

The Light of Life (Lux Christi), op 29

An oratorio for soprano, contralto, tenor and baritone soloists, full choir and orchestra, based on biblical texts arranged and expanded by the Reverend E Capel-Cure. The oratorio is intended to be performed without an interval.

Approximate Length:	65 minutes
First Performance:	
Date:	10 September 1896
Venue:	Worcester Festival
Conductor:	the composer
Dedicated to:	Dr Charles Swinnerton Heap, conductor and founder of the North Staffordshire Music Festival

Elgar proposed to call this, his first oratorio, *Lux Christi*, but his publishers Novello persuaded him to provide an English title. He chose The Light of Life. The story is of the blind beggar whose sight Christ restored. The words are taken from St John's Gospel with some rather unsatisfactory additions by the Reverend Capel-Cure.

Inevitably, the work does not quite achieve the standard and consistency of the oratorios that soon followed it - it would be unreasonable to expect Elgar to attain perfection with his first foray in the genre. It nevertheless represents an important step in his musical development. It was the longest work that Elgar had at that time composed, and the first in which he adopted leitmotifs for the main characters and concepts. It shares some of these with *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, most notably the gentle motif representing Jesus as the giver of light. First introduced towards the end of the work's prelude, it occurs repeatedly in different forms throughout this work then re-emerges as the principal crescendo in the prologue of *The Apostles*. Indeed, while *The Light of Life* tells a self-contained story, it is appropriate to regard it musically as the first of the trilogy of New Testament oratorios continued by *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*.

The work is only occasionally performed but well worth hearing when the opportunity arises.