

# Psalmes, or Songs of Sion (1631)

William Slatyer's  
Scandalous Collection

Edited by Ross W. Duffin



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Middleton, Wisconsin

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# Introduction

... but one Puritan amongst them,  
and he sings Psalmes to horne-pipes.  
—*The Winters Tale* (4.3)

On 20 October 1631, William Slatyer (plate 1)<sup>1</sup> appeared before the High Commission of the Church of England, consisting of six eminent bishops and four lay grandees and led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbott, and the Bishop of London, William Laud. Slatyer's appearance is recorded as follows (plate 4):

William Slater [*sic*], Doctor in Divinity.

Doctor Slater submitted himself by his petition to the Court and therby professed he was heartily sorie for his offence and tendered his submission to this effect following: Whereas I lately tooke upon me to translate some of David's psalmes, and added therunto a scandalous table to the disgrace of Religion and to the incouragement of the contemners thereof, although I have heertofore declared my intentions in soe doeing, yet I am heartily sorry for my offence heerin, and doe humbly aske forgiveness for the same of Almighty God and of the people of God the whole church, promising never to offend againe in the like for the tyme to come. To this he subscribed his name, William Slater. Heervpon he was dismissed and freed of his imprisonment; The ArchBishop giving him a very sharpe reproofe for beeing ever busy about bables. And the Bishop of London called him back and tould him he must there give him admonition of that which from the King he was commanded in all his visitation to make knowen to all ministers that they bee more carefull in their habits not to goe like rufflers as if they were ashamed of their ministry and this is soe common a fault (he said) that ministers can hardly be knowen from other men by their habit,<sup>2</sup> and therefore, Doctor Slater (said the Bishop), that band is not fitt for a minister, nor those ruffles up to your elbows almost. Doctor Slater excused himselfe saying that he was now in his riding cloathes. The Bishop replied that if he sawe him in the like hereafter he would looke out some canon or other to take hould of him.<sup>3</sup>

The author of this scandal, William Slatyer (not Slater, as in the report),<sup>4</sup> is virtually unknown today. He was born near Bristol, attended Brasenose College, Oxford, receiving his B.A. in 1609, M.A. in 1611, and eventually his D.D. in 1623.<sup>5</sup> In 1617 he was appointed vicar of Newchurch (with

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1. The portrait is from Slatyer's posthumous *The Psalmes of David in 4 Languages and in 4 Parts* (London: P. Stent, 1652), frontispiece. From Slatyer's tombstone, we know that he died at the age of fifty-nine on 14 February 1647, but the man in the portrait looks perhaps twenty years younger and thus possibly close to the age when his scandalous 1631 collection appeared.

2. A marginal note here says, "He had on a carelesse ruffe & deepe cuffes."

3. The record is preserved in GB-Lbl, Harley MS 4130, fol. 52v, and is transcribed in Samuel Rawson Gardiner, ed., *Reports of Cases in the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission* (Westminster: The Camden Society, 1886), 186. The list of Commission members in on p. 181.

4. The spelling in the High Commission report points to further puzzlement over the pronunciation of Slatyer's name. Papers in a 1638 ecclesiastical lawsuit held at GB-MA (shelfmark DCb/J/J/63/109) refer to the vicar of Newchurch as "Slaughter." See also "A Note on the Pronunciation of Slatyer's Name" below.

5. *Brasenose College Register, 1509–1909*, vol. 1, *List of Members* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 93 (as "Slater, William").

# 1. Psalme 1

Thrice blest, who hath not bent

Tune: *The man of life vpright or a Lancashire tune, or H. Pipe*

Lancashire Hornpipe



1. Thrice blest, who hath not bent t'all counsell foot nor eare, \_\_\_\_\_  
Nor path of sin-ner's hent, nor sate in scorn-er's chaire: \_\_\_\_\_

(4)



But in the law of God the Lord hath set his whole de-light, \_\_\_\_\_ And

9



in that law, th'e-ter-nall Word, doth medi-tate day and night. \_\_\_\_\_

The man of life upright (Campion, 1601)



1. Thrice blest, who hath not bent t'all counsell foot nor eare,

5



Nor path of sin-ner's hent, nor sate in scorn-er's chaire:

The man of life upright (Campion, 1613)



1. Thrice blest, who\_ hath not bent t'all\_ counsell foot nor eare,

5



Nor path of \_\_\_\_\_ sin-ner's\_ hent, nor sate in scorn-er's chaire:

## 18. Psalme 63

Thou, O God, art my God whom I early enquire

Tune: *Faire Angell of England, or Sweete Robin*

Bonny Sweet Robin



1. Thou, O God, art my God whom I ear-ly en-quire, My soule thirst-eth for thee, my flesh doth de-sire And



long af-ter thee the true foun-taine of blisse, In a bar-ren and dry land where no wa-ter is.

1. Thou, O God, art my God whom I early enquire,  
My soule thirsteth for thee, my flesh doth desire  
And long after thee the true fountaine of blisse,  
In a barren and dry land where no water is.
2. O let me behold thee in thy Sanctuary,  
And see thy great maiesty, power, and glory;  
For thy loving kindnesse is better than life,  
And my lips will be telling thy praises most rife.
3. So Lord will I magnifie thee all my daies,  
And lift up my hands in thy Name to thy praise?  
My soule shall be filled with marrow and fatnesse,  
Mouth and heart praising thee with lip-offrings of gladnesse.

4. Oft thou on my bed art remembered by me,  
And in the night season I thinke upon thee  
Because thou hast been my defence from annoyes,  
Vnder the shadow of thy wings will I there-fore reioyce.
5. My soule cleaveth unto thee; for thy right hand  
Vpholdeth me, and therefore Lord shall I stand:  
And who seeke for my soule to destroy it, into  
The nethermost parts of the earth they shall go,
6. And with th'edge of the sword they shalbe cast downe,  
Made a portion for foxes, whiles ioy the King crownes  
And who sweare by him, by Gods truth underpropt,  
But the mouth of all those that speake lies shalbe stopt.

This is a case of two names for the same tune. As Claude Simpson wrote in 1966, "Fair Angel of England as a tune title derives from the opening line of a ballad sung to the tune 'Bonny Sweet Robin.' The two tune names can thus be considered equivalent, or alternate, titles of the same air."<sup>1</sup> "Bonny Robin," "Bonny Sweet Robin," or "Robin is to the greenwood gone" are the most frequent names for the tune, although the earliest source among many, the Lodge Lute Book (begun around 1559), calls it "Robin Hoode."<sup>2</sup> The song was quoted by Ophelia in *Hamlet* (4.5) and cited by the Jailor's Daughter in *Two Noble Kinsmen* (4.1).<sup>3</sup> The ballad "Fair Angel of England" appeared in the early seventeenth century and may have been the one registered on 1 March 1600 as "A princelie

# 39. Psalme 128. In Greeke and Latine

Beatus, O beatus ter

Tune: *Tune of the ordinary Psalmes, or Rogero, or Ladies fall*

Low Dutch tune

1. Ὡς ὄλ- βι- ός ἐ- στι φῶς τὸν κυ- ρὸν ὃς φο- βεῖ- ται  
1. Be- a- tus, O be- a- tus ter, qui Do- mi- num ti- me- bis,

ὃς ἐν τρί- βοι- σιν ἐμ- βε- βῶς αὐ- τοῦ βί- ον ποι- εῖ- ται,  
Vi- tam hiis viis su- a- vi- ter in- ce- dens ob- ti- ne- bis,

Oxford tune (Old Common tune)

1. Ὡς ὄλ- βι- ός ἐ- στι φῶς τὸν κυ- ρὸν ὃς φο- βεῖ- ται  
1. Be- a- tus, O be- a- tus ter, qui Do- mi- num ti- me- bis,

ὃς ἐν τρί- βοι- σιν ἐμ- βε- βῶς αὐ- τοῦ βί- ον ποι- εῖ- ται,  
Vi- tam hiis viis su- a- vi- ter in- ce- dens ob- ti- ne- bis,

Rogero

1. Ὡς ὄλ- βι- ός ἐ- στι φῶς τὸν κυ- ρὸν ὃς φο- βεῖ- ται ὃς  
1. Be- a- tus, O be- a- tus ter, qui Do- mi- num ti- me- bis, Vi-

5  
ἐν τρί- βοι- σιν ἐμ- βε- βῶς αὐ- τοῦ βί- ον ποι- εῖ- ται,  
-tam hiis viis su- a- vi- ter in- ce- dens ob- ti- ne- bis,