

LECTURE VI.

THE ORGAN.

AMONG primitive peoples the use of some form of instrumental music in religious worship was very general. The religious procession with symbolic dance and choral song was an outstanding feature of the ritual, and for this the service of instrumental music was largely called into requisition. The monuments of ancient Egypt and Assyria have many representations of these sacred processions, in which a variety of instruments are depicted. In addition to the purpose they served by supporting the song and giving the rhythm for the dance, the instruments would likewise exercise a certain influence upon the feelings, and tend to the stimulation of the nervous excitement, and the heightening of the emotion of awe or joy or sorrow suited to the occasion. Among the Hebrews instrumental music was likewise in general use. Miriam and the women go out to meet Moses, after the crossing of the Red Sea, with timbrels and dances. Saul on his departure from Samuel meets with a company of prophets marching along with a psaltery and a tabret

and a pipe and a harp. The musical arrangements in the temple were on a most elaborate scale. The instruments employed were cymbals, two kinds of stringed instruments, distinguished in the Authorised Version as psalteries and harps, and trumpets which were played by the priests alone. According to the Book of Chronicles 4000 were appointed to praise the Lord with instruments (1 Chron. xxiii. 5). These are large figures, but they pale into insignificance beside those of Josephus, who records that Solomon provided 200,000 trumpets and 40,000 psalteries and harps (*Ant.*, viii. 3, 8). One wonders what the physical effect of such an orchestra would have been, had it ever existed anywhere but in the imagination of the historian.

In the early Christian Church there was, however, a strong feeling against the use of instruments in divine worship. Some have thought to account for this by the secrecy which the Christians had to adopt for their gatherings for worship, on account of the persecution to which they were exposed. But if that had been the reason, it would have silenced the voice of song as well. Yet in spite of the persecution which made the infant Church hide "her head 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs," vocal music seems to have been a regular part of the ritual. We must seek the explanation of the opposition to musical instruments in worship in some other direction; and from the attitude of the Fathers it is not difficult to find it. It arose from

the desire to make the gulf which separated Christianity from heathenism as wide as possible. The instruments which might have been called into use in divine worship were, to the early Christians, inseparably associated with heathen religious rites and theatrical performances of a debasing character. Clement of Alexandria would have musical instruments banished not merely from the worship but also from the feasts of Christians. He regarded them as being more suitable to beasts than men. "For we have heard," he says,¹ "of stags being charmed by the pipe, and seduced by music into the toils, when hunted by the huntsman. We must be on our guard against whatever pleasure titillates eye and ear, and effeminates. For the various spells of the broken strains and plaintive melodies of the Carian muse corrupt men's morals, drawing to perturbation of mind, by the licentious and mischievous art of music." Jerome thought that a Christian maiden ought not even to know what a lyre or a flute was, or what it was used for. The first believers were little concerned about the artistic quality of their performance. The spirit of ecstasy and fervid enthusiasm in which they poured forth their feelings was to them a matter of far more importance than the sweetness or tunefulness of their song. "We sing God's praises," says Eusebius,² "with living psaltery, inspired cithara and

¹ *Pædag.*, ii. 4.

² *In Psalm.* 91.

spiritual songs. Far more pleasant and dear to God than any instrument is the harmony of the whole Christian people, when in all the Churches of Christ we sing psalms and hymns with harmonious minds and well-tuned hearts." And again: "Our cithara is the whole body, by whose movement and action the soul sings a fitting hymn to God, and our ten-stringed psaltery is the veneration of the Holy Ghost by the five senses of the body and the five virtues of the spirit." Similarly the references in Scripture to the use of musical instruments are interpreted by Clement of Alexandria as referring to the various organs of the body. It may be of interest to give the passage as a specimen of patristic allegorisation: "The Spirit, distinguishing from such revelry the divine service, sings, 'Praise Him with sound of trumpet;' for with sound of trumpet He shall raise the dead. 'Praise Him on the psaltery;' for the tongue is the psaltery of the Lord. 'And praise Him on the lyre.' By the lyre is meant the mouth struck by the Spirit, as it were, by a plectrum. 'Praise with the timbrel and the dance,' refers to the Church meditating on the resurrection of the dead in the resounding skin. 'Praise Him on the chords and organ.' Our body He calls an organ, i.e., an instrument, and its nerves are the strings, by which it has received harmonious tension, and when struck by the Spirit, it gives forth human voices. 'Praise Him on the clashing cymbals.' He calls the tongue the cymbal of the mouth, which

resounds with the pulsation of the lips. Therefore he cried to humanity, 'Let every breath praise the Lord,' because He cares for every breathing thing which He hath made. For man is truly a pacific instrument; while other instruments, if you investigate, you will find to be warlike, inflaming to lusts, or kindling up amours, or rousing wrath."¹ Some of the Fathers took up the position that the introduction of musical instruments into the temple service was a concession to the carnality of the Jews. So Chrysostom: "It was only permitted to the Jews as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols: but now instead of instruments, we may use our own bodies to praise Him withal."

The organ, which was the instrument destined ultimately to establish itself as peculiarly fitted for use in Church worship, is of considerable antiquity. The germ from which it was to develop was the syrinx or Pan's pipe, a set of reeds of various lengths bound together in a row with their open tops arranged in a horizontal line, so that the player by shifting it about, as it was held to the mouth, could produce sounds of varying pitch. In course of time the idea suggested itself that instead of the player shifting the pipes about as he blew down them, it would be better to introduce the wind from below,

¹ *Pædag.*, ii. 4.

and to have some arrangement whereby it could be admitted to the pipe one desired to sound and excluded from the others. The form of organ in use in ancient times was known as the hydraulic organ, the principle of which was devised by an Egyptian of the third century B.C. called Ctesibius. It received its name from the fact that the supply of wind to the pipes was regulated by an ingenious water arrangement. The instrument so constructed by Ctesibius was improved by Archimedes, and called forth the admiration of Tertullian: "Observe the extraordinary genius of Archimedes. I speak of the hydraulus. What members, what parts, what joinings, what rows of pipes, what a compendium of sounds, what an intercourse of modes, what troops of *tibiae*, and all composing one great whole! That spirit, which breathes from the trouble of the waters, is administered through the parts, is solid in substance, divided in operation."

The hydraulic organ came in course of time to give place to the pneumatic. The difference between the two kinds of organ is not very well brought out by these designations, as one might be led to infer that the part played by air in the pneumatic instrument in sounding the pipes was taken by water in the hydraulic. But that was not the case. The water in the hydraulic instrument did not go near the pipes. The hydraulic organ, so far as the sounding of the pipes was concerned, was as truly pneumatic as the so-called pneumatic. The water was

used merely to regulate the wind pressure, the inequality of which was one of the great difficulties in organ construction. In the pneumatic instrument water was dispensed with, and the difficulty about the regulation of the wind pressure was met by multiplying the number of bellows. I have quoted Tertullian's eulogy of the hydraulic organ. It may be of interest to have a similar encomium of the pneumatic instrument, this time in an epigram attributed to Julian the Apostate: "I see a strange sort of reeds—they must, methinks, have sprung from no earthly, but a brazen soil. Wild are they, nor does the breath of man stir them, but a blast, leaping forth from a cavern of ox-hide, passes within, beneath the roots of the polished reeds; while a lordly man, the fingers of whose hands are nimble, stands and touches here and there the concordant stops of the pipes; and the stops, as they lightly rise and fall, force out the melody."¹

The Greek Church does not tolerate instrumental music of any kind in worship, and its doors were closed to the organ. Of the date of the introduction of the instrument into the Western Church we cannot say anything with certainty. We read of an organ being sent by the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine Copronymus, to King Pepin in the year 757, and this is sometimes taken as the date of its introduction to the West. But organs seem to have been known

¹ *Palatine Anthology*, Bk. IX., No. 365.

in Spain and Italy long before this. According to Julianus, a Spanish bishop who lived in the fifth century, the organ was in common use in the churches of that country in his day. Some authorities have it that Pope Vitalianus, who lived in the seventh century, introduced the instrument into the Church in Italy. It is difficult to reach any certainty in the matter; but Ambros,¹ an eminent authority on the history of music, is of opinion that the use of small organs in church may be dated much earlier than is generally supposed. Charlemagne had one built for the cathedral at Aix-la-Chapelle, and by the tenth century organs were installed in most of the cathedrals and larger churches.

We are accustomed to think of the organ as the instrument specially associated with Church worship. But originally it was used for secular entertainment, and a writer of the fifth century praises Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths, for having none at his court. Chaucer² speaks of the "mery organ," even when referring to its use in the church, which is hardly the epithet we should employ; but as we shall see, it was sometimes used in the Mass to introduce strains of a far from sacred character. The first organs employed in church were very unwieldy, cumbersome structures. The keys were from four to six inches broad, and had to be struck by the

¹ *Gesch. der Musik*, ii. 75.

² *The Nonne Priestes Tale*, 4041.

fists or the elbows. Hence the expression "to beat the organ." The tone was harsh and piercing, and we read of a woman in the cathedral at Aix-la-Chapelle falling into a faint, or if we press the literal translation of the Latin, losing her life, at the sound. The following account of a gigantic organ installed in Winchester Cathedral in the tenth century is of interest: "Twice six bellows above are ranged in a row, and fourteen lie below. These, by alternate blasts, supply an immense quantity of wind, and are worked by seventy strong men, labouring with their arms, covered with perspiration, each inciting his companions to drive the wind up with all his strength, that the full-bosomed box may speak with its four hundred pipes which the hand of the organist governs. . . . Two brethren of concordant spirit sit at the instrument, and each manages his own alphabet (i.e., octave). . . . Like thunder the iron tones batter the ear, so that it may receive no sound but that alone. To such an amount does it reverberate, echoing in every direction, that every one stops with his hand his gaping ears, being in no wise able to draw near and hear the sound, which so many combinations produce. The music is heard throughout the town, and the flying fame thereof is gone out over the whole country." ¹ If the organ at Aix-la-Chapelle was anything like this, one does

¹ Wulstan, translation from Wackerbarth, *Music and the Anglo-Saxons*, p. 12.

not wonder at the collapse of the woman at the sound.

I do not propose to give any account of the gradual development of the organ from the clumsy, unwieldy instrument I have described to the state of perfection it has now attained. There is just one point to which I would draw attention, for it casts light upon a most important development in music, nothing less in short than the origin of that polyphony which was to create such an enormous advance in the history of the art. Up to the Middle Ages vocal music had been entirely in unison. The first efforts at polyphony were of the crudest character. They consisted in two voices of different pitch—say at the distance of a fifth or a fourth from each other—each singing the same melody, the two parts thus running parallel at the interval between the voices, or the lower part holding one note as a kind of drone while the other part sang the melody. To our ears the former method would sound atrocious, even in spite of the efforts of modern composers to reconcile us to consecutive fifths. But crude and discordant as it was, it was the germ from which the marvels of counterpoint were to develop. This species of singing received the name "*organum*," and the performers were said to "*organise*." Even to the present day in Spain *canto de organo* means harmonised vocal music, as opposed to unison plain-song. It is sometimes difficult in reading mediæval writers to decide whether, when they speak of

organum, they are referring to the instrument or to this elementary part singing. Now how did this species of singing come to receive the name *organum*? There is no certain evidence on the point; but it is a plausible conjecture that it was so named after the instrument on which it had been discovered that two notes accidentally sounded together by the two hands produced a pleasing combination. In course of time when the *organum* had become established as a regular practice in vocal music, it was realised that it was possible to have the organ so constructed that one key should sound two pipes, one a fourth or a fifth above the other, or three pipes, the third adding the octave; and this was the origin of the mixture stop which is still a feature in the organ. If it be the case, as the name seems to suggest, that the organ was the source from which polyphony sprang, it is interesting to note how amply the offspring has repaid the debt; for there can be no question that the polyphonic style of music is that best suited to the genius of the organ. Thus the new art, which was to win its first triumphs in the field of vocal music, returned in due time to the source from which it sprang, to develop to richer fulness the resources of the instrument.

As we have seen, during the Middle Ages the organ was being gradually introduced and more and more freely used, at any rate in the larger churches. It is only natural that the spirit which resisted its introduction should be found giving itself expression,

even when it was fairly firmly established. An English abbot of the twelfth century, Ælred of Riveaulx, compares the blowing of the bellows to the crashing of thunder. But he was out of sympathy with any attempt to elaborate the music of the service, and makes mock of the singers with their deep breaths, their open mouths, their alternations in quality of tone, now an outburst like the neighing of a horse, now a fading away to the thinness of a woman's voice, their postures and contortions and grimaces, more like actors in a theatre than men engaged in the worship of God; with all of which he contrasts the mode of singing which the Holy Ghost introduced by His organs, the holy Fathers of old, Augustine, Ambrose, and especially Gregory.¹ Thomas Aquinas likewise protested against the introduction of the organ. "Such instruments," he says, "serve rather to cause pleasure than to awaken devotion. They are introduced in the Old Testament because the people were crass and obdurate, and required to be stimulated by such instruments as by earthly promises."² And he says expressly that the Church does not permit musical instruments, such as zithers and psalteries, in order that it may not be like the Jews. From this we should conclude that in the churches with which he was acquainted the organ cannot have been in use. This may quite

¹ *Speculum caritatis*, lib. ii. cap. 23.

² *Tract.*, 2, 2, *quaest.* 91, Art. 2.

well have been the case, as we know that in the Church of Lyons, for instance, the introduction of the organ was barred by the canon: "*Ecclesia Lugdunensis novitates non recipit.*" Similarly the organ has never been admitted into the Sistine Chapel. But in spite of protest and occasional refusal to admit it, it gradually made its way into the Church and received a definite place in the service.

We turn now to consider what that place was. How was the organ used when it was first admitted into the Church?

The first use to which it was put was to give the note to the priest and the choir for their intonation. In course of time, when the instrument was improved, the organist would venture to go further than the simple tone, and would play the opening phrase of the music to follow. This led on to what was called the Preamble, and this was later to develop into the more elaborate Prelude. Further, the organ was used to accompany, to some extent at any rate, the singing of the choir. This seems to have been the case especially with such choral numbers as were concerned with the praise of God, such, e.g., as the "*Sanctus*" and "*Hosanna.*" These uses of the organ are fairly obvious. But there is another way in which it was employed which strikes us as strange, and of which it may prove interesting to give some detailed account. This was to make the playing of the organ alternate with, instead of

accompanying, the singing of the choir. By the sixteenth century this was the established custom. Luther tells us in his "Table Talk" that once when he was a monk he came to a village to celebrate Mass, and when he went up to the altar he could hardly keep from laughing when the sacristan began to play the "*Kyrie eleison*" and "*Patrem*" on a lute, for he was not used to that kind of organ-playing. What seems to have amused Luther was not the rendering of a certain portion of the Mass on an instrument, but the naïveté of the sacristan in making use of the lute, which was used for secular music, to take the place of the absent organ. One writer,¹ speaking of the different methods in which organ and choir may co-operate, tells us that one way was for the organ to play the first verse of the canticle or psalm and the choir to sing the remainder straight through (*uno contextu*), another for the choir and the organ to render alternate verses. This latter method he prefers, as it keeps the mind from wandering, and gives less opportunity for chattering. He suggests that when the verse is being played by the organ, the choir should fill in the words in subdued tones and each member for himself (*submissa voce et singulatim*). At the Synod of Kulm in 1605 it was decreed that in the portions assigned to the

¹ Martinus Azpilcueta Navarrus, *Commentarii et Tractatus*, cap. 21, p. 293 s. Quoted, Rietschel, *Die Aufgabe, der Orgel im Gottesdienste*, p. 13.

organ, a single member of the choir should recite the words corresponding to the music.

While this method of having choir and organ perform in alternation was in general use in the sixteenth century and recognised by the ecclesiastical authorities, there were, as we learn from the decisions of some Synods and Councils, certain limits assigned to it. The Synod of Cambray in 1565 laid down the principle that whatever portion of the musical service was designed for instruction should be rendered by the choir alone and not by the organ, which could not edify like the living voice which is the interpreter and messenger of the Spirit. The number that was pre-eminently debarred to the organ on this principle was the "*Credo*." Different Councils differed in their decisions as to what other parts of the Mass should be reserved for the choir.

A definite pronouncement as to the place assigned to the organ in the Roman Catholic service at the end of the sixteenth century is made in the "*Cæremoniale*" drawn up by Pope Clement VIII. in the year 1600. In Matins it co-operates with the choir in the "*Te Deum*," and in Vespers in the "*Magnificat*," the choir commencing and the organ following. In the Versicles the organ is to keep silence and the choir to sing alone. The "*Gloria patri*," etc., with which the "*Introit*" concludes, is likewise to be rendered by the choir alone, also the last verses of the hymns. In the other canonical hours it is not customary for the organ to participate; but if this

takes place, it is recommended that one member of the choir recite in a clear voice what the organ is rendering. In the Mass the organ is to alternate with the choir in the "*Kyrie eleison*," the "*Gloria in excelsis*," and various other numbers. At the elevation of the host the organ is to play devoutly and quietly. In the "*Credo*" the organ is to remain silent and the choir is to sing alone.

While the organ was thus securing for itself a recognised place in divine service, there were not wanting protests against certain abuses which followed on its introduction. Complaint was made that in their desire to show off their powers the organists sometimes spun out the service to an hour longer than the usual time. Or sometimes the complaint was to the opposite effect, that the organ was used to rush through in the shortest possible time the various portions of the Mass which would have taken much longer to sing. Still worse, the organists were blamed for introducing secular, sometimes even lascivious and obscene, melodies into the Mass. This was one of the abuses specially dealt with by the Council of Trent.¹ As Schweitzer says: ² "Catholics and Protestants alike at that time imposed on it [the organ] a term of penance, in order

¹ "Ab ecclesiis musicas eas ubi sive organo, sive cantu lascivum aut impurum aliquid miscetur item seculares omnes actiones . . . arceant." Can. et decr. Conc. Trid., Sess. 22, decr. de observandis et evitandis in celebr. Missae.

² *J. S. Bach*, i. p. 25.

that it might alter its ungodly nature, in default of which the Church would excommunicate it."

Although I have not in these lectures attempted to give any account of the music of the Mass, I have ventured, in describing the introduction of the organ, to speak with some fulness of the manner in which it was used at first in the Roman Catholic Church, as some acquaintance with this is necessary to understand the part assigned to it in the Lutheran Church in the sixteenth century, of which I now proceed to speak. By the Swiss reformers it was absolutely rejected. Zwingli was opposed not only to instrumental music but to all congregational song whatsoever. The organ in Zurich Cathedral was destroyed, and the song of the congregation silenced. Calvin regarded instrumental music as no fitter to be adopted in the public worship of the Church than the incense, the candlestick, and the shadows of the Mosaic Law. Organs and such other ludicrous things were suited to Popery, which was a ridiculous and unsuitable imitation of the Jews, whereby the word and worship of God are exceedingly profaned. Carlstadt, one of the extremists among the Lutherans, railed against Gregorian song and organs as so much empty sound fitted for theatres and princes' courts rather than divine worship. The house of God was a house "*non clamoris sed amoris.*" As there is but one God, one baptism, one faith, so the music of the Church should be one song, unison. But it was not among the extremists alone that the organ was

regarded with suspicion. Some of the most moderate reformers were opposed to it. The memory of the abuses associated with it was still fresh. To many it seemed indissolubly connected with the Popery from which the Church had been delivered. The Protestant opposition to the use in divine service of any foreign language without interpretation was conceived to rule out the organ, which spoke to the ears but not to the understanding. Among those who cherished such views about the organ we are surprised to find Luther himself. We know what an ardent lover of music he was, and how anxious he was not only to secure congregational song but to retain the figured music performed by the choir; and it comes to us with quite a shock of surprise to find that this warm champion of ornate Church music did not regard the organ with favour. He classes it among the sensual attractions which avail nothing to the spirit, which is rather destroyed by such titillations. "There can be more faith," he says, "in a miller lad than in all the Papists, and it can avail more than all the Popes and monks with their organs and tricks, even had they more organs than there are pipes therein." In the regulations which he laid down for the Mass and divine service and in his prefaces to his hymn-books, he makes no reference to the organ.

But in spite of the coldness with which Luther regarded it and the violent opposition to it in some quarters, the organ retained its place in the Lutheran

Church. But it was not used at first to accompany the singing of the congregation which was the distinctive feature of the Lutheran worship, and this fact may in some measure explain Luther's attitude towards it. It was employed, exactly as it had been in the Roman Catholic Church, first of all to play a prelude and give the note to the minister and choir, and secondly to alternate with the choir in the rendering of those parts of the musical service assigned to them. In the singing of the hymns by the congregation the organ remained silent. They were sung by the congregation alone, or by the congregation and choir alternately. In course of time the organ was utilised to assist the congregational singing, but here again the method originally employed was not that of accompaniment but that of playing in alternation. The organ played the melody over first of all, and then struck in now and again to play a verse of the hymn while the congregation remained silent. So large a part however did the figured music in which choir and organ co-operated secure for itself in the Lutheran Church during the latter part of the sixteenth century, that there are signs of the congregational song being more and more thrust into the background. From the various admonitions addressed to organists in the Church Orders of the day we gather that various abuses, similar to those that obtained in the Roman Catholic Church, had crept into the Lutheran Church. They are admonished not to play secular organ-

pieces, and not to spin out their performance too long. A contemporary musician¹ gives the following description of the vagaries in which the organist indulged: "When the organists are required to give a specimen of their skill, their only resource is to make an empty noise without grace of art (*inanem strepitum sine ulla gratia*). To flatter the ears of their audience and to excite admiration over their technique, they run about with their fingers over the keys for half-an-hour at a time, and hope in this fashion with the help of God to move mountains by their graceful noise, but only a ridiculous mouse is brought to birth. Do not ask where Master *Mensura*, Master *Tactus*, Master *Tonus*, and especially Master *Bona Fantasia* are to be found. For after they have wandered about for some time with the greatest quickness over the keys playing in unison, they begin at last a two-part fugue, and working away with both feet on the pedals, they add the remaining parts. But such music in the ears not only of an expert, but even of any man of common sense and sound judgment, is as agreeable as the braying of an ass."

As we have seen, the organ during the sixteenth century did not, in the Lutheran Church, accompany the congregational singing of the chorales. It maintained a position of independence, and when it co-

¹ Hermann Finck, quoted Rietschel, *Die Aufgabe der Orgel im Gottesdienste*, p. 681 f.

operated in the rendering of the chorale, it was by striking in occasionally in alternation with the singing of the congregation. It was during the seventeenth century that it came to be used to support the singing of the congregation. There were two different methods in which it was employed for this purpose. The first was the one which appears to us the most natural, the one with which we are familiar in our present-day employment of the organ for this purpose, viz., that the organ supplied the harmonic foundation for the support of the melody which was sung by the congregation. Originally the melody was in the tenor, whence the origin of the name. It was Osiander, the Würtemberg Court preacher, who first conceived the idea of putting the melody in the upper part; and in the year 1586 he published a collection of fifty sacred songs and psalms "set contrapuntally," as the title says, "in four parts in such a way that the whole Christian congregation can always join in them." In his arrangement he had no thought of the organ co-operating in the performance. The counterpoint which he supplied was designed for the choir, not for the organ. But the transference of the melody to the upper part was a great advance; and when the co-operation of the organ with the congregation was contemplated, it seemed natural to modify as much as possible the polyphonic movement of the lower parts, and to assign to the organ a harmonic rather than a figurate form of accompaniment. That was one method in

which the organ was employed to support the congregational singing. But there was another and more complicated method employed, which could not, we should think, have served the purpose so well, but which was destined to prove fruitful in inspiration for the development of organ music. When Osiander transferred the melody to the treble, he retained a certain amount of polyphonic movement in the lower parts. He was followed by a number of composers, such as Eccard and Prætorius, who developed the polyphony indulged in by the choir to richer fulness, and converted the chorale into a kind of motet in which the choir wove a texture of florid counterpoint round the *canto fermo* sung by the congregation. When the idea was conceived of utilising the organ for the accompaniment of the congregation, the second method employed was to hand over to the instrument both the chorale melody sung by the congregation and the elaborate counterpoint supplied by the choir. The melody could be made to stand out boldly by the use of louder stops, while the florid counterpoint which, when rendered by the choir, might be apt to confuse the congregation by its prominence, could be kept subordinate by the employment of softer ones. Whether this method of treatment was likely to prove helpful as an encouragement to congregational singing is open to doubt. But it is of great interest because it was the germ—nay, we may say rather the bud almost on the point of bursting—

from which was to emerge one of the fairest flowers of organ music, the Chorale Prelude, which the genius of Bach was to develop to such perfection.

Before we leave Germany, let us glance for a moment or two at the manner in which the organ was actually employed in supporting the congregational singing, once its serviceability for this purpose was recognised. In consequence of the slow rate at which the chorales were sung, there was much fuller opportunity for introducing florid counterpoint into the accompaniment than in the case of an English hymn. The singing was precluded by improvisation on the theme of the chorale melody, and between each verse further improvisation was introduced; nay, not only between each verse, but even between each line there was an instrumental interlude. The effect must have been as disastrous to the coherence of the chorale as the practice of "lining out" in the psalm-singing in England. Evidently such methods of accompanying the congregational singing gave full opportunity to the organist to employ the resources of his art, and there was great temptation to sacrifice the interests of the congregation to the display of one's skill as an executant. A writer in the middle of the eighteenth century complains that several organists introduce as many variations when the congregation are singing as if they were playing a chorale prelude. "Now are heard two-part variations and diminutions, now the bass, now the upper part sports about;

they kick with the feet, they ornament the tune, they break it up and hack it about till one does not know what it is. Is this the right way to keep a congregation together? I should say rather, to confuse it." ¹ Even John Sebastian Bach was guilty of such extravagances in his youthful days; and there is an interesting record in the archives of the Principality of Sonderhausen in which the Consistory take him to task, among other things, for the manner in which he played the service, now preludising at inordinate length before the singing of the chorales, and then, when objection was taken to this, going to the other extreme and reducing the prelude to a minimum, now introducing surprising variations or strange harmonies into the chorales so as to confuse the congregation. One can understand how a youthful genius like Bach must have revelled in the opportunity presented by such a method of accompanying the chorales as I have described, and frequently overstepped the limits suggested by reasonable consideration for the congregation. But all the same one cannot but feel that the Consistory was in the right in protesting against the liberties he took in his accompaniment of the chorales as likely to confuse the congregation, and in urging him in future to restrain the exuberance of his genius.

¹ Adlung, *Anleitung zur musikalischen Gelahrtheit*, p. 681 f.

In England the use of the organ in Church worship was carried over with the rest of the musical service from the Roman Catholic to the Reformed Church. The outstanding names in the Cathedral music of the Tudor period—Byrd, Tallis, Merbecke, Tye—were all organists. It was from the Puritan side that the opposition to instrumental music came. The Puritans were opposed to the whole Cathedral Service with its “organs, singing, ringing and trowling of Psalms from one side of the church to another, with the squeaking of chanting choristers, disguised in white surplices.”¹ Instrumental music they condemned as both Jewish and Popish. The artistic side of worship made no appeal to them. Sir Edward Deering declared that one single groan in the spirit was worth the Diapason of all the Church music in the world.² When the Great Rebellion came and the Puritan cause gained the victory, the opposition to instrumental music took practical form, and organs were ruthlessly destroyed all over the country. Cromwell himself was a lover of music,

¹ A request of all true Christians to the House of Parliament, 1586.

² The sentiment was echoed in later times by C. H. Spurgeon: “That the Great Lord cares to be praised by bellows we very gravely question; we cannot see any connection between the glory of God and sounds produced by machinery. One broken note from a grateful heart must have more real acceptable praise in it than all the wind which swept through whistling pipes.”

and it is not fair to blame him for the destruction. But the fanatical frenzy of his soldiery knew no bounds, and they took a savage delight in desecrating and destroying all the paraphernalia of the hated Episcopal form of worship. Organs were either removed or broken up, choirs disbanded and their books destroyed, stained glass windows broken, the whole Choral Service abolished, and there was even a proposal to pull down the whole of the cathedrals.

With the Restoration the old order of worship again came into being, and efforts were made to have the Cathedral Service restored. But one difficulty was the lack of organs. The organ-builders' occupation was gone during the interregnum, and when the demand arose for instruments to replace those that had been destroyed, there were hardly any builders in the country to execute the work. Help had to be sought abroad, and some of the chief organs of the Restoration period were built by two men who came from the Continent, a German, Bernhardt Schmidt (generally known as Father Smith, to distinguish him from his two nephews who accompanied him), and René or Renatus Harris, the son of an English organ-builder who had emigrated to France. Smith built the organs for Whitehall, Christ Church, Oxford, Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's; and Harris those of Salisbury, Ely, and Bristol. There is an interesting story of a competition between Smith and Harris for the supply of the organ for the Temple Church.

Each was required to set up an organ in one of the halls of the Temple, in order that the Benchers might choose between them. This was accordingly done, and after a protracted delay and the excitement of a good deal of feeling on the part of the supporters of the respective competitors, the decision was ultimately given in favour of Father Smith. It is interesting to note that the players selected by Father Smith to display the powers of his instrument were Dr. Blow and Henry Purcell, who had been Blow's pupil. In due time the difficulties caused by the scarcity of organ-builders righted themselves. The great demand for instruments all over the country called forth a supply of builders able to carry out the work, and the organ became firmly established in its place in divine worship.

In the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland the introduction of instrumental music was a matter of much later date than in the Reformed Churches in Germany and England. In its beginnings the Reformed Church in Scotland was in close alliance with the Church at Geneva, and the position which Calvin took up on Church worship exercised a dominating influence upon the worship of the Church of Scotland during a long period of its history. As is well known, Calvin would admit nothing into the praise of the sanctuary but the Psalms of David. He banned all musical instruments, holding that their use in the Old Testament was indissolubly associated with the Jewish legislation, and that if

we were to admit them into the worship of the Church, we should likewise have to admit the incense, the candlestick, and the shadows of the Jewish law. "We know," he says,¹ "that our Lord Jesus Christ has appeared, and by His own advent abolished these legal shadows. That instrumental music, therefore, we hold to have been tolerated by reason of that time and people, because, as Holy Scripture says, they were as boys who needed such boyish rudiments, which must not at this time of day be recalled, unless we wish to overthrow the perfection of the Gospel, and to obscure the full light to which we have attained in Christ our Lord." The praise restricted to the Psalms, and these in metrical form suited for congregational singing without any instrumental assistance—these were the narrow limits within which the music of the Scottish Church was confined for more than a couple of centuries.

As can well be imagined the reactionary movement in England was viewed with much favour by the Scottish Church. When the Commissioners of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to the Westminster Assembly wrote in 1644 to the General Assembly giving an account of their labours, among the great things already done in which they admired the good hand of God mention was made of the taking down of "the great organs at Paul's and Peter's at Westminster," which the General Assembly

¹ 1 Sam. xviii.

specially mentioned in their reply among the things which they were greatly refreshed to hear.

It was not till the beginning of the nineteenth century that we hear of any proposal to introduce instrumental music into the Scottish Church. The first attempt seems to have been made in 1807 in St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow, which had an organ that was made by the famous inventor, James Watt. This was used to assist at the weekly congregational practice of praise, and on one occasion it was employed in divine service on Sunday to accompany the concluding Psalm. The matter was brought before the Presbytery, who gave it as their opinion "that the use of organs in the public worship of God is contrary to the law of the land, and to the law and constitution of our Established Church;" and therefore prohibited it in all the churches and chapels within their bounds. As the St. Andrew's experiment was confined to the use of the organ for a single Psalm on one occasion only, it may be regarded as the thin end of the wedge in the most literal sense of the term. Not for another half century was any attempt made to press the matter further. It was in Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh, that the next step was taken, the minister, Dr. Robert Lee, here introducing the reading of prayers and the use of a harmonium to accompany the congregational singing. The matter came before the General Assembly of 1864, which decided that such practices were not contrary to the law of the Church, and were

to be forbidden only when they tended to create dispeace in the congregation. The legality of the practice having been established, it gradually spread until in course of time it became the general practice throughout the Church of Scotland. In 1872 the United Presbyterian Synod, after many refusals, decided to permit the use of instrumental music. In the Free Church the innovation was more bitterly contested, and it was only after a severe conflict that the champions of instrumental music ultimately gained the victory. Now throughout the United Free Church, i.e., the Church formed by the union of the Free and the United Presbyterian Churches, the organ is in general use, while in the Free Church of the present day, i.e., the remnant of the former Free Church which refused to enter into the United Free Church, it is still denied a place.

It is interesting to recall some of the arguments used on either side in this acute controversy. One's dominant feeling when reading them is of how completely our position has changed from that taken up by the disputants. We regard the matter from the utilitarian point of view. The question of admitting instrumental music into Church worship is to be determined by its serviceability. Is it an aid to worship? Does it deepen our devotion and make our song of praise more hearty? But in the discussions of these days the question is argued almost entirely along Scriptural lines. Is there, or is there not Scriptural authority for it? It is

not enough that it be proved that instrumental worship is not prohibited in Scripture. "We must find an express warrant in God's Word," says Dr. Begg,¹ "for all that we do in the worship of God." "There is no middle ground," says Professor Girardeau,² "between submission to God's revealed will and a worship dictated by the fancies of sinners." At first blush one might fancy that the free use of instruments in the Old Testament would seem to authorise their employment in Church worship. But to this the opponents of instruments reply that we are not under the Old Testament dispensation, but under the new. It is true that God approved of instrumental music in the temple worship. But this was no immutable decree to remain for ever in force, but a positive enactment which might be changed at His pleasure. If we are to hold by the divine approval of instrumental music in Old Testament worship, then we must likewise retain the other things with which it is inseparably associated, circumcision, the passover, sacrifice, and the like. Dr. Candlish, one of the most stalwart disputants, argues, exactly in the spirit of Calvin, "that if the organ be admitted, there is no barrier in principle against the sacerdotal system in all its fulness—against the substitution again, in our whole religion, of the formal for the spiritual, the symbolic

¹ *Instrumental Music*, p. 2.

² *Music in the Church*, p. 180.

for the real." This was the position on the one side. The supporters of instrumental music sought to rebut these arguments by proving that the instrumental music introduced under the Old Testament dispensation was not essentially connected with the sacerdotal features of the temple worship. The arguments were sometimes more ingenious than convincing. The silver trumpets mentioned in Numbers x., though occasionally used in connexion with sacrifice, were really quite distinct from it. They were used for other purposes as well, and were, to quote the words of one of the writers of the time,¹ "simply an exhibition of Christ, the prophet, uttering His will as the sovereign ruler of the Hebrew church-state." "The institution of trumpets resembled nothing in the present dispensation but the ordinance of preaching."² Similarly it is argued that the service of praise introduced into the temple worship was not essentially or in principle connected with sacrifice and the priesthood. It was the free-will offering of the people, and was not under the control of the priests as it would have been had it been essentially connected with sacrifice. It being thus proved that the Old Testament sacerdotal system and the Hebrew service of praise were quite distinct, it follows that they do not stand or fall together, and supporters of the use of instrumental music in worship may survey unmoved the conten-

¹ Cromar, *Vindication of the Organ*, p. 55.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

tion that if they admit the organ they are in consistency bound to accept the sacerdotal system in its fulness.

That is a specimen of the lines of argument adopted by the disputants on either side. They were agreed on their premiss of the necessity of the sanction of Scripture, and upon this common ground they fought the battle with grim determination. And meanwhile the issue was being decided in a different corner of the field. The post which either side was fighting for, under the impression that its possession would secure the victory, had become of no strategic importance. The principle upon which the use of instrumental music in Church was ultimately to be determined really lay much deeper. It was whether or not the use of instrumental music satisfied a genuine craving of human nature, whether it helped or hindered the worship of that God who is Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. If the use of the organ could justify itself on that ground, then the victory was assured. It was not by the superiority of their arguments in the Scriptural discussion that the champions of instrumental music gained the day, but by the pragmatistic test of its value as an aid to devotion.

Let us turn now to consider the place which the organ holds in our present-day services, and the manner in which it may be used to best advantage. Its function is twofold, first to accompany the congregation and the choir, and secondly to provide certain

independent musical numbers, called voluntaries, at different points of the service.

First then of the organ as an accompanying instrument, and specially of its use in accompanying the singing of the congregation. This is its chief function, the ground upon which its admission into our churches at the present day is usually defended. One writer, indeed, would assign to it a more menial office, restricting its use in worship to the prelude at the assembling of the congregation and the postlude at their dismissal, in order to cover the noise made by the people when coming in and going out.¹ But as he is an avowed opponent of instrumental music, his proposal is not to be taken seriously. That the organ can be of the greatest assistance in the support and encouragement of congregational singing will readily be admitted by all who realise the possibilities of the instrument when properly used for this purpose. But it does not follow that in the hands of an unskilful performer it will have this result, and there are doubtless many instances, to which the opponents of instrumental music might point, where the introduction of the organ has tended to diminish rather than to swell the volume of praise that rises from the lips of the congregation. That being so, it behoves all organists to give careful heed to the manner in which they discharge this, the most important of the duties of their office. Just as the arrangements for the singing of the choir in the

¹ Harms, *Past. Theol.*, ii. 79.

Psalms and hymns must all be made with a view to the participation of the congregation, so the organist must always keep their interests before him in his organ accompaniment. He has to play in such a manner as shall give them encouragement and support, to diffuse around them an atmosphere of sound which shall remove the feeling of isolation which makes them afraid to lift up their voice, and yet at the same time to beware lest he drown their voices under the dominating tones of the instrument. As he has to keep the *via media* in respect of quantity of tone, so likewise in respect of *tempo*. The tendency of the congregation is to drag, and the organist has to see to it that he does not so accommodate his pace to them as to get slower and slower as the song proceeds. But in his desire to avoid this error, he may fall into the opposite one of so accelerating the pace that he leaves the congregation quite behind. This is a mistake of which many organists are guilty. They seem to identify slow with dragging singing, and to fancy that the only way to avoid dragging is to quicken the pace. But apart from the fact that such a quick tempo is utterly at variance with the character of most congregational tunes, it does not remedy the evil. The congregation still drag in a breathless kind of fashion in their effort to overtake the organ which is running away from them.¹ The

¹ "It is when he (the organist) is constantly trying to force the pace that dragging always ensues" (S. H. Nicholson, *A Manual of English Church Music*, p. 143).

remedy for dragging is not so much a matter of pace as of securing an understanding between organ and congregation, giving them encouragement, gently urging them to alertness, making them feel that the praise in which they are taking part is their affair and that its success depends on their co-operation. It is difficult to put into words the kind of "way with him" that an organist has who carries the congregation along with him. It is not altogether a matter of pace or of volume of tone, though both of these enter into it. It is in a minor degree the kind of relationship which a good conductor soon establishes with a choir which, when it comes into his hands, is stiff, stolid, and intractable, but which by the force of his personality he soon reduces to pliability. I say in a minor degree, for the organist cannot hope to make the congregation so quickly responsive as a conductor can a choir; but it is the same kind of relationship that he has to establish with them. I believe that what often frustrates the establishment of such relations between organist and congregation is the presence of the choir. Having them at his hand quick to respond, he is apt to forget the congregation beyond, which is much more sluggish in movement and requires to be more coaxingly dealt with. If our organists could in their accompaniment of the congregational singing forget altogether the existence of the choir and play as they would if it were a matter between the congregation and themselves, I believe our Church singing would be better than it is.

In the accompaniment of the hymns and other material of congregational praise, the organist does not, of course, confine himself to the music as it is written, but uses that as the foundation upon which to build a superstructure which shall give fuller scope to the resources of the instrument. There are manifold ways in which he can infuse new life and colour into the music before him. One of the dangers attending congregational singing, which is constrained to aim at a full volume of tone rather than delicacy of expression, is monotony; and it should be the aim of the organist to seek to secure variety. There are several methods by which he may effect this. There is first of all the great wealth of tone-colour at his disposal through the variety of stops of the instrument. By skilful registering he can invest every verse of the hymn with fresh interest. "Though the sacrifice is the same," to use Thomas Fuller's phrase, "yet the dressing of it is different." As a general rule anything in the way of descriptive accompaniment is to be avoided. To attempt a realistic reproduction of the roar of the thunder, the sighing of the winds, the singing of the birds, and the chimes of bells, goes beyond the limits of legitimate musical art, and offends by its cheapness and vulgarity. The words which Beethoven wrote at the top of his Pastoral Symphony: "Expression of feeling rather than description," indicate what is the true province of music, though he may not himself have consistently

adhered to the principle throughout the work. And if the organist is anxious, as he very properly should be, to give expression to the sentiments of the text, he should do so not by attempting to reproduce the actual physical sounds referred to, but by endeavouring to stimulate the feelings which those sounds evoke. Then further there are countless variations available by certain ornamentations which he may introduce. While still keeping to the harmony before him, he may manipulate the chords in a variety of ways by arpeggios, broken chords, sustained notes, or movement in the various parts, or he may weave a descant which makes the original melody stand out with added charm. Then if the congregation is singing in unison, he may vary the harmony, which in itself makes an enormous difference in the way of relieving monotony. Care must be taken in this connexion that the liberties one allows oneself in the way of modulation do not degenerate into licence. There is a story of Beethoven in his youth having once quite put out a singer in the Hof-Kirche at Bonn by the boldness of his modulations. And the Consistory made it a complaint against Bach that he was not content with introducing a *tonus Peregrinus*, but sometimes wandered off into a *tonum contrarium*, which seems to have been some extreme modulation. A change of harmony makes a wonderful difference in the character of a familiar melody. That is why a varied harmony is so effective as a relief to monotony. But if the new harmony

be startling and remote, the effect is apt to be unsettling, and the novelty which kept within bounds would be an added attraction, is only too likely to prove disastrous to the singing of the congregation. One can recall settings of familiar songs by some of our modern composers which are so indefinite in their tonality that it is only by a kind of *tour de force* that the singer can hold his own against the accompaniment. Anything of that kind in the way of varied harmony to a hymn tune is to be deprecated. In all the different methods at his disposal for the introduction of variety, the organist must never forget that it is the singing of the congregation that is the matter of first importance, that his part is merely to accompany, and that whenever by his accompaniment he disturbs the congregation or inspires any feeling of insecurity, he has failed in the discharge of his function.

The accompaniment of plainsong and Gregorian Chant is a special branch of the organist's art upon which I do not propose to speak at any length. Strictly speaking, this style of singing should be unaccompanied, and if the organ is introduced it must be kept in complete subordination to the voices. As we have seen, the outstanding characteristics of this style of music are its free rhythm and its modal tonality; and on no account must either of these be interfered with. Any attempt to make its free rhythm fit into the Procrustean bed of our measured music is to be deprecated. It loses all its charm

when its freedom of movement is reduced to a steady march. Similarly the modal tonality must be preserved in the accompaniment. The organist must realise that the great wealth of harmonic material at his disposal in modern tunes is now reduced to a minimum. As Dr. Madeley Richardson says:¹ "To dress up ancient tones with diminished sevenths and all the devices of modern music, is a thing to be abhorred; far better leave them alone altogether. The player should transfer himself in spirit to the old days; he should forget that he has ever heard modern music, and play what he would have played had he lived before it was invented; so will he make the modal music a thing of beauty, and worthy its place as worship music."

In accompanying the choir when singing alone, the treatment of the organ will vary considerably from that employed for congregational singing. There the organist recognises that there are certain musical blemishes incident to the situation which it behoves him so far as possible to make good. The strains of the instrument envelop the singing of the congregation in a mantle of sound which, like charity, covers a multitude of sins. What is lacking in precision of attack, intelligence of phrasing, and, within certain limits, delicacy of expression, the organist endeavours to make good by his use of the instrument. But with the choir it is quite different.

¹ *Modern Organ Accompaniment*, p. 146.

That is precisely the way in which a choir should *not* be accompanied; yet it is, unfortunately, the method which prevails in a great number of our churches. The choir must learn not to depend upon the organ. The reason why so many choirs fail in this respect is, I believe, because of the constant use of the instrument at rehearsal. When required to sing without accompaniment, they feel as if some inordinate demand were being made upon them; whereas the plain fact of the matter is that a choir that cannot sing without accompaniment cannot sing at all. Many anthems have no independent accompaniment, and are best rendered unaccompanied. When the organ is used to accompany them, let it be distinctly understood that its position is subordinate. It is there not to lead but to support the choir. Far too often the result of the method of rehearsal to which I have referred is that instead of the organ accompanying the choir, it is the choir that accompany the organ, the instrument always leading off in the attack and giving exaggerated emphasis to all marks of expression, while the choir plod along, with little attempt at variation of expression, as a sort of undertone to the more brilliant performance of the organ. Where there is an independent organ part, the organist has more opportunity for boldness of treatment. Here the choir must stand by itself. It has its own part to sing, and the organ part stands in contrast to it, and is equally important, or almost so. It is a mistake in

such a case to keep the organ subdued. It has a claim of its own to be heard, and full scope is to be given to the resources of the instrument in the way of tone-colour, dynamic effect, and variety of expression, due care, of course, being always exercised that the choir is not overweighted.

In addition to accompanying the congregation and choir, the organ is used from time to time as a solo instrument in the course of the service. In a great many churches it plays over the tune of the hymn or Psalm before the congregation. Dr. Madeley Richardson objects to this practice as neither necessary, sensible, nor seemly. "It is not necessary," he says,¹ "if the singers know the tune; if they do not, it is too late to begin learning it a moment before it is to be sung. . . . It is unreasonable, for the notes played do not constitute an organ piece; they are vocal parts, and should be treated as such. . . . It is unseemly, for it suggests the idea of a rehearsal rather than a set service." There is force in these objections. But all the same if new tunes are to be introduced, we can hardly assume that the congregation do not require such assistance. The choir will have practised them beforehand, but they are quite unfamiliar to the congregation, and the playing over will prove a help. And there is the further ground upon which the playing over of the tunes may be defended, viz., to set the rate at

¹ *Modern Organ Accompaniment*, p. 69.

which the Psalm or hymn to be sung is to be taken. Possibly other considerations weigh in the retention of the practice. If the tune be not played over, then in order to avoid too abrupt a commencement a short instrumental prelude on the melody about to be sung might be introduced. This requires a certain gift of extemporisation on the part of the organist. In the hands of a brilliant musician the little prelude before the hymn might become a thing of beauty to which it would be a delight to listen. In the hands of the average organist who can make no pretension to creative imagination, it is apt to degenerate into a meaningless succession of chords, or an incoherent jumble of fragments of the melody. As the proportion of musical geniuses to unpretentious performers among our organists is naturally small, this may explain the retention of the custom of playing over, even when it is admitted that under ideal conditions it might advantageously give place to the artistic prelude. Better to—

bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.

But the chief opportunity for the organ in the way of independent contribution to the service is in the voluntaries at the commencement and conclusion of the service, and in many churches during the taking of the collection. These voluntaries may be either free improvisations or renderings of some organ pieces. Where the organist has the gift necessary

to the former method, he has the advantage of being able to adapt his voluntaries to the spirit of the occasion, and make them echo and enforce the lessons of the service. But it is, as I have said, a gift to which few can aspire. There is a story of Bach improvising for half an hour on end on "An Wasserflüthen Babylon," and being complimented by the old Hamburg master Reinken, who said: "I thought this art had perished, but I see that it still lives on in you." But Bachs are rare, and there are comparatively few organists who have the gifts which justify their attempting to improvise voluntaries. Anything more dreary than the aimless meandering about from chord to chord or phrase to phrase, without form or purpose, which is the usual result of the efforts of the man who lacks the inspiration of genius, can hardly be imagined. "Is anything more exasperating," asks M. Widor,¹ "than an improvisation in four parts, wandering now here, now there—monotonous in colour, devoid of determination, repose, contrast, or purpose, having neither beginning, middle, nor end? A veritable *macaroni au fromage!*" Those who are conscious that they do not possess the genius to make improvisation a work of art, would do well to confine themselves to the performance of some definite piece of music.

¹ Preface to Pirro's *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Organist*, p. xviii.

But what is the kind of music best fitted for the purpose? That is a question which every organist who takes a serious view of his office will carefully ponder. It will inevitably lead on to the further question: What is the purpose of the voluntary? What place does it occupy in divine service? And any attempt seriously to answer that question will at once dismiss as utterly unworthy many voluntaries which find a place in our Church services, and as entirely irrelevant the grounds upon which their introduction is defended. The function of the voluntaries at the beginning and end of the service is not to cover the noise made by the congregation when taking or leaving their places in church. It is not to tickle the ears of the hearers by giving them something that they like. It has a definite religious object. These voluntaries are meant to quicken the sense of reverence with which we take our place and prepare ourselves for worship in the House of God, to deepen the impression made by the service in which we have been taking part and the lessons which the preacher has been enforcing. Once we realise this, a great deal of the music which at present does duty as organ voluntary is forthwith put out of court. The sickly sentimental melody, "loathsome in its own deliciousness," the light tripping dance measure, the showy concert piece in which the organist can "exploit the resources of the instrument," the noisy march with which the congregation are played out—these and such-like productions we

at once set aside as quite unworthy. Then further, it is not enough that music be good to justify its use as a voluntary. It may be of most excellent quality, and yet by its inherent character or its secular associations prove unfit for use in divine worship. It is a difficult matter to say what makes us regard one kind of music as sacred and another as not, when it is purely instrumental without any text associated with it. Undoubtedly association has a great deal to do with it.¹ A certain style of music has grown up within the Church. At the time when music was coming to a consciousness of its powers and developing them to riper fulness, this was the form in which, in the service of the Church, these powers found expression. Religion has put its stamp indelibly upon it, and in virtue of this association it seems peculiarly fitted to awaken religious feelings in the breast. In the field of organ music the leading exponent of the type of music I have been referring to is John Sebastian Bach. In his works our organists have not only a comprehensive repertory of music of the very highest quality upon which to draw, but likewise an excellent school in which to

¹ "There is no sacredness, says Ruskin, in round arches or in pointed, in pinnacles or in buttresses; and we may say with equal pertinence that there is nothing sacred *per se* in sixteenth-century counterpoint, Lutheran choral, or Calvinist psalm-tune" (Dickinson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, p. 271.

cultivate a taste for what is sound and devotional in organ music. Among Bach's organ works the Chorale Preludes stand out as eminently suited for divine worship. The *Little Organ Book*, which contains forty-six Chorale Preludes, mostly comparatively short, should prove a rich storehouse for the Church organist. Here is a collection of organ pieces suffused with the poetical fire and religious devotion of one of the greatest personalities in the field of religious music. In addition to the collection just referred to Bach has written other Chorale Preludes or Fantasias on a more elaborate scale. And yet till comparatively recently these works were little known in this country. Bach's other organ works, at least the more outstanding of them, were familiar to all who made any pretence to competence on the instrument; but the Chorale Preludes were a *terra incognita* to all but a comparatively few enthusiasts. Thanks to the labours of such men as Spitta, Schweitzer, Pirro, Parry, and Harvey Grace, the attention of organists has been drawn to the richness of the treasure, of the highest value for liturgical purposes, contained in these wonderful compositions; and it is devoutly to be hoped that they may bulk more largely in our Church services than they have done in the past. And they have likewise served, one is glad to note, as models to composers of more recent years for a class of voluntary eminently suited for use in Church worship. "Our organ music for purely Church use,"

says Harvey Grace,¹ "has benefited lately from two sources, one old and one new; Bach, whose Chorale Preludes are now familiar to a good many organists and congregations, and Karg-Elert, whose recent output of nearly a hundred pieces founded on chorales has revived interest in a form that some historians had regarded as obsolete. The result of this awakened interest has been a substantial and steadily growing store of English organ music written round our native hymns, by such composers as Parry, Stanford, Charles Wood, Charlton Palmer, C. W. Pearce, Harold Darke, C. H. Kitson, E. C. Bairstow, John E. West, Bristow Farrar, Vaughan Williams, and others. The bulk of this music is founded on the standard tunes which are, or should be, in regular use in our churches, and the style ranges from simple accompanied melody to elaborate development. In no case do we find the now discredited set variation form, with its inane twitterings." In addition, if something of a more vigorous nature be desired for the final voluntary, there are the preludes and fugues of the great master, whose infinite variety 'age cannot wither nor custom stale.' Some, it must be admitted, are of a brilliancy that makes them more suited for use at recitals than in divine worship. Yet even so they are infinitely preferable to the noisy compositions

¹ Article on "Organ Voluntaries," in *A Manual of English Church Music*, p. 162 f.

that are often made to do duty as concluding voluntaries. "We must always keep in mind," says Professor Dickinson,¹ "that the question of appropriateness in church music depends very much upon association. A style that would be execrated as blasphemous in a Calvinist assembly would be received as perfectly becoming in a Catholic or Lutheran ceremony. . . . It may be said that Bach's grandest organ pieces are conceived as the expression of what may be called the religious passion—the rapture which may not unworthily come upon the believer when his soul opens to the reception of ideas the most penetrating and sublime." I would again recall Mendelssohn's saying that Bach could turn any concert room in which his works were performed into a church. Even in his most brilliant organ pieces we can never divest ourselves of the idea that they were composed for an instrument whose true place is the church, and by a man who felt constrained to lay the most exquisite productions of his genius as offerings upon the divine altar.

While pleading that our organists should make their voluntaries worthy to be reckoned as an integral part of the service, it is only right that I should point out that a certain responsibility rests upon our congregations. The organist is often pestered by their importunity to have their ears

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 299.

tickled by some tawdry flummery decked out by the employment of fancy stops. Too often they regard the voluntary as a kind of show-piece to be performed for their delectation. There is great temptation to a man who has not a high sense of the dignity of his office to gratify their predilections, and to prostitute his talents in order to win a little cheap applause. And there is another respect in which, it seems to me, our congregations, and our ministers too, will require to adopt a change of attitude if the concluding voluntary is to attain the high level which appears becoming. We urge our organists to regard the voluntaries as an integral part of the service. But is it really so if minister and congregation leave their places during its performance? The proper course would seem to be for both to remain where they are till the voluntary is concluded. When the Dead March is played on any occasion of mourning, no one thinks of leaving the church till its conclusion. Why? Because it is felt that it is a part of the service. But is not that what we should feel with regard to the concluding voluntary in every case? It may appear a counsel of perfection, and certainly it will probably be long before it becomes established practice, but it seems to me that one of the most helpful ways to secure the elevation of the concluding voluntary to the high artistic and liturgical level that appears becoming would be the adoption by minister and congregation of the attitude which I have suggested.

I would close by a strong plea to our organists to recognise the sacredness of their calling, and to magnify their office by the spirit in which they devote themselves to the discharge of its duties. One is glad to notice in recent years an enormous improvement in this respect on the part of the musicians who give their services to the Church. Our Societies of Organists are giving ever-increasing evidence of their realisation of the sacred character of their office, and their sincere desire to make their contribution to the music of the Church a veritable aid to worship. In no department of Church music is the manifestation of such a spirit more necessary than in the voluntaries, where the organist can do so much to make or mar the spirit of reverence which becomes the worship of the sanctuary. What Sir John Goss is reported to have said of a well-known organist of his day, George Cooper, well expresses the spirit in which the organist should address himself to his work: "He always places the worship of God first, then the composer's views or intentions, his choir next, then his organ, and himself last." To make the enumeration complete, one would have liked to see the congregation included; but so far as the first and last places are concerned, there can be no question as to the correctness of the order. Only when he puts the glory of God in the foremost place and his own interest last can the organist, or indeed anyone who makes any contribution to the worship of the sanctuary, worthily discharge his office.

The instrument over which our organists have command has been well named the King of Instruments. But *corruptio optimi pessima*, and just because it is the king of instruments, if it be prostituted to unworthy uses, it may become a most potent agent for evil in the music of the Church. Let them never fail to put the worship of God in the foremost place and to use the great powers which the instrument puts at their disposal for His glory, and we need have no fear but that, in spite of the misgiving with which in many quarters its introduction into Church worship was hailed, it will prove a most powerful influence for deepening the spirit of devotion with which the congregation lift their hearts in worship to Almighty God.