hindrance to it. There could be no room for any dead matter within the church, as any such supposedly indifferent matters necessarily detracted from the process of edification.²⁴

We will deal with adiaphorist thought concerning music in a later chapter. This section will concern itself with the contrasting use of the rhetoric of edification in relation to music. As with the understanding, the rhetoric of edification was a

after an English grammar, has every appearance of the curiosity of an encyclopaedic mind, rather than one addressing itself directly to wider debates and contexts.

²⁴ Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England* (Oxford, 1970) pp. 2-48: on the shift in conformist thought and the centrality of Hooker, see Peter Lake, ‘Presbyterianism, the idea of a National Church and the Argument from Divine Right’ in Lake and Maria Dowling (eds), *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England* (London, Croom Helm, 1987) pp.193-224, and his

constant in the post 1559 church. The Millenary Petition was concerned that “church songs and music be moderated to better edification, that the Lord’s day be not profaned”, although it was not forthcoming as to what way this was to be achieved.²⁵ John Nasse, writing from the Marshalsea in 1581, suggested to Convocation a series of contrasts by way of a definition of “edification”:

Reading service and tossing of psalmes from syde to syde in the quyer, and turning their arses and backs to the people etc. where Chrystes ministers do all but edifye both in prayer and preaching, and prophesying and ministring, and in Psalmes synginge together with the whole church etc., and not service readyng, and psalmes in partes songe, nor pistlinge nor gospeling after the Popes fashion, which is a blynde order, and a waye to kepe the people still in ignorance ... the unlearned sorte .. shall never come to see or knowe the lighte of lyffe ... [but] bee still blynde and so loose their salvation etc.²⁶

Peter Smart made the point that it was the primary duty of clergy to edify:

It is forbidden sauth the Pope, that any chaunt in churches, but men of mean degree, none above subdeacons: but Ministers and deacons must apply themselves to reading and preaching, for that makes most for the people’s edification, to which all must be done.

Cosin, therefore, was neglecting his role when:

having 2 fatt benefices, an Archdeaconrie, and a prebend, being a Bachelaur of Divinitie, and more then a subdeacon, even a full priest, [he was wont] to leave all your charges of soules at 6 and 7, and sitt all day long, eyther at home with a tobacco pipe in you mouth, or in the quire chaunting among singers.²⁷

A further specific point of divergence was the role of the congregation in worship. Earlier we encountered the injunction of the *Directory of Public Worship* that all were to be involved in the singing. One of Peter Smart’s key concerns with Cosin’s innovations at Durham was the effect that they had on the level of participation by the congregation. The effect of Cosin’s utilisation of the choir was to reduce the role of the congregation: one of the articles presented to the High Commission against Cosin indicted him:

Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English Conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker (London; Unwin Hyman, 1988) pp. 44-7, 164-9.

²⁵ Henry Bettenson (ed.), *Documents of the Christian Church* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1967) p. 283.

²⁶ ‘Articles sent to the Bishops and Cleargye in the convocation house ... From the Marshalsea by John Nasse the Lordes prisoner 1580 Januarye’: Albert Peel (ed.), *The seconde parte of a register* (2 volumes, Cambridge, CUP, 1915) i. 151.

²⁷ Cosin, *Correspondence* i.183.

For prohibiting Psalms to be sung in metre [ie. congregationally], and procuring songs and anthems to be sung [to a secular tune, The Three Kings of Cullen (Cologne)] - The Dean and prebendaries did absolutely forbid and prohibit the Psalms in metre to be sung before and after sermon, and at the administration of the Holy Communion: and instead thereof turned prayers and pieces or reading psalms into anthems, and caused them to be sung, so that the people understood not whether they were prayers or no.²⁸

Smart also noted that the new style of service had forced some away from the church:

other things, contemptible to the people, you have built a new payre of gorgius organes, which have cost at least £700, which you command to be played upon not only at the six o'clock prayer in the morning (wherby you have driven away from the church all schollars and artificers, which were wont to frequent that morning prayer, when it was short, and playnly said, so that they might understand it)²⁹

However, other non-Puritan writers took a slightly different position. The anonymous writer of the *Praise of Musicke* argued that it was possible to be edified by simply hearing music, as well as taking part in it, in a similar way to the audition of said prayers. - 'those which sing with the tongue and with the understanding also, neither do they delight themselves only, but also bring wonderful help to those that hear them.'³⁰ Charles Butler also made the point that not all congregation members were necessarily good singers, and that there was little harm in having sections of the service sung by a choir in a similar way as large sections of the liturgy were presently said by the priest only:

Why should we not think that the Psalms and Hymns and Spirituall Songs, sung by a Christian Quire (the devout hearts of the people concurring) be now as acceptable to the Lord, as when they were sung by the Priests and Levites, with the hearty devotion of their congregation?³¹

John Cosin was also in little doubt as to the detrimental effect of poor singing in the liturgy:

And thus have our new masters and mistresses at Geneva made known to the world from whom they took example, to thrust out the solemn music of David's own

²⁸ W.H. Longstaffe (ed.), *The Acts of the High Commission Court within the Diocese of Durham* (Surtees Society, xxxiv, 1858) p.224.

²⁹ Cosin, *Correspondence* i.167.

³⁰ (Oxford, 1586) p. 140 and 123. On the confusion between this work and the 1588 *Apologia musices* of John Case and the mistaken attribution of the former work to Case, see J. W. Binns, *Intellectual culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England* (Leeds, Francis Cairns, 1990) pp.436 – 443.

³¹ *Principles*, p. 112.

psalms, and other glorious hymns of holy men, from the Church, and to give songs of their own altering and composing to be sung instead of them, by a company of rude people, cobblers and their wives, and their kitchen maids and all, that have as much skill in singing as an ass has to handle a harp³²

However, his protestations against the accusations of Smart to the Court of High Commission seem to imply that the above passage, despite its scornful tone, did not suggest a disregard for the edification of the people:

The singing of the metre psalms was never forbidden, by him or any other (that he knoweth) in that church, where he used daily to sing them himself (as in other places his custom is to do) with the people assembled at the six o'clock morning prayer.

Cosin also argued that his practice had been

after the sermon to sing an anthem or hymn, which that the people might the better know what was at any time sung, was always publicly declared by one of the quiremen, out of what psalm (being many times a metre psalm) or other part of Scripture, or the Book of Common Prayer, the same was taken.³³

The career of Robert Sanderson has recently been assessed by Peter Lake, and Sanderson emerges as a figure cutting across categories of Laudian and Puritans. Sanderson was Calvinist in doctrine, but both anti-Puritan and anti-Arminian in rhetoric, and a moderate supporter of the policies of Laud.³⁴ He asserted a view of edification through the use of music that encompassed more than the strictly word- and intellect-centred approach of many “Puritan” observers. He observed that ‘in the mouths and apprehensions of most men generally, edification is in a manner confined wholly to the understanding.’ This had led to the harmful objection against the use of instruments in church on the grounds that ‘that they tend not to edification, but rather hinder it, because there cometh no instruction, nor other fruit to the understanding thereby.’ He suggested that

the Objectors should consider that whatsoever thing any way advanceth the service of God, or furthereth the growth of His Church, or conduceth to the increasing of any spiritual grace, or enlivening of any holy affection in us, or serveth to the outward exercise or but expression of any such grace or affection, as joy, fear, thankfulness,

³² The manuscript “Notes upon the Book of Common Prayer” (1619 – 1638), in J. Sansom (ed.), *The Works of the Rt. Reverend John Cosin, Lord Bishop of Durham*. (5 volumes, Oxford, 1851) v.62.

³³ *Correspondence* i. 225.

³⁴ Peter Lake, “Serving God and the times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson” *Journal of British Studies* 27 (1988) 81 – 116. On Sanderson’s Calvinism, Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists* p.263.

cheerfulness, reverence, or any other, doubtless every such thing so far forth serveth more or less unto edification.³⁵

Edification was then a prime concern of the majority of churchmen in early Stuart England. It is here however that we also see perhaps the clearest fault line in understandings of the role of music in worship: the question of whether the worshipper was necessarily to take part in musical activity in church in order to benefit from it. It is also the case that, in common with issues identified earlier, this issue became a more pressing one in the 1630s with the achievement of Laudian hegemony. A petition to Parliament of 1641 drew a crucial distinction between the involvement of the inner man in worship and the role of bodily ritual. Laud and his colleagues' endeavours

have been to take off men's hearts from the spiritual fervency and purity of worship (viz. the immediate direction of it to God) and to stay them and make them rest in outward actions, forms and things....¹. Their requiring, using and observing in divine worship, such specious habits, ceremonies and formalities (in the outward state and majesty whereof the sense and fancy might be amused and the minds of the people detained from the rational part of the work) and confounding all with noise, especially in the cathedral service, which they make exemplary to all other churches.³⁶

This view is clearly distinctive from the Laudian emphasis on the engagement of the whole body in the physical activity of worship, in kneeling and bowing, that Peter Lake has recently anatomised.³⁷ However, apart from an emphasis from the more Puritan figures on the primacy of congregational music, many moderate figures, who it would be inaccurate to call Laudian, accepted the usefulness of music to be heard rather than participated in. The division here was between not between a Laudian group and the mainstream of the English church.

Purity, danger and the limits of the indifferent

We have already seen the manner in which the modes of discourse were polarised and radicalised in the late 1620s and through the 1630s. It is the concern of this section to

³⁵ Sermon preached at Hampton Court 26th July 1640 on I Corinthians x.23: Wm Jacobson, (ed.) *The Works of Robert Sanderson DD* (6 vols, Oxford, UP 1854): vol. i. pp. 297 - 323: p. 311 – 312.

³⁶ Staley, *Hierurgia* iii. 346: 'A Schedule annexed to a Petition presented to the Parliament from the county of Notts., complaining of Grievances under the Ecclesiastical Government by Archbishops, Bishops etc.' (1641)

³⁷ 'The Laudian style' pp.165 – 7.

examine the different reactions to this, and the extent to which musical practices were tainted by association with other abuses and rendered unacceptable.

We have already examined the conflation by Peter Smart of musical activities at Durham with other Popish innovations. A writer such as Robert Browne had earlier taken the implications of this critique to its logical conclusion. For Browne, the purity of worship was crucial to the survival of the whole church order - to “give their neckes to the yoak of disordered and popish attire, the marckes of antichrist” was no matter of indifference. As Smart was later to assert that “pereat unus, ne pereamus omnes” (one should perish, not the whole), so for Browne all open and unrepented sin of this sort was “to overthrowe the foundation”, for “by the capp and the surplisse and the bishop’s dischargings, with their other traditions the Word is in bondage”³⁸. Music is thus caught in a far more thoroughgoing dispute over the nature of a Reformed church. No accommodation with Antichrist could be countenanced if the whole were not to perish.

Charles Butler set out specifically to refute what he saw as the objections to church music as put by the Puritan party, based as he considered them to be on grounds of distraction from the meaning, the need for understanding and the involvement of the heart and for full participation.³⁹ However, after accepting the importance of such concerns, he stated that ‘if any time [music] have been abused, it is a poor Reason, that therefore it should not bee restored to its ancient right use again.’⁴⁰ The composer Thomas Morley was critical of singers who saw their role as to “cry louder in the choir than their fellows” - for Morley:

The musicians of this age, instead of drawing the minds of men to the consideration of heaven and heavenly things, do by the contrary set wide open the gates of hell, causing such as delight in the exercises of their art tumble headlong into perdition.⁴¹

The import of this however was not to abandon the use of music because of its abuse in some situations.

³⁸ “A True and Short Declaration” (1583) in A. Peel, Leland H. Carlson (eds.), *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne* (London, 1953) pp. 396 - 429; pp. 419, 420 and 416.

³⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 109 – 113.

⁴⁰ *Principles of Music.* p. 108.

⁴¹ R. Alec Harman (ed.), *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* (London, Dent, 1952) pp. 293 – 294.

The anonymous writer of *The Praise of Musicke* was aware of the possible faults in church music, but felt that ‘a blemish is sooner perceived on a comely body’ - it was wrong to attribute the faults and abuses of a particular musician to the thing itself:

the faults of the persons are attributed to the art, and whatsoever is amiss in this or that musician, is said to proceed from [Music].... Because the Pierides in pride of their skill provoked the Muses, or Maryas and Pan in opinion of their own excellency, Apollo: this generall collection is made, that musick causeth pride and ambition... straightwaie musicke is wayward and troublesome, cunning men are either dangerous or phantasticall, as it to be skilful were a fault or to be cunning worthy reprehension.”⁴²

George Wither, a figure that we have identified as having a Puritan style of piety, also identified the problems but came to a similar conclusion;

many organists take over much liberty, and runne on too fantastically in their voluntaries... [some] wanton it in the exercises of divine worshippe, according to the distracted and ridiculous fashions of the time; or mixe their tunes with straines of melody, prophane or unsutable to the matter or place...[they are] deriders and abusers of the sacred ordinance of he Church.

However Wither’s conclusion was again fundamentally different to that of Browne, in that he contended “they are to be reprehended, not Music abolished”⁴³.

In a similar manner to discussions over the nature of edification, the fault line in the discussion of the purity of music in church is not one between Laudians and a consensual Calvinist majority, but between ‘purist’ radical Calvinists and a broad range of moderate conformist figures and the Laudian group.

‘Rightly used’

An examination of four further thinkers will serve to illustrate the very slipperiness of the language used to discuss the use of church music, and the almost complete lack of any writing which attempted to make practical recommendations for the actual ordering of music in terms of the music itself. Fulke Robarts, one of Matthew Wren’s

⁴² Oxford, 1586; Preface.

⁴³ *Preparation.*, pp. 85, 86.

commissioners in the diocese of Norwich in 1636, set himself the task of responding to those thinkers who:

call upon me to listen to the sounde that is made in our Churches, by voices of singers, by Organs and other instruments of musique, and to tell how I can cleare this from being Popish or superstitious ?⁴⁴

He proceeded to state that:

But God be thanked: as there is no law to prohibit the use of musique, even in the Church Service: so withall, *being rightly used*, it is very usefull and profitable, for the spirituall man, in that it stirreth up his christian affection, the more chearefully to prayse God. Pet. Mart. saith that in Musique *rightly ordered*three good things concur viz. comely, profitable, pleasant. [my italics]⁴⁵

Unfortunately Robarts at no point elucidates how church music is to be “rightly used”, but instead continues to assert:

And I do assure my selfe, that man who shall bring to the Church, where Musique is rightly used, a devout hart not perverted with prejudice and attend unto the Prayses of God which are set out with Musique: cannot choose but feele his thoughts therewith elevated and enlarged the more pathetically and feelingly, the more ampie, and fervently to acknowledge and magnifie the goodnesse of God. It is true that some of the antient Fathers do find fault with the abuse of Musique in God’s worship: but that condemneth not the right use thereof, any more than the holy supper is condemned by St Paul, whilst he blameth those who shamefully prpohaned it. ... *In the right use therefore* of church Musique, there is good profit, and edification to the affection but no Superstition. [my italics]⁴⁶

In Robarts, then, we see many of the themes we have already encountered several times - that music, if rightly ordered, has the power to excite devotion, and any man with a sufficiently devout heart (and few were likely to consider themselves to be without such a heart) could not fail to be moved by it. Again, the fact that music has been abused in some places and at some times should not disallow its use.

William Prynne, in whose writing is to be found some of the most vitriolic rhetoric with regard to ‘bad’ church music, is also to be found making a statement of similar definitional muddiness:

That Musicke of it selfe is lawfull, usefull and commendable; no man, no Christian dares denie, since the Scriptures, Fathers, and generally all Christian, all Pagan Authors extant, do with one consent averre it. But that lascivious, amorous,

⁴⁴ *God’s Holy House and Service* (London, 1639) p.54. Fincham ‘Episcopal Government, 1603-1640’ p.90: Lake, ‘The Laudian style’ p.165.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.54.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.56.

effeminate, voluptuous Musicke (which I onely here incounter) there is none so audacious as to justifie it, since both Scripture, Fathers, moderne Christian writers: yea and Heathen Nations, States and Authors, have past a doome upon it.⁴⁷

Humphrey Sydenham was another figure whose career fits uncomfortably into categories of either Laudian or Puritan. In a similar fashion to Robert Sanderson, he was one with a Calvinist past, but who was nonetheless anti-Puritan in rhetoric and supportive of the Laudian regime. In a sermon published in 1637 with a dedication to Laud, Sydenham is to be found saying very similar, and in places contradictory, things:

The over-carving and mincing of the ayre either by ostentation or curiositie of Art, lulls too much the outward sense, and leaves the spirituall faculties untouch'd, whereas a sober mediocritie and grave mixture of Tune with Ditty, rocks the very soule, carries it into exstasies, and for a time seems to cleave and sunder it from the body, elevating the heart inexpressably, and resembling in some proportion those Hallelujahs above, the Quire and unities which is in Heaven.⁴⁸

Church music, if badly ordered, has no good effect, as it does not engage the inner man, the spiritual faculties, but if only “right” church music was used, then the heart would be lifted heavenwards. Since in music we discover

portraitures both of Vice and Vertue, and the mind thus taken with resemblances, falls often in love with the things themselves; insomuch, that there is nothing more betraying us to sensuality, than some kind of Musicke; And therefore there must be a discreet caution had, that it must be grave and sober, and not over-wanton'd with curiositie or descant.that whilst the eare was charm'd with the sweetnesse of the Ditty, the minde also might be rapt with the divineness of the matter, and so whilst others sing, we not onely heare, but learne too...and yet .. let us take heed, whilst wee too much indulge this outward modulation, wee are not more transported with the melody of the Tune than the sense of the Psalme; the singing, than the matter which is sung;⁴⁹

One final thinker, this time one usually characterised as Calvinist or ‘moderate puritan’, will serve to illustrate again the crucial ambiguity of rhetoric surrounding

⁴⁷ *Histriomastix* pp. 278-9.

⁴⁸ “The Well Tuned Cymball or A Vindication of the moderne Harmony and Ornaments in our Churches against the Murmurings of their discontented Opposers. A Sermon occasionally preached at the Dedication of an Organ lately set up at Bruton in Somerset’ in *Sermons upon several occasions* (London, 1637): p. 22-3. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists* p.262; Lake, ‘Sanderson’ p.116.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 22-5.

“right” and “wrong” church music.⁵⁰ Andrew Willet asserted in very strong terms the characteristic concern with the edification of the people:

First, for the sacrament, or any other part of the service of God to be ministered in an unknown tongue, is contrary to St Paul’s rule, who would have all things to be done in the Church to edifying, and in such sort that the unlearned might say Amen I Cor xiv.16. But the people cannot be edified by a language which they understand not; nor yet can say Amen unto strange prayers.

However, when discussing the popish abuse of church music, he, as many of his contemporaries, asserts that only good music is good, without being able, or concerned, to delineate the features of such “good” church music.

Thirdly, a moderate and sober use of music in the church we condemn not, though the practice of the Jewish Church doth not warrant it: for their melodious sound of instruments was typical, signifying the spiritual melody and harmony, which we should make in our hearts, Eph. v. 19. And though music may be well used, yet it is by them three ways abused: first, in adorning a false and idolatrous service. Secondly, in playing and singing unedifying songs. Thirdly, in displacing thereby the preaching of God’s word, and fruitful prayer.⁵¹

Here we have a dichotomy set up between the “moderate and sober” and the “unedifying”. When discussing ceremonies in general, Willet is clear that popish ceremonies

do clean destroy and extinguish all spiritual and internal motions, drawing the heart from the spiritual worship of God to external beggarly and ragged relics and ceremonies.⁵²

Here we see a clear echo of the central “Puritan” concern with the heart of the worshipper. However, when we examine the conditions that Willet puts forward for “right” ceremony, they are sufficiently lenient of interpretation to render them almost meaningless. They were to be to the glory of God, orderly and decent, without offence, and tending towards edification, as opposed to any “ridiculous light and unprofitable ceremonies.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Anthony Milton has described Willet as an archetypal ‘moderate Puritan’ – vigorously anti-papal, Calvinist in theology, convinced of the need for further reformation but at the same time conforming. *Catholic and Reformed* (Cambridge, 1995) pp.13-19; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists* p.23.

⁵¹ *Synopsis* vol. vi. pp. 1 - 20; pp. 3, 12.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 359.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 358

It has been the aim of this section to explore some of the key fault lines in the discussion of music in church. It has contended that in discussions of the necessity for the engagement of the understanding of the worshipper, and the need for edification, all thinkers could agree on the general desirability of both, but little prescriptive guidance was given on the manner in which this was to be fostered and the type of music to be used. Clearer divisions are discernible over the necessity for the congregation to be participating at all times, and the complete exclusion of music to be *heard*. However, contrary to the historiographical pattern explored in the Introduction, the divisions here identified are not between a Calvinist consensus and a radical Laudian minority. What distinction there was here was between radical Puritan figures and a broad spectrum of moderate Calvinists and the Laudian group (which included almost all cathedral churches, and for the majority of the time since the accession of James). It would be inaccurate to suggest that we have yet discovered a distinctive Laudian view of music in worship. The next sections will explore: the sources of authority available to writers on music: the Bible, the early church, the continental Reformations, broader philosophical, mystical and psychological understandings of the nature and agency of music, and the legislative position of the church.