

The Elgar Society

Journal



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The Elgar Society

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*The Editor does not necessarily agree with
the views expressed by contributors,
nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views.*

Front Cover: Edward Elgar's brother, Sister Mary Reginald Elgar, known as Dot, pictured in the grounds of St Rose's Convent in Stroud. Courtesy of the Dominican Sisters Archives, Stone, Staffordshire.

Editorial

If this issue is delivered later than usual, it is through circumstances – to be no more specific than is necessary – beyond the control of any individual involved. It has been necessary to make new arrangements for setting the pages, and these could not be implemented overnight. I would like, therefore, to pay tribute to John Norris, who has undertaken this work over a long period, but for whom the March issue of the Journal was the last. As editor I might have welcomed a slightly longer run in before having to take steps, with the aid of the Chairman and Treasurer as well, it must be said, as John himself, to replace him. I am grateful in any case for all his help. I am also grateful to Michael Byde, who has undertaken the work in his place, which involved learning to use software new to all of us.

The delays can hardly be held responsible for an eventuality which covered the editor with confusion. I suppose it is not too early to admit to the odd senior moment. The fact is that successively, at a considerable interval, two highly esteemed contributors volunteered to review the CD of the Canterbury *Apostles*, both having also attended it in person. Somehow I managed to accept both their kind offers, having forgotten, when the second offer came, about the earlier one. My apologies to Geoffrey Hodgkins and Paul Rooke, therefore, and thanks to them, as they could not possibly have been nicer about it. Both offered to withdraw, but the reviews were too good for that; and in order to avoid redundancy, I concocted what may appear to be a dialogue, in the hope that this thorough review of a most commendable venture will be of still greater interest than either review on its own.

I am pleased that we can include another article drawn from the Stratford/Broadheath conference of 2005, with Norma E. Hollingsworth's insight into the world of angels. With this, the *Apostles* review, and Geoffrey Hodgkins's second article on Elgar's reading in theology, the centenary of *The Kingdom* is at least obliquely celebrated by concentration on sacred music; and this is nicely paralleled by the first instalment of Richard Smith's investigations into the member of the Elgar family most devoted to the Catholic faith. Part II of his article on 'Dot' will follow in the November issue. My thanks to all contributors, and to Dominic Guyver for his help in reading the proofs.

Julian Rushton

A tribute to Philip Maund

In the last issue of *The Elgar Society News*, John Norris paid tribute to the work of Philip Maund during his tenure as Editor of the Journal. It remains self-evident that the Journal is the shop-window through which the Society presents itself to the world, and that the Journal's Editor therefore has an enormous responsibility. It is up to the Editor to make of this responsibility what he (or she) will, and to take forward the legacy of the previous Editor. For Phil Maund this was Geoffrey Hodgkins. Phil has changed the Journal, and quite right too! It will no doubt change again, as is only natural, and we shall, one day, look back on the Atkins, Taylor, Hodgkins, and now the Maund years and recognise that each assumed a voice and style of his own.

When Geoffrey took over from Ron Taylor I wrote '...thank you for all you have done to maintain our most valuable product, the way you have enhanced it, and the imagination with which you have managed the job...'. This applies to Phil Maund as well. What has marked his time as editor has been his willingness to take on subjects that have made us think about areas of Elgar's music and life we thought we knew. In his first issue David Lemon's piece on *The Dream of Gerontius* is but one obvious example. Other pieces included possible 'solutions' to the 'Enigma', articles from the past on 'Elgar and Englishness', Olaf Tryggvason, Stanford, and Sanford Terry. Furthermore, Phil's steady hand was on the tiller as we were guided through the increasing number of notable centenaries including the Covent Garden Festival and *The Apostles*.

We should be grateful to Phil for his dedicated and imaginative work and the twelve editions of the Journal he edited. We now welcome Julian Rushton as our new Editor. Julian has already served the society as a director of the Elgar Society Edition, a position he has just relinquished. I look forward with eagerness to what he will bring to the Journal and, more widely, the Society. We are particularly fortunate that Julian, until recently professor of music at Leeds University, has agreed to take on this role. He will also continue to serve the Edition in an editorial role, and Phil will also be involved in the Edition in future, most notably *The Severn Suite* volume. In the changes I have anticipated I am sure we, as a society, will seize the opportunity for renewal as we look towards the daunting 'Year of Elgar'. Thank you, Phil, for leaving a legacy of which you can be justly proud.

Andrew Neill

'I believe in angels...': the Role and Gender of the Angels in *The Dream of Gerontius*¹

Norma E. Hollingsworth

What is an angel? The Introduction to Gustav Davidson's comprehensive *A Dictionary of Angels* states that 'angels are pure spirits and so should be presumed to be bodiless and, hence, sexless'.² In a recent BBC Radio 4 edition of 'In Our Time', Valery Rees described how the early tribes of Israel absorbed a belief in angels from the surrounding nations. It was from the Jews that the Christian faith inherited its own belief in angels.³ But how were Jewish and Christian authors to describe encounters with spirits that were 'bodiless and sexless'? It is hardly surprising that they pictured them in their own image and began to give them bodies and gender. So throughout history the way human beings describe angels tells us more about those human beings themselves than it does about the pure spirits.

Cardinal Newman certainly believed in angels; in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, looking back on his beliefs as a young man, he writes, 'I thought that life might be a dream, or I an Angel, and all this world a deception, my fellow-angels by a playful device concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with the semblance of a material world'.⁴ He believed that the material world was but a symbol of the spiritual. But Newman's earthly, symbolic dream world is inhabited by angels, and in the *The Dream of Gerontius* it is the Guardian Angel who conveys the Soul from the actual body to the Throne of God, acting as an unseen bridge between the material world, which is a symbol, and the reality of the spiritual world. Newman's belief in angels, both as an Anglican and a Roman Catholic, was not unusual for the day. Victorian art and poetry are full of depictions of angels and the angelic host: Browning, Longfellow, Leigh Hunt, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti all wrote poems featuring angels, and Newman himself had previously composed two poems on the subject. The first, entitled 'Angelic Guidance', was composed in 1832 when Newman was still an Anglican. The second, because of its subject, is more relevant to our topic. It was written in 1853, over ten years before he wrote *The Dream*, and is called 'Guardian Angel'.⁵ The four verses which impact on this paper are these:

GUARDIAN ANGEL

(1) My oldest friend, mine from the hour
When first I drew my breath;
My faithful friend, that shall be mine,
Unfailing, till my death;

- (5) Thou wast my sponsor at the font;
 And thou, each budding year,
 Didst whisper elements of truth
 Into my childish ear.
- (10) Mine, when I stand before the Judge,
 And mine if spared to stay
 Within the golden furnace, till
 My sin is burn'd away.
- (11) And mine, O Brother of my soul,
 When my release shall come;
 Thy gentle arms shall lift me then,
 Thy wings shall waft me home.

This poem will be referred to again later, but what is worthy of note at this stage is Newman's reference, in the penultimate verse, to the 'golden furnace'. This is perhaps a more traditional way of depicting Purgatory than the deep lake of *The Dream*, but both of them are metaphors for a doctrinal spiritual concept. Observe also that even at this stage, Newman already uses the same image of the Guardian Angel transporting his soul to eternity: 'Thy gentle arms shall lift me then/ Thy wings shall waft me home'.

In the *The Dream of Gerontius*, as the Guardian Angel approaches the 'veiled presence', the soul escapes from its enfolding hands. It is a moment that can easily be missed by readers of the poem:

ANGEL The eager spirit has darted from my hold,
 And, with the intemperate energy of love,
 Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel.⁶

Judging from the number of alterations Newman made both to his initial notes and to the fair copy he commenced on 17 January 1865, he found the Soul's appearance before God a very difficult section of the poem to write.⁷ In the copy made by a secretary and forwarded to Miss Fanny Taylor for publication in *The Month*, there are even alterations (which appear to be in Newman's own hand) to the phrase 'The eager spirit'.⁸ Newman's Angel had obviously intended to carry the Soul right into the presence of God. Why has Newman arranged otherwise? It is not merely the 'secrecy of the confessional' as suggested by Jerrold Northrop Moore;⁹ the answer lies in Newman's own beliefs as expounded in the *Apologia*, written in 1864, just months before *The Dream*:

Only this I know full well now, and did not know then, that the Catholic Church allows no image of any sort, material or immaterial, no dogmatic symbol, no rite, no sacrament, no Saint, not even the Blessed Virgin herself, to come between the soul and its Creator. It is face to face, 'solus cum solo' in all matters between man and his God.¹⁰

Newman's lack of understanding of the true position of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to Marian devotion had caused a stumbling block to his conversion to

Catholicism; it is hardly surprising therefore that, in writing *The Dream*, Newman was determined that no presence should interpose itself between the Soul and God. Consequently the Soul darts from the Angel's hands, and without the *Apologia* we would not understand why it had to do this.

What did Elgar make of all this? We know from the number of alterations in the manuscripts and sketches held at the British Library and the Elgar Birthplace Museum that he too found difficulty in representing this moment musically. Letters to his friend and publisher, August Jaeger, also reveal that Elgar considered the poem 'sacrosanct'; and although he cut it down, leaving out much of the dogma to focus more sharply on the Soul, he was not prepared to alter the poetry itself. Elgar scholars will be familiar with the exchange of letters concerning the nature of the music representing the Soul's appearance before God. Jaeger felt that this should be the grand climax of the work, while Elgar was adamant that it was the Soul that went before God, not the audience. Finally goaded by Jaeger's references to Wagner and Strauss, Elgar added a series of dissonant chords culminating in a mammoth dominant ninth chord, with added thirteenth, at which point the composer's score is marked "'for one moment" must every instrument exert its fullest force'. So, although the rising arpeggios that represented the Soul's appearance before God (Example 1) are retained in the final score, they lose their original significance, the Soul's appearance before God now being represented by the chords illustrated in Example 2.

Ex. 1. Arpeggios originally representing the Soul's appearance before God

Ex. 2. Chords representing the Soul's appearance before God

The mounting tension of these chords is, for many, one of the most moving moments in the oratorio, but it constitutes the only moment when Elgar, under the influence of a third party, is not true to the concept of Newman's poem. Where is the 'eager soul', darting from the Angel's grasp and flying to the 'dear feet of Emmanuel'? Not in those heavy chords. By inserting them, and without actually altering any of the words, Elgar in fact changes the meaning of the poem, the order of events, and the nature of the experience of the Soul's appearance before God.

Both Newman's Guardian Angel and the Angel of the Agony are male, in that the male pronoun is used in relation to each of them. Newman was a theologian and would know that angels are pure spirit, so why did he choose to give his angels a gender? Looking at his notes it becomes obvious that while he was initially unsure whether to view the Soul as 'it' or 'he', he had no such uncertainty with regard to the Guardian Angel who is 'he' from the beginning, just as in the 1853 poem he describes the Guardian Angel as 'Brother of my Soul'. Byron Adams suggests that the gender of Newman's Guardian Angel is male because he 'clearly modelled the Guardian Angel in *Gerontius* after Ambrose St John'.¹¹ Ambrose was Newman's friend and constant companion from 1845 until his own death in 1875, and when Newman himself died in August 1890, he asked to be buried in the same grave as

Ambrose at Rednall.

Adams uses as his authority two letters written by Newman, after Ambrose's death, to his friends, Lord Blachford and the Reverend John Walford, wherein he records: 'At Rome 28 years ago he was always so working for and relieving me of all trouble, that being young and Saxon-looking, the Romans called him my Angel Guardian'¹² – surely a reference by the Romans to the famous remark of Pope Gregory the Great on seeing fair Anglo-Saxons that they were 'not Angles but Angels'.¹³ Certainly in the homosocial world of the Birmingham Oratory, Newman would be cared for, nurtured and tended by men. But he would have no need to model his Guardian Angel on any person, for he had believed in their existence as spiritual beings since childhood. Newman writes of the Guardian Angel being his 'sponsor at the font' and 'whispering elements of truth / Into my childish ear' in the 1853 poem, which precludes Ambrose from being the muse on this occasion. In the opening lines of Section Three of *The Dream of the Soul* addresses his Angel as 'Mighty one, my Lord', which seems singularly inappropriate if Newman had his friend in mind as a model for the role.

One explanation for Newman's use of the male gender for both the Guardian Angel and the Angel of the Agony might be that he took their sex for granted, simply because of the masculine space in which he lived. But this is not the case. Above everything else Newman was a theologian, and as *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* makes clear, 'According to Scripture, angels are masculine, youthfulness and virility being their general attributes'.¹⁴ It is apparent also that 'the purely feminine angel' was not 'invented' until the Renaissance. Newman's angels would be 'scriptural', the heirs of Michael, Gabriel and the other masculine angels of the Bible; he would have had no need to consider the gender of his Angels, as for him they could only have been male.

And what of Elgar's angels? Elgar too was a Roman Catholic and one might have expected him to appreciate the reasons for and follow Newman's lead on the gender of the Angels. He does not do this, as he was, after all, a composer rather than a theologian. Elgar delineates the characters of his angels on a purely functional basis; as his choir of angelicals proves, angels, for him, can be both male and female. His Angel of the Agony is most definitely male, as befits the spirit that, according to St Luke (22.43), appeared to Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane and brought him strength. Strength is generally regarded as a male attribute and therefore it is fitting that Elgar should give the role to the bass voice. One might be forgiven for anticipating that the music of the Angel of the Agony would be powerfully diatonic and regular to denote that strength within the masculine order of the day; it is however painfully chromatic (Example 3).

Elgar's chromaticism in connection with this bass Angel is interesting for it brings us into the centre of the debate among musicologists concerning the nineteenth-century identification of chromaticism with that which refuses to be 'incorporated in tonal order', so that it becomes suggestive of 'the Other', the decadent, the feminine; a threat to the healthy masculinity essential to a strong nation.¹⁵ However, as the examination of the music of Elgar's Guardian Angel reveals, the qualities ascribed to concepts of masculinity and femininity in music are not absolutes, but depend on the standpoint of the author and the particular use to be made of the distinction. In

the music given to the Angel of the Agony, Elgar used chromatic descending scales to express both the pain of Gethsemane and the prospect of the powerful Angel of the Agony pleading for the souls appearing before God. A parallel is being drawn between the anguish of Christ in his weakest hour and the experience that the Soul is about to undergo. It is almost as if Elgar had the courage to flout the normal masculine, 'stiff upper-lip', conventions of Victorian England, and in writing this work from his 'innermost self' (as he told Jaeger), he is acknowledging publicly that a man is entitled to express his feelings, to plead, to be uncertain. To Elgar it is not a sign of weakness; it is part of being a man. In Part I, bars 518-20, Gerontius is 'unmanned', emasculated by the experience of death, and so perhaps Elgar is also acknowledging that in the hereafter, gender does not matter; men are freed from the need to conform to conventions.

If Elgar had been looking for someone to care for him, to nurture and tend him, he would probably, like most Victorian men, instinctively turn to a woman; his Guardian Angel is therefore female. In 1854 the English poet Coventry Patmore (1823-1894) published his poem 'The Angel in the House', and as the century progressed the term came to be applied to every wife who put her husband's interests first and created a safe haven for her man in a comfortable, well-run home. Virginia Woolf, writing in 1942, described how at the end of Victoria's reign 'every house had its Angel. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish ... She sacrificed herself daily ... if there was a draught, she sat in

it ... Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty'.¹⁶ Alice Elgar certainly fulfilled this role:

Elgar's wife ... surrounded her husband with a ring-fence of attention and care which was almost pathetic. The composer himself depended upon his wife to a surprising extent ... my newly-wed mother was, I am sure, awed by Mrs. Elgar with her array of rugs, shawls and cushions, extra body-belts and knitted bedsocks for Edward's comfort. One evening Helena noted with astonishment no fewer than seven hot water-bottles being filled for his bed on the occasion of Elgar's complaining of a slight chill!¹⁷

It is hardly surprising that when Elgar, so firmly rooted in Victorian domesticity, came to draw the musical picture of the Angel who has nursed and tended Gerontius from birth, and whose 'most loving arms' were now to enfold his soul and 'softly and gently' lower it into the penal waters, he should choose a woman's voice. His publishers, Novello, would have been unlikely to accept an oratorio without a female lead, and if he had made the Guardian Angel a male then all the soloists would have been men. But the decision to cast his Guardian Angel as a female, a mezzo-soprano, left Elgar with a problem for, as has been noted, Newman's Guardian Angel is male and referred to as such in four places in the poem. In constructing his libretto out of the poem, Elgar omits two references to the gender of the Guardian Angel, just leaving the phrase in the opening lines of Part II:

SOUL I will address him. Mighty One, my Lord,
My Guardian Spirit, all hail!

Elgar must have felt those words were essential to the action and he could not therefore leave them out. Neither was he prepared to alter them. So does the combination of the mezzo-soprano voice and those references to the Guardian Angel as male turn Elgar's angel into a sexless, androgynous creature as Adams, for example, has suggested? I would argue not. Although Simeon Solomon's and the Pre-Raphaelite's Mid-Victorian paintings are full of angels of uncertain sexuality, the sociologist George L. Mosse informs us that by the end of the nineteenth century the image of the androgyne 'had been transformed into a symbol of vice and sexual perversity'.¹⁸ It seems unlikely, therefore, that Elgar would have sought to blur the gender of the Angel in this way.

My view that the way Elgar delineated the gender of his angels was purely functional is not based solely on the part played by the Guardian Angel in the rearing and training of Gerontius, but also has regard to the musical role of the character. The Guardian Angel has to sing a duet with Gerontius and in the finale to make herself heard against a combination of the male chorus of the Souls in Purgatory, and the sopranos and altos of the semi-chorus of angelicals and the main chorus. In choosing a mezzo-soprano voice with its distinctive timbre, Elgar ensures that the voice of the Guardian Angel will be clearly identified against the background of the Heavenly Host. It is this pitching of the voice which prevents the duet sung by the Angel and Gerontius from sounding like the age-old operatic love duet between the

The image shows a musical score for 'The Angel of the Agony' from Part II, starting at bar 106. The score is in 3/4 time and features a mezzo-soprano vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics: 'Je - su! by that shud'ring dread w/ fell on thee; Je - su! by that cold dis-may which sick - ened thee;'. The piano accompaniment consists of chromatic descending scales in the right hand and block chords in the left hand. Performance markings include 'molto espress.', 'dim.', 'rit.', 'molto dim. lunga', and 'Lento e solenne'. Dynamics range from *pp* to *f*.

Ex. 3 The music of the Angel of the Agony

lead soprano and tenor. Perhaps the choice of voice does impose a slightly maternal or big-sisterly, quality on the relationship between the Angel and Gerontius, but that is a valid interpretation of Newman's poem, for the Angel has 'nursed and tended' Gerontius throughout his life.

In his programme notes for the first performance, Jaeger, the friend who perhaps knew Elgar and his music best, described 'The Angel's Farewell' as 'music to bring peace and happiness to the troubled heart. It is the 'ever womanly' in music which speaks to us in these soothing tones and draws us onwards; which purifies and elevates us'.¹⁹ It is above all the music that Elgar writes for the Angel to sing that identifies her as female. How does he do it?

The Guardian Angel's music is tonal, her first song being in E minor and her final farewell in D major. Elgar's performance markings for both read '*dolce*'. In the Angel's Farewell there are additional markings of *legatissimo* (as smooth as possible), and *dolcissimo* (as sweet as possible), and so on. The melodic line is essentially simple and uncluttered, moving smoothly in conjunct motion. Tritones only raise their ugly heads when she refers to lowering the soul into the penal waters of Purgatory. When the Angel is singing it is the strings that accompany her, supported by sparse woodwind writing. Everything about the Guardian Angel's music is tender, gentle and loving, and despite the fact that she sings down to B below middle C as she lowers the soul into the depths of the lake, she is easily identifiable as a woman.

So what does our analysis of the role of angels in *The Dream of Gerontius* tell us about Elgar? That while his depiction of the female angel as the epitome of grace, beauty, order and gentleness is fairly typical of what one would expect of the Victorian age, in relation to the masculine angel, Elgar's writing is more individual. Much of the time Elgar was anxious to project an image of himself as a typical country gentleman who enjoyed his London Clubs, horse-racing and fishing; but when the time came to reveal his 'innermost self', his own soul, he was not afraid to reveal a masculinity that accepted doubt, uncertainty, and torment as part of the make-up of a man. For Elgar to step outside the stereotypical image of manliness of the day and portray a fractured and more self-questioning masculinity in this way demanded a great deal of courage.

Norma Hollingsworth took early retirement in 1993 from her position as Chief Crown Prosecutor for the Crown Prosecution Service. Since then she has pursued the interests pushed out by her busy career in crime. In 2002 she was awarded first class honours in Music and English, and in 2004 a Master's degree in musical research. Since then she has been researching for a PhD at Keele University. The title of her thesis is 'The Development of The Dream of Gerontius, Poem and Oratorio: Gender, Religious and National Identity'.

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of this paper was read on 1 July 2005 at the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon, as part of the conference organized by Matthew Riley of Birmingham University to commemorate the centenary of Elgar's appointment as Peyton Professor of Music.
- 2 Gustav Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), xxiii.
- 3 Valery Rees is a Renaissance Scholar at the School of Economic Science, London. This edition of 'In our Time' was broadcast on 24 March 2005.
- 4 Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (ed. Ian Ker, London: Penguin Books, 2004), 23.
- 5 *Verses on Religious Subjects* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1853), 12.
- 6 *The Dream of Gerontius*, VI. 25.
- 7 The evidence of this is to be found in the original 52 pieces of paper which constitute Newman's first draft, now held at the Birmingham Oratory.
- 8 This copy is held by the British Library: the *The Dream of Gerontius*, MS 33,984 (fol. 28).
- 9 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar. A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 307.
- 10 *Apologia*, 179.
- 11 Byron Adams, 'Elgar's later oratorios: Roman Catholicism, decadence and the Wagnerian dialectic of shame and grace', in Daniel Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 90.
- 12 Recorded in Wilfred Ward, *The Life of John Henry Newman* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), 411–12.
- 13 First recorded in Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, book 2, section 1.
- 14 *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington: The Catholic University, 1967), vol. i, 515–16.
- 15 For discussion of the feminine 'other' in music, see *inter alia* Susan McClary's foreword to Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (University of Minnesota Press, 1989), and her own *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Carolyn Abbate, 'Opera, or the Envoicing of Women', in Ruth Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Musical Scholarship* (University of California Press, 1993).
- 16 Virginia Woolf, *The Death of the Moth* (1942), cited in Suzanne Fagence Cooper, *The Victorian Woman* (London: V & A Publications, 2001), 10.
- 17 Myrrha Bantock, *Granville Bantock: a Personal Portrait* (London, 1972), 47–8.
- 18 George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 92.
- 19 A.J. Jaeger, *Analytical and Descriptive Notes* (London: Novello, 1900), 49.

Elgar, Dot and the Stroud Connection – Part 1

Richard Smith

Although I have lived near the small country town of Stroud in Gloucestershire for forty years, it was only recently that I discovered that it had an Elgarian connection. Not so much with Edward himself, but with his youngest sister, Ellen Agnes, known to the family as Dot or Dott.¹

The published Elgar biographies reveal relatively little apart from the fact that she became a nun at St Rose's Convent in Stroud. A brief conversation with Elgar's great niece, Margaret, confirmed that after Dot entered convent life the family saw little, if anything, of her. This prompted me to try to discover more. The picture that emerged was of a frail lady who, while often battling with serious illness, was extremely intelligent and capable. She also possessed a sense of humour similar to that of her more famous brother, a characteristic that endeared her to all who knew her.

Ellen Agnes was born on 1 January 1864 above the Elgars' music shop at 10 High Street in Worcester.² Her oldest sister, Lucy, later described the birth in her *Reflections* now preserved in the Elgar Birthplace Museum:

In 1864, as the bells were ringing in the glad New Year, our darling mite Dot (Helen Agnes) was sent to us ... I have often believed she was a saint, and would not be allowed to suffer earthly ills for long; whose soul was already in Heaven, while the poor body is left to do good in this world till it shall wear itself out and melt away like a shadow.

Dot was baptised on 6 January at St George's Church in Worcester by Father William Waterworth, her godparents being a Mr Tyler and a Mrs McGuire. Not long afterwards she became so ill that one night her father, William Henry, despaired of her life. He left the baby in her mother's arms but, as Lucy later recounted:

Mother watched the whole night alone over the sweet baby, counting every breath, fearing each one may be the last, and the agonised soul of the dear patient watcher was on the verge of despair, when, as the dawn came, baby opened those large thoughtful eyes – one could almost imagine they possessed a super-human power, so beautiful were they, those wonderful eyes – and looked straight at Mother and smiled! dear Mother! she then knew her little one was given back to her – and so she recovered ...

So Dot survived the first of the several severe illnesses that were to trouble her throughout her life. In common with all her siblings she was brought up a Roman

Catholic, making her first confession at St George's Church in Worcester on 31 March 1874. In the same year her mother Ann wrote a couplet about each of her surviving children. That for Dot is enlightening:

Slender, thoughtful, timid maid
Like a young fawn in the shade.³

Dot received her first Communion on 28 December 1875 and was confirmed on 1 July 1877. Two years later she was made a 'child of Mary', which was to have a great influence on her later life.⁴ Also in 1879 her brother Edward left 10 High Street to live with his sister Pollie and brother-in-law, Martin Grafton, at Loretto Villa in Chestnut Walk, Worcester.

Even as a child, Ellen Agnes led a very retiring life, rarely venturing out except to attend Mass. At one time she sang in the choir at St George's, but she hardly ever attended concerts or other forms of entertainment. Though she had few friends, those that did come to see her were devoted to her, and they often vied with each other to acquire new embroidery stitches to add to their proficiency in needlework.

In her teenage years Dot took a vow of chastity and wanted to become a nun, but was prevented from doing so by her conflicting desire to look after the mother who always meant so much to her. At one time she contemplated joining a missionary congregation, possibly the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, even acquiring the necessary clothing. Nevertheless, she continued to play an important part in the life of St George's; the parish priest, Fr Thomas Knight, SJ often asked her to 'apply the poker' (prepare a wayward member of the congregation for the confessional) when an exceptionally tough case was to be expected.⁵ As she neared her twenties, Dot became the book keeper for the music shop, a duty which she performed with her usual efficiency and sense of humour.

On 8 May 1889 Edward Elgar married Caroline Alice Roberts at Brompton Oratory. The couple then stayed on in the capital while Edward strove to interest London music publishers in his work. Just before Christmas they sent an etching of Millet's *The Angelus* to Dot, and in the covering letter Edward included a lithograph of four monkeys singing from music with a fifth holding a baton. Below was printed 'May old Father CHRISTMAS smile on thee'. On the reverse Edward wrote 'Dot Worcester Cath. Choir Xmas 1889'. He explained:



The five surviving Elgar children photographed in 1878. From left to right are Frank, Lucy, Edward, Dot and Pollie. Courtesy Elgar Birthplace Museum.

I cannot help sending the enclosed card though A[lice] does not hold with it. I hope you will like the 'Angelus': that was the picture (the original) that was sold for £20,000 last summer. I like to see those simple people stopping in their work as they hear the bells from the distant church & reciting the simple prayer.

Happy Xmas & clear pipes for seven o'clock Mass.

Your affte
E.⁶

By the end of July 1890, Edward and Alice were eagerly awaiting the arrival of their child. Edward wrote:

My very dear Dot,

I am sending a solemn letter to ask, from my dear wife and myself, if you will be so good as to be god mother to the little one we hope is to be given to us very shortly: if you will do this it will be of the greatest satisfaction to us both & we shall feel at ease concerning the future whatever may happen to us. I should explain, as there has been some talk of 'deputy' godmothers, that you will be the only one & we feel it is best to have a strong adherent to the Faith. Just a simple 'yes' or 'no' will do but I know you won't refuse. Alice sends her love.

Ever yr. affecte brother.⁷

Following the birth of their daughter on 8 August 1890, Edward wrote to Dot on the 26th informing her that 'All is going on smoothly but very dull being all alone'. Five days later he wrote again regarding the christening:

...The Ceremony (!) is fixed for 12 o'clock on Tuesday & the names are to be Carice & another which we will definitely get fixed.

Say a prayer for this little sweet thing: she is so pretty & good.

Good bye to the [Festival?]: keep your spirits up.

Ever
Edward

All well here and I went downstairs today as far as the drawing room. Don't feel surprised there is another 'Miss Elgar'.⁸

Correspondence between Edward and Dot temporarily ceased when he returned to Worcestershire in June 1891. The years that followed saw him beginning to achieve the recognition he craved. In March 1898 he and Alice rented a cottage at Birchwood, near Storridge, where he wrote much of *Caractacus*. Dot replied to the couple's letter:

Dear Edward and Alice,

Thank you so much for the pictures. We do like the look of your pretty house. I am feeling very anxious about the bite – Miss Norbury said you had a cold. Are you really better or is it something serious.

All here are much as usual. Dad has been unwell but is fairly bright now.

Frank comes each day – but it is not much use yet. He [Dad] looks so feeble. Work does not seem to do just yet. I suppose we can't expect it all at once.

I am so glad Carice is well.

Good bye. I do hope in a few days to hear you are better.

Yours as ever,
Dot⁹

On 13 December 1898 the Worcester Musical Society gave a performance of Elgar's *The Banner of Saint George* at the Public Hall. *The Worcester Herald* commented:

... The cantata was a praiseworthy performance throughout, but the members of the society are to be still further congratulated upon the success with which they emerged from the trying ordeal of the 'Banner of Saint George.' As is now well-known, Mr. Elgar's elaborate and remarkable music severely taxes both chorus and orchestra, and in this ballad little rest is granted either, from the beginning to the end ... At the conclusion the audience were most enthusiastic, and Mr. W. M. Dyson, the conductor, was recalled to bow his acknowledgements.

Ann Elgar, in writing to her daughter Pollie, was disappointed not to be there, but revealed again the affection in which she held all her children:

All have gone to the concert but me - and I didn't feel up to it, and had no-one to go with without parting Loo [Lucy] and Dott so I got busy with my papers after all had gone – feeling I would be very busy and then I shouldn't mind – a very little while Ed came in. He was not conducting and they had been dining at Arnolds. The ladies went to the concert and he came here – and we had a jolly time – all to ourselves – he played and sang a lot of choice bits from *Caractacus* – oh lovely, for ever so long – and then a lot of the Banner. I was so glad to be at home – now he's gone to Arnold's to wait for the rest and supper before they go home. Now Dott will not fret about my being at home poor kid how hard she tried to get me to go – oh I am glad – the dear old boy – then we had some talk of course – and he is very well and seems so happy and bright he has not decided what to write for Birmingham yet.¹⁰

As Edward's fame increased the Master of the Queen's Musick, Sir Walter Parratt, organised a concert of his music on 8 October 1899, at the Royal Albert Institute in Windsor. The Royal Family was represented by Queen's Victoria's daughter, Princess Christian,¹¹ and overnight accommodation was arranged for Elgar in the Castle. Just afterwards, he wrote to Dot from Tredworth Square, Chelsea, the home of his friend Basil Nevinson, the cellist:

My dear Dot:

...Yes it was a concert at Windsor & 3 princesses were at it – they did *ten* of my pieces which I either conducted or accompanied – you shall see a gold programme! Very nice & I slept in the Castle! I sent a line to Dad as I thought it might please him.

We are staying for Richter on Monday & hope hope to be back in our quiet woods on Tuesday.

Yrs ever
Ed E.

Love to all & don't forget Stoke. I've no time to write to everybody alas!¹²

On 9 January 1900 Ann Elgar wrote to Edward revealing that 'Poor Dott is not getting any strength, I fear she is so white & feeble – but we hope strength will come surely if slowly – fine days & sunshine will do wonders...' ¹³

During the middle of October Edward heard that he was to be presented with an honorary doctorate by Cambridge University. His reaction was, at best, ambivalent, as he communicated to Dot:

My dear Dot,

You may like to know and tell the old folks that I am to be made a Doctor of Music at Cambridge (with Cowen) honoris causa.

You may think this is a 2½d thing with the Archbishop of Canterbury's degree, but it is a rare thing: it has of late only been given to

Toscanini
Tchaikovsky
Max Bruch & a few others

I have to go to Cambridge on Nov 22!

It won't be announced yet so don't tell everybody. What an ass I shall look. I then be Dr. Elgar – good lawk! How I detest that. I shall not use it.

Ain't it a jape show this to the 'pig' and Henry.

Yours ever
Ed. E. ¹⁴

Following the first excellent performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in Düsseldorf, Edward told Dot: 'the performance completely bore out my idea of the work...'; Alice wrote an enthusiastic postcard to her sister-in-law following the second German performance, on 19 May 1902:

You will like to hear that we have had a gorgeous visit. Impossible to describe reception of Gerontius by crowds of friends and enthusiasts. E. has been very well. That evening there was great festival supper. Mr. Strauss made a beautiful speech talking about Meister Elgar... Have found no minutes to write till about 3 am!

Love to you all
C.A.E.

On 12 May 1902 Edward's mother, now becoming rather frail, wrote to her son about her other children, but much of the letter is



Sister Mary Reginald Elgar - Dot, pictured in the grounds of St. Rose's. Courtesy of the Dominican Sisters Archives, Stone, Staffordshire.

illegible. In a postscript Dot wrote: 'I am afraid you will not make much of this note – Mother cannot write – both she & Dad are quite bright to-day. I do hope you will soon be well again – love to you both.' ¹⁵ On 1 September 1902 Dot's beloved mother died. She was buried three days later beside the two sons who had predeceased her by more than thirty years. Her death at last made possible Dot's desire to become a nun.

She wrote to Edward and Alice on 16 November 1902 from Plymouth, telling them of her forthcoming move to St Rose's Convent in Stroud:

Dear E & Alice,

I am afraid you will not want to be bothered with a letter from one so soon – but it's a case of now or not for a long time. I am leaving here on Monday 24th for Stroud - & then of course I do not know what will happen.

Will you sometime write to me – I mean don't let me quite drop out of your minds – perhaps Christmas & Easter you'll find time to send word.

There is one thing. I want to ask you. The Superioress of the place I am going to is a lady quite & a very good musician. Someone gave her your 'Dream' last Xmas & later on I sent 'Light of Life.' She is delighted with them – so when you are publishing any new thing do send one to me – for her. She plays the organ well – all the music they use is Gregorian - & they sing almost everything.

I know you will not want to write to me now so don't bother – only don't forget me altogether.

I do hope you are well – I shall never forget how good you have both been to me. It's very hard to make the final step – but it will soon be over now. I do so hope to keep well & be able to stop.

Good bye for a bit.
God bless you both & Carice.
Always your loving
Dott

If only I had got dear old Father Knight to talk to now. What a comfort that would be. ¹⁶

To be continued in the next issue of the Journal



St. Rose's Convent, Stroud in 1935. The building is currently used as a business centre.

The writer is greatly indebted to Fr Piers Linley, OP, Parish Priest of Woodchester; Sr Mary Quentín OP; Sr M. Cecily Boulding OP, Archivist of the Dominican Sisters (who supplied the official necrology of Dot and a memoir of her by Sr Agnes Teresa Mayo from which some of this article has been abstracted); Margaret Sanders, the previous archivist at the Elgar Birthplace Museum; and fellow Elgarians Martin Bird and Canon John Forryan.

Notes

- 1 It is thought that the nickname 'Dot' arose not only because she was the youngest member of the family, but also because she was diminutive in stature. In correspondence between Ellen Agnes and members of her family, the spelling of her nickname varies between 'Dot' and 'Dott'.
- 2 Dot's first name is invariably given as 'Helen' but that used in both the birth and baptism registers was definitely 'Ellen'.
- 3 Dated 29 November 1874. Sending a photo of her children to her brother, John Greening, in America, Ann slightly changed this couplet about Dot to:
Gentle, timid, graceful maid
Like a young fawn in the shade
- 4 A 'child of Mary' means that she was enrolled in the sodality of the Children of Mary, a pious association established by the Jesuits, Worcester being a Jesuit parish. It involved a prayer of consecration to Our Lady with the intention of pursuing a pure and upright life, a particular daily prayer, and the wearing of a blue ribbon around the neck during the May procession of Our Lady and the Corpus Christi procession of the Blessed Sacrament.
- 5 Fr Knight was actually Parish Priest at St George's between 1890 and 1893, but had ministered there for some years previously. Elgar dedicated his *Four Litanies for the Blessed Virgin Mary* to him in 1886.
- 6 EBML 9499 (23 December 1889).
- 7 WRO microfilm BA 5184 (3 August 1890).
- 8 EBML 9498 (31 August 1890).
- 9 EBML 1163 (ca. April 1898).
- 10 Percy M. Young, *Elgar O.M.* (Collins, London, 1955), 81 (13 December 1898).
- 11 Formerly Helena Augusta Victoria, Princess Christian (1846-1923) had married Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein on 5 July 1866.
- 12 EBML 4595 (20 October 1899).
- 13 WRO microfilm BA 5184 (9 January 1900).
- 14 EBML 4597 (17 October 1900). Presumably 'the pig' was an affectionate term for their brother, Frank.
- 15 WRO microfilm BA 5184.
- 16 EBML 1158 (16 November 1902).

'Everything I can lay my hands on': Elgar's theological library—Part Two

Geoffrey Hodgkins

In assembling his own libretto for The Apostles Elgar consulted and studied a wide variety of biblical reference material including translations, concordances, commentaries and other theological writings. The first part of this article focused on the books used in compiling a libretto for The Apostles. The concluding part covers the rest of the library, mostly dealing with the second oratorio, The Kingdom, and the uncompleted third oratorio.*

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It was only in late June 1903 (little more than three months before the Birmingham premiere) that the final shape and content of *The Apostles* was approved. Parts I and II took the narrative up to the Ascension (Acts of the Apostles 1). However, on 28 June Elgar wrote to Alfred Littleton, chairman of Novello: 'The concluding portion of the work – (Pt III to round it off) – much of which was written first – you can have anytime later ... The part of Peter is not *big* until Part III when he is left 'in charge' & head of the Church'.¹ The great success of *The Apostles* on 14 October 1903, and immediate proposals by choral societies to perform it, caused a rethink. On 23 October Elgar wrote to Littleton: 'I ... have now definitely decided that the present work must stand alone leaving the continuation of the scheme to be carried out in a work of similar proportion';² in other words, a separate work some two hours long.

It would appear from this that Elgar had done a good deal of work (how much is not clear) on what were to become Scenes I (In the Upper Room) and III (Pentecost) in *The Kingdom*. He had also composed some of the final section (The Upper Room), as in the 'Ascension' scene of *The Apostles* he had quoted a theme from the setting of the Lord's Prayer. In addition, he had begun to set to music, and may well have completed, the words of the Eucharist from a non-biblical source – the early Christian document, the Didaché – which he had found in a newly-published book *The Early Eucharist* by William Barrett Frankland (1875-1952). The author was a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, and lectured in mathematics at Selwyn College before entering the Anglican ministry. The flyleaf contains the inscription: 'Edward Elgar 1903 ... used for "The Apostles"', showing the composer's original intention of including the Eucharist in the first oratorio. He asked Canon Gorton on 3 June 1903 for help with the wording:

I feel very much drawn to incorporate in my scene the little prayers (the portions underlined) on p.17 (see also p.65).

I shd. have to ask the permission of Mr. Frankland whom I do not know. It would give me much more pleasure & interest if you wd. furnish me (at once!) with a version - *not rhyme* - metrical if you like - but, best of all as free in rhythm as you please. I don't want the 'glory, &c' section in either of the two because I have it in the Lord's prayer.

Gorton sent several versions, but in the end Elgar used the wording in Frankland's book. However at Gorton's suggestion he did insert the word 'grain' in the phrase 'As this Broken Bread was grain scattered upon the mountains...' Elgar had also completed the libretto for a scene about Simon Magus, based on an incident in Acts chapter 8;³ he intended Simon Magus to be the main antagonist of this second work, as Judas had been in the first.

Some idea of the nebulous character of Elgar's plans can be gauged from his many libretto sketches. One of these closes Part 2 at the Resurrection, and begins 'Pt. III' with Mary Magdalene's account of it (Mark 16:9-11, John 20:11-18), followed by the journey to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13, Luke 24:13-35), the incident of Thomas's confession of faith (John 20: 24-31), and only then the Ascension and Pentecost. 'Pt IV' was to include 'Ananias and S[apphira]' (Acts 5), 'Peter in prison' (Acts 12), and 'Success of the church' (Acts 11:1-18).⁴ Another note reads 'Now: a miracle Lame Man [see *The Kingdom* Scene 4] / Saul persecution [Acts 8 & 9] / then Simon Magus / Chorus of *spread* of / Saul's Conversion/ & return to Jerusalem [Acts 9] / Eucharist / Our Father'.⁵ *The Kingdom* as finally written ends in Acts 4, but several other episodes from chapters 5 to 12 were considered in yet another note: the trial and martyrdom of Stephen (chapters 6 & 7); the Samaritan revival and the incident with Simon of Gitta (8); the persecution by Paul and his subsequent conversion (8 & 9), the libretto to include some of Paul's own account from chapter 26; and the conversion of the first Gentile, the Roman soldier Cornelius (10).⁶

William Henry Pinnock's *Analysis of New Testament History* – used widely for *The Apostles*, as mentioned in the earlier article – was the basis for many of these ideas, and Elgar also marked several references to the Antichrist and other possible themes for the third oratorio. He also possessed another of Pinnock's books – *An Analysis of Scripture History* – having acquired it on 3 January 1903, according to the inscription on the flyleaf. There are only a few markings, most referring to Messianic prophecies.

The sequel to *The Apostles* was expected at the next Birmingham Festival in the autumn of 1906. A visit to Hereford from Canon Gorton in September 1904 stirred Elgar to resume work; on 26 September he was 'deep in libretto of the "Apostles"', and he continued with it after returning from the Leeds Festival, where *In the South* was given and where he received an honorary degree. Alice's diary reads on 10 October: 'E. busy with his text. C[arice] helped him many days'. 11 October: 'Much the same proceedings'. 12 October: 'E. very busy with text of "Apostles"'. On the 15th he wrote to Alfred Littleton at Novello: 'I am working away at the oratorio but have nothing to shew you yet, & I sometimes feel overweighted'.⁷

But whatever progress was made was soon set aside, as before the end of the month Elgar had been approached by Birmingham University to become its first Professor of Music. In retrospect it can be seen that the acceptance of this post was a dreadful mistake. It certainly had a calamitous effect on his creativity: in the year and a half during which he gave the lectures (March 1905 to November 1906) he completed *The Kingdom* – at great cost to his mental health – and wrote a part-song for the Morecambe Festival, a piano piece on his Mediterranean voyage, and a short organ piece for his sister, these last three amounting altogether to barely ten minutes' music. By August 1905, with little more than a year to go, nothing more had been added, and he wrote to Jaeger in despair on 6 August:

I know nothing about Apostles pt.2 or any analysis ... my life now is one incessant answering of letters & music is fading away.⁸

* * *

As already stated, Elgar referred a good deal to Ernest Renan's *The Apostles*: there are many marked passages that comment on the early chapters of the Acts. It seems certain that Elgar's notion to end the second oratorio at Acts 11: 26 – 'And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch' – came from this source. On page 2 Renan writes: 'We shall follow Christianity in its rapid progress through Syria as far as Antioch'. Elgar makes a marginal note and underlines the name of the city. Later in the book he has marked the passages which read:

It was at Antioch that the sect for the first time had full consciousness of its existence; for it was in this city that it received a distinct name ... It was at Antioch that the title of *Christianus* was devised ... This is a most important moment. Solemn indeed is the hour when the new creation receives its name, for that name is the direct symbol of its existence. It is by its name that a being individual or collective really becomes itself, and is distinct from others ... Christianity is now completely weaned from its mother's breast; the true sentiments of Jesus have triumphed.⁹

Renan's *Apostles* continues the radical tone of its predecessor, *The Life of Jesus*. His explanation for the resurrection was that the apostles perpetuated the delusion of Jesus' presence still with them. He speaks of Peter and John, who 'more than all the others ... were favoured with these intimate conversations with the well-beloved phantom'. The appearance of Jesus to the apostles by the Sea of Galilee is referred to as 'a wondrous dream' which Peter had. The appearance to the five hundred disciples is 'an illusion ... they fancied they saw him again'.¹⁰ Time was devoted to 'day dreaming and to the indulgence of the favourite passion [imagining that Jesus was still with them]. The latter had, in the minds of these people, attained to a degree altogether inconceivable by us'. Elgar marked this passage, and one four pages later, where Renan explains away the gift of tongues in Acts 2: '[The apostles] believed that the preaching of the gospel should be free from the obstacle raised by the difference of idioms. They fancied that, under certain circumstances, those present had heard, each in his own language, the gospel preached by the apostles; in other words, that the apostolic preaching translated itself to each one of the hearers'.¹¹

Elgar seemed to share something of Renan's scepticism here: on a page of sketches for the chorus 'Behold are not all these which speak Galileans?' in scene 3 of *The Kingdom* he wrote: 'According to this simple narrative the people seem to be as wonderfully endowed – they talk to *each other* vv. 7 & 12'.¹²

Several other theological books in Elgar's collection deal with the period covered by *The Kingdom*, including perhaps as many as four single-volume commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles. The first, published in 1901, was in the Century Bible series, by J. Vernon Bartlet (1863–1940), Professor in Church History at Mansfield College, Oxford, and a Congregationalist. (The format of each volume of 'The Century Bible' consisted of an extensive 'Introduction', followed by the text of the Authorised Version, and finally the Revised Version text with explanatory footnotes.) Unfortunately, this volume is not present at Broadheath, nor is it mentioned in the inventory from Severn House (ISH). However, we can assume that Elgar possessed it, as he refers to it twice in his libretto sketches, where he notes that the last phase of the feast of Pentecost was called the Feast of Trumpets, and that the stoning of Paul at Lystra (Acts 14:19) was carried out by 'imported Jews'.¹³ The second commentary on Acts is by T.E. Page and A.S. Walpole, and the flyleaf is inscribed 'Edward Elgar. Dec 30 1905'. Thomas Ethelbert Page (1850–1936) was a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, and later taught at Charterhouse; Arthur Sumner Walpole (1850–1920) was an Oxford man who became an Anglican clergyman. (Interestingly, in late 1904 Walpole became Vicar of Dinedor in Herefordshire, the village just across the Wye from Plas Gwyn, the house to which the Elgars had recently moved.) Elgar marked a number of passages, including those referring to the Temple – the Beautiful Gate, the lame man who was healed, and Solomon's porch. Something of Elgar's state of mind in the early part of 1906 can be gathered from his marginal comment to the note on Acts 11: 26, where 'the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch'. Page and Walpole wrote: 'It was not used by the Christians of themselves, being found in N[ew] T[estament] only here, xxvi.28 (contemptuously), and 1 Pet. iv.16'. Elgar has written in the margin: 'Contemptuously all the better: / contempt is our lot here'.

The third commentary on Acts was by Richard Belward Rackham (1868-1912), in the Westminster series of commentaries. Rackham was a High Churchman from the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield: his book dates from 1901, and was recommended by Canon Gorton: 'It is the latest and best', he wrote on 3 February 1906.¹⁴ Elgar dated it 'March 1906' on the flyleaf, but noted only a few passages, mostly dealing with incidents in the life of St Paul.

The final reference to a commentary on Acts comes from the Cambridge Greek Testament, written by J. Rawson Lumby (1831–95), Professor of Divinity and the History of the Creeds at Cambridge. In his notes, under the heading 'The Kingdom of God', Elgar quoted, relating to Acts 1:3: "'The Kingdom of God" was the subject of Christ's converse with the disciples during the forty days after the Resurrection'.¹⁵

Elgar referred to a commentary on St John's Gospel on another page of notes, dated 7 November 1905. He wrote words from John 1: 16-17 and Ephesians 2: 18 for Peter and John to sing between the Eucharist and the Lord's Prayer towards the end of *The Kingdom*.

Of His fullness have all we
received, and grace for grace.
For the law was given by Moses, but
grace & truth came by Jesus Christ.
Through Him we (both) have access
(by one Spirit) unto the Father.

Ultimately Elgar did not set these verses, but by the first of them he placed an asterisk, and further down the page: '(*Note (Ellicot) Evangelist *speaks* here)'.¹⁶ This means that in the previous verse (i.e. John 1:15) there is a reference to 'John', alluding to John the Baptist: the fourth gospel writer never mentions himself by name, and so the following verse (v.16) is by the author, i.e. John the apostle. 'Ellicot' [sic] is Charles John Ellicott (1819-1905), an eminent theologian and Bishop of Gloucester from 1863 to 1904. Ellicott chaired the committee that produced the Revised Version of the New Testament in 1881. He also edited a Bible commentary by a number of writers which was published in separate volumes. The commentary on John was by the Rev. Henry William Watkins (1844-1922), Professor in Logic and Moral Philosophy at King's College, London.

The Acts was also covered by Charles Vaughan's *Church of the First Days*, published in three volumes, all found in Elgar's library. The first, 'The Church at Jerusalem' (1865), covered chapters 1-8; the second, 'The Church of the Gentiles' (1866), chapters 9-16; and the third, 'The Church of the World' (also 1866), chapters 17-28. Vaughan (1816–97) was headmaster of Harrow, and was generally known as a Broad Churchman. He later became Dean of Llandaff (1879), and was part of the team that produced the New Testament in the Revised Version of 1881. In the first volume, Elgar marks a long passage relating to the Ascension; in the second, several incidents – the martyrdom of James, the imprisonment of Peter, and the death of Herod (all from Acts chapter 12) – take his interest; the third book has merely a handful of minor annotations.

Elgar possessed Frederick William Farrar's *Early Days of Christianity* (1882). Farrar (1831–1903), a 'Broad Church Evangelical', held a number of important posts, including Headmaster of Marlborough (1871-76), Canon of Westminster, and Rector of St Margaret's, before moving to Canterbury as Dean in 1895. His *Life of Christ* (1874) was a scholarly work which upheld the traditional Christian view of Jesus. (Farrar also wrote fiction, including the now much-derided *Eric, or, Little by Little* in 1858.) Although there are some pencil marks in this book, I am not convinced they are by Elgar. They are in the centre of the book, near where the pages join (unlike Elgar's other marginal lines, which are invariably right next to the text) and are all approximately the same length, and the same distance from the top of the page. Apart from the first annotation (p.195), the odd pages are separated by multiples of sixteen, and I believe the marks were made by the printer in the assembling of the book. The textual content of these 'quotes' bears little if any relation to the highlighted passages in Elgar's other books.

Two more books in the Broadheath collection deal with the early church. A *History of the Church of Christ*, Volume 1 (from 29 to 324 AD) was written by Herbert Kelly (1860–1950), and published in 1901. Kelly was an Anglican monk,

Director of the Society of the Sacred Mission formed in 1890 to train clergy for missionary work in Korea. There are several marked passages in the early pages; as one might expect, the later post-scriptural years were of less interest to Elgar. On p.15, dealing with Peter's sermon in chapter 2, Kelly writes: 'The church appears therefore from the first as a definite and organised body'. Elgar underlined this and put a question mark in the margin. The passage at the end of Acts chapter 2 is also heavily marked by Elgar, as Kelly refers at length to the four aspects of the early communal life of the church – the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers – which scheme Elgar used to close *The Kingdom*. Kelly also suggests that it was Stephen in his defence who caused the church to make the break from its Jewish origins, suggesting that 'the law had neither finality nor sufficiency' (p.25). Elgar marked these passages with underlining and marginal lines.

The final book dealing with the period of the early church was Homersham Cox's *The First Century of Christianity*, published in 1886 in two volumes (Elgar owned the heavily revised second edition of 1892). Cox (1821–97) was a veritable polymath; after Cambridge, he went into law, finally becoming a county court judge in Kent. His published works include books on British politics and mathematics, as well as theology. He was a radical churchman, and wrote to the *Church Times* after publication of the Revised Version, rejoicing that the passive 'be converted' of Matthew (18:3: 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven') was rendered by the active 'turn', which changed the emphasis to the human role in religious conversion rather than divine intervention. 'Thus the main foundation of modern Evangelicalism is destroyed', he said. On the flyleaf Elgar has written 'p 113 for The Kingdom', and there are markings there for the verses on 'the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers'. The book contains one or two other minor markings.

Elgar made a note of a book entitled *From Jerusalem to Antioch* by the Rev. James Oswald Dykes, but there is no evidence that he owned or used it.¹⁷ Dykes (1835–1912) was a noted Presbyterian preacher and author of several books, and Principal of Westminster College. The title of the book was guaranteed to appeal to Elgar, encompassing as it did his planned time-frame for the second oratorio.

* * *

The presence of a number of commentaries on Old Testament books is probably the strongest evidence of Elgar's intense interest in theology, beyond the compilation of the libretto, during the composition of *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. He did not really *need* any of these books, as he was not setting narrative text from the Old Testament, but choosing appropriate verses for the characters to sing. These texts he could have easily discovered from the various bibles and concordances he possessed. Yet most of these Old Testament books contain markings and comments.

Richard Green Moulton (1849–1924) was a professor of English at Cambridge. In 1891 he became Professor of Literary Theory and Interpretation at the University of Chicago, and his many books include a number about Shakespeare. He was interested in the Bible as literature; and his 'Modern Readers Bible' was completed in 1905, after having been previously published as separate volumes. Moulton declared its *raison d'être* in the Preface: 'We are all agreed to speak of the Bible as supremely great literature. Yet, when we open our ordinary versions, we look in vain

for the lyrics, epics, dramas, essays, sonnets, treatises, which make the other great literatures of the world; instead of these the eye catches nothing but a monotonous uniformity of numbered sentences, more suggestive of an itemised legal instrument than of what we understand of literature'.

Seven of Moulton's volumes, from the Old Testament and Apocrypha, are preserved at Broadheath (though of course there could originally have been more). In *Job*, Elgar marked a passage from chapter 39 about the horse, as he was intending to include a chariot race in his third oratorio. The book begins with Satan testing Job by attacking him, destroying his goods, property and family. Chapter 3 begins: 'After this opened Job his mouth and cursed his day'. Elgar underlined this, and in the margin wrote: 'no wonder!'. In *Ezekiel* he marked passages in chapters 41 and 43 about the temple, and in chapter 32 he put a marginal cross by verse 18: 'Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down', underlining the final four words, and writing in the margin, '+ celebrate their going down'. This too could be linked to Part III, and the final defeat of the Antichrist. On the flyleaf Elgar wrote 'Key relationship / Unrest in modern music / piano dominant', suggesting some scribbled thoughts for one of the Birmingham lectures, possibly the one on orchestration. Elgar marked passages in the introduction to the volume on *Proverbs*, but only one verse from the text (12:16) is highlighted: 'A fool's vexation is presently known: but a prudent man concealeth shame'. In *Daniel and the Minor Prophets* Elgar marked Daniel 7:13–14; its apocalyptic references link it once again with the third oratorio. Nahum 3:2 – another reference to horses – has double square brackets in the margin. Pages 141–4 and 153–6 are uncut, suggesting that Elgar did not thoroughly research all of these books. There are no markings at all in the other three volumes in the series: *Ecclesiastes & the Wisdom of Solomon*, *Ecclesiasticus*, and *Jeremiah*.

Two commentaries on the prophecy of Isaiah were in Elgar's collection. One was by Andrew Bruce Davidson (1831–1902), Professor of Hebrew at Edinburgh University and a notable Old Testament scholar. His *Book of the Prophet Isaiah* was published in the year of his death in the Century Bible series. The other was by Thomas Kelly Cheyne (1841–1915), joint editor of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, the rather liberal reference book which Elgar owned (see Part 1 of this article). Cheyne had studied at Göttingen under Heinrich Ewald, one of the most eminent of the 'Higher Critics', and became the first man in Oxford to teach the methodology of biblical and textual criticism.

Davidson's *Isaiah* contains just one marking, a warning to women (chapter 32: 9–11); Elgar's scheme for the third oratorio included 'good women' and 'barren women'.¹⁸ He also quoted from this book in a letter to Jaeger of 12 August 1903.¹⁹ We know that Elgar owned Cheyne's book as it is listed in ISH as 'Chaney's Isiah' [*sic*]; but it is not absolutely certain which book this is, as Cheyne wrote no fewer than seven books on Isaiah, beginning with *Notes & Criticisms on the Hebrew Text of Isaiah* in 1868, and ending with *The Mines of Isaiah Re-explored* in 1912. However, Elgar is most likely to have owned *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, a two-volume commentary first published in 1880, and which had reached its fifth edition in 1889. This is because it is the only one of Cheyne's books that does not assume a working knowledge of Hebrew, but transliterates the words into roman type. Cheyne's other

six books on Isaiah are really too technical for the layman.

Like Charles Jennens, who compiled the words for Handel's *Messiah*, Elgar found the book of Isaiah a fertile source. He selected almost thirty passages for use in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*: of Old Testament books, only the Psalms is quoted more. It is a great pity that the whereabouts of his copy of Cheyne's Isaiah commentary is unknown, as Isaiah, and especially the question of its multiple authorship, was one of the most controversial areas in nineteenth-century theological debate, and any markings by Elgar would be of immense interest. The notion that the Book of Isaiah was the work of more than one writer was not new, but was now a really contentious subject. Both Davidson and Cheyne accepted that it was the work of more than one author, but whereas Davidson was cautious – 'I dislike the old, I distrust the new', he once said – Cheyne became more outrageous with every publication, so that in the Preface to *The Mines of Isaiah Re-explored* he calls the Jews 'Monarchical Polytheists, [who] worshipped a small divine company under a supreme director'. Cheyne 'was beginning ... to think it good to shock': and in Rochester, placards in the street would speak of 'the Canon's latest blasphemy'.²⁰ Davidson eventually said of him: 'This critic, chameleon-like, has reflected in succession critical opinion of every colour and complexion. In him there is no continuance'. In his last years Cheyne embraced the Baha'i faith.

In a note marked 'Antichrist', Elgar wrote out verses from Isaiah 32 about 'careless women', for the third oratorio. At the foot of the page he has noted 'See Lowth for punctuation'. Robert Lowth (1710–87) was Bishop of London, and wrote a commentary on Isaiah in 1778.²¹

Another Old Testament commentary was *Daniel & the Minor Prophets* in the 'Temple Bible' series, edited by the Rev. Dr Robert Sinker (1838–1913), Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge. Only two minor markings are found, both in Amos. Sinker was a traditionalist, and a contributor to *Can we trust the Bible?*, a collection of six essays published in 1908. In his chapter, 'Facts and "Facts"', Sinker pointed out that many of the assumptions made by the early 'Higher' critics had been disproved by later archaeological discoveries. He also took up cudgels on behalf of a single authorship for Isaiah, and wrote the Preface to Letitia Jeffreys' 1899 book *The Unity of the Book of Isaiah*.

Elgar possessed the second and third of the three-volume commentary of 1875–6 on the Psalms by William Henry Lowe (1848–1917), Lecturer in Hebrew at Christ's College, Cambridge, and Arthur Charles Jennings (1850–1932). There are only two markings, and there is no *real* indication that Elgar actually owned these books. They belonged to one John Cooper Wood, but of course Elgar may well have obtained them second-hand or been given them. If he also owned the first volume it is now missing.

* * *

The final group of theological books possessed or consulted by Elgar are those linked with the third oratorio, known as *The Last Judgement* (among other projected titles). After the First World War and the death of Alice, he seriously contemplated writing this work, and some of the books date from this later period. Foremost among them is the two-volume commentary on *The Revelation of St John* by Robert

Henry Charles (1855–1931), an Ulsterman who became the leading authority on apocryphal books and pseudepigrapha (writings ascribed to various patriarchs and prophets outside the accepted canon of scripture.) After ordination, he lectured at Dublin and London, and became Archdeacon of Westminster in 1919. The book was published in 1920, and among Elgar's papers a typescript exists of parts of Chapter 6, with notes on the use of themes from *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Kingdom* ('Mary's Vision', i.e. 'The sun goeth down').²² He also typed parts of the last four chapters (19 to 22), which were clearly intended for the final chorus of the third oratorio. Here Elgar follows the scheme adopted by Charles in changing the order of certain verses (vol.2, p.434ff.).²³ Charles's commentary is missing, but the Broadheath collection does contain his *Lectures on the Apocalypse* of 1919, published in 1922. Elgar writes 'Peter' beside chapter 7, verse 17: 'For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto the fountains of the water of life: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes'. This is the sole annotation.

One of Elgar's memos has: 'Morris / on the Apocalypse / Milligan / on the Apocalypse'. I have been unable to find anyone named 'Morris' who wrote on Revelation during Elgar's lifetime, but Professor William Milligan (1821–92) of Aberdeen University wrote a commentary in the Expositor's Bible series in 1893. However, once again there is no corroborative proof that Elgar made reference to the book.

One of the most marked books in what remains of Elgar's library is *Revelation* in 'The Century Bible' series by Charles Archibald Anderson Scott (1859–1941), the author of almost twenty religious books. (He also edited *The General Epistles* in the same series.) On the flyleaf Elgar wrote 'p 160 begin?', referring to the beginning of chapter 4: 'After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven...'. The passages marked by Elgar – over forty altogether – show how stimulated he was by the dramatic account of the events in Revelation: the opening of the seals, the sounding of the trumpets, etc. In one or two places he again linked the passage with music from the previous oratorios, as on p. 292 where he wrote 'quote theme from Apostles' at the words 'the twelve apostles of the Lamb' in chapter 21:15. Anderson's book was published in 1901, and five years later came the commentary by Henry Barclay Swete (1835–1917), the eminent Cambridge professor. Swete was a traditionalist and an outstanding scholar, and his book was held in high esteem. It was his initiative that brought about the publication of the *Journal of Theological Studies*, and he also translated the Septuagint into English. Elgar's copy of Swete's *The Apocalypse of St John* has 'Presentation copy' on the title page and there are no markings in it at all.

Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920) was a professor at Göttingen and one of the founders of the 'History of Religions School' which looked closely at the early church in the context of the other religions of the day. His book *The Antichrist Legend* (1895) was translated into English the following year, and has 'Edward Elgar 1896' on the fly-leaf. Most of the annotations are found in the Preface, where Bousset links the Antichrist to the Babylonian Dragon myth. On p.248 Elgar underlines the phrase 'the sounding of the trumpet by Michael the Archangel', and writes '3rd' in the margin.

Another European professor whose book Elgar owned was Paul W. Schmiedel (1851–1935). Entitled *The Johannine Writings*, it was published in English in 1908, and is extremely modern and liberal in outlook. It is in two parts: the first compares John's gospel with the other three, and the second looks at the five New Testament books ascribed to John. The only passage noted by Elgar concerns Matthew 24 and its prophecies of the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world.

W.A. Blake's *Christ and Patmos* of 1905 is a book of no substance and there are no markings. It is more like a book of sermons, although it ends with some interesting interpretations of the numbers (of days, years, etc.) found in Revelation. I now strongly suspect this is the book sent to Elgar that same year by R.H. Wilson, as mentioned in the first part of this article, as the publishers were based in Manchester, where Wilson lived. Blake was a clergyman in Stockport.

There are references to other authors which relate to the third oratorio: Adolf Hilgenfeld (1823–1907), Constantin Tischendorf (1815–74), and Johannes Grabe (1666–1711) are all named in the same note, and one suspects they were found in one of the Bible dictionaries or even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.²⁴

Interestingly enough, in the whole collection there are only two books by Catholic writers (with the exception of Renan, who had anyway renounced his faith). The first, mentioned in Part I of this article, was Barry's *Traditions of Scripture*. The other, *The Apocalypse, The Antichrist and the End*, by J.J. Elar, was published in 1906. 'Elar' was a pseudonym for James Joseph Louis Ratton (1847–?), who had been a surgeon in the Indian Army in Madras and had written several books on medical matters. His book is written from an extreme Catholic standpoint. However, there are no marked passages in it. Elgar does not seem to have been close to the Catholic priests while in Malvern, although he struck up a relationship with Canon Dolman when living in Hereford, and in 1907 dedicated the anthem *Ave Maris Stella* to him, possibly out of gratitude for his help when Elgar was struggling with depression during the composition of *The Kingdom*.

There is a remarkable silence in the Elgar papers during these years regarding Catholic clergy, with no mention in letters, even of Dolman. I have often pondered over the significance of the chorus 'O ye priests!'. It follows the election of Matthias to the brotherhood of the twelve apostles, but to me it seems as if Elgar is exorcising some demons – perhaps bad experiences of priests in his past? After the opening words (repeated), there follows a double bar and the chorus sing *fortissimo* 'Seemeth it but a small thing that God hath separated you to bring you near to Himself, to stand before the congregation?'. The section is marked *Allegro martellato*, an unusual choice of direction. 'Martellato' means 'hammer-like', and those opening bars are startlingly aggressive, given that the choice of a new Apostle should have been a cause of rejoicing. A few bars further on, in the phrase 'For it is not ye that speak' (marked *non legato*), the negative is marked *staccato* with an accent. It should perhaps be remembered that Alice wrote in her diary on 18 January 1906 of 'a beautiful tune for 2nd scene – *warning* to priests &c' (emphasis mine), and that this was a particularly depressed time for Elgar, with huge Liberal gains in the General Election.

For whatever reasons Elgar's main theological advisers were Anglican priests: Edward Capel Cure; Gorton; and Joseph Armitage Robinson (1858–1933). Elgar

met Robinson on 7 January 1904 during his holiday at Alassio, where he 'was impressed by [Robinson's] leonine head and commented on his superiority to the general run of Italian priests'. According to Burley, the two men 'liked each other at first sight', and Robinson 'turned out to be an authority on Biblical research, who could answer many of the questions that had arisen in regard to the oratorio trilogy'.²⁵ Elgar wrote to Troyte Griffith: 'He is a real good sort I think & approves of much of my libretto notions & we jawed over the remainder of the Apostles'.²⁶ Robinson was enthusiastic about Elgar's suggestion of giving the second oratorio the title of *The Kingdom*, as he wrote in March 1906:

I am sure you are right, and your reasons are good. 'The Kingdom' is an excellent name. Its touch of vagueness is an advantage: it suggests more than it says, and it cannot be misunderstood. I cannot think of anything else half so good. The *Men* and the *Society* into which by a natural process they grew – these are your topics, and nothing can hint at them better than the vague titles, The Apostles and The Kingdom. The Kingdom is vague; the Church definite. The latter is the initial embodiment of the former, not complete; not intended to be complete, until *the End*.²⁷

Robinson sent Elgar a copy of his most recent book, a commentary on *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, published the previous year, and inscribed it 'To Dr Elgar / from the Dean of Westminster / a fellow-student of the Apostolic age / Westminster Abbey / Jan. 20 1904'. Elgar's only annotations are found in the Introduction, as there is no narrative in the Epistle itself. He marked passages dealing with the martyrdom of Stephen and the movement of the early church away from its Jewish roots towards a more universal outlook. At the back of the book, Robinson had inserted an old proof sheet from the 'Cambridge Companion to the Bible', published in 1892, and to which he was a contributor (Elgar wrote in the bottom margin: 'given me by the Dean of Westminster. E.E'). Other contributors to the Companion whose names have already appeared in this article include Westcott, Sinkler, Rawson Lumby, Davidson, and Robertson Smith.

Dean Robinson's section was entitled 'History of the Apostolic Age', and Elgar noted several of his headings:

'A. The Formation of Jewish-Christian Churches. 1. The Church within the walls of Jerusalem. 2. The Church dispersed throughout Palestine. B. The Formation of Churches wholly or in part Gentile. 1. St Paul's First Missionary Journey. 2. The Controversy at Antioch and the Conference in Jerusalem ... 5. St Paul a Prisoner AD 58-63. C. The Close of the Age and the Consolidation of the Church. 1. The Destruction of Jerusalem, AD 70'.

Elgar also put marginal marks by Robinson's comments on speaking in tongues and the healing of the lame man.

* * *

For the sake of completeness, it is worth mentioning three other books Elgar owned, but which are not relevant to the compilation of the oratorio librettos. The first is *Traditional Aspects of Hell* by James Mew (1837–?), published in 1903.

It has a Severn House label on the inside front cover. However, Elgar must have acquired it soon after it was published, as he quotes from it in his inaugural lecture at Birmingham in March 1905. The second is *Signs of the Times* by Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen (1791–1860), named in ISH. It dates from 1856 and is subtitled 'Letters to E.M. Arndt on the dangers to religious liberty in the present state of the world'. Bunsen was a German diplomat and amateur theologian, who from 1823 to 1839 was a minister at the Prussian legation at Rome, and from 1841 to 1854 ambassador to London, during which time he was regarded as the most distinguished representative of European Protestantism in England.

The final book is *The Apocryphal New Testament*, a collection of gospels and epistles that were widely accepted and used in the first four centuries AD, but which were ultimately excluded from the canon. The copy dates from 1880 and includes a 'gospel' of Nicodemus, and 'epistles' by Paul, Ignatius, Clement, and others. The book was edited and emended by William Wake (1657–1737), Archbishop of Canterbury, and Nathaniel Lardner (1684–1768), a Nonconformist apologist. It is present in the Broadheath collection, but there are no markings.

* * *

The large number of Elgar's religious books, and the interest which he showed in the subject beyond the mere selection of texts, means, I believe, that we can count theology – along with kite-flying, cycling, chemistry, and the rest – among his 'hobbies'. But it also raises the inevitable question of Elgar's own beliefs. This is really beyond the scope of this article, but perhaps certain conclusions might be drawn. The difficulty lies in the differing attitudes Elgar adopted: it would be possible to compile two lists of Elgarian quotes, one affirming belief, the other denying it.

For some, such as Henry Wood, he was 'such a devout Catholic';²⁸ whereas others speak unequivocally of a 'loss of faith', even making it the cause of 'a gradual lapse into creative silence after 1919'.²⁹ In 1933, during his visit to Delius in France, Elgar said that his composition of the oratorios was 'the penalty of my English environment',³⁰ whereas in 1905 he wrote to an Anglican clergyman that the *Apostles* project was 'the one work to which I devote my best thoughts'.³¹ And during his last illness Elgar is alleged to have told his surgeon: 'I believe there is nothing [i.e. after death] but complete oblivion';³² yet of this same period Sir Malcolm Sargent wrote: 'It has been suggested that Elgar's religious convictions weakened towards his end. I had a grave illness at the time Elgar was dying. We exchanged many letters. I do not believe he had any doubts whatever as to the Redemption and the Hereafter'. In discussing *Gerontius* Elgar told Sargent many things which the latter said were 'too musically subtle and spiritually sacred' to be repeated.³³

The marking by Elgar of passages that show Renan's rejection of the supernatural aspects of the narrative (see above) is problematic. Did he *agree* with Renan, or was he merely marking passages he found interesting and which stimulated his thinking? If Elgar himself was sceptical about such things, why did he include a major miracle in each of the oratorios – the walking on the water and stilling of the storm in *The Apostles*, and the healing of the lame man by Peter and John in *The Kingdom*? In his notes on the former work, Elgar wrote: 'A manifestation of Christ's

supernatural power was necessarily to my plan: I chose the miracle of the Walking on the Waters in preference to the Transfiguration, because all the Apostles were present at the former'.³⁴

If Gerald Cumberland is to be believed, Elgar certainly saw himself during these years as a *fidei defensor*. Cumberland visited Plas Gwyn on 23 December 1905 (i.e. during the composition of *The Kingdom*) to interview the composer. During the course of their conversation Elgar said of the critic Ernest Newman, who had savaged part of *The Apostles*: 'He is an unbeliever, and therefore cannot understand religious music – music that is at once reverential, mystical and devout'.³⁵

How can we reconcile these conflicting statements? It would appear that Elgar may have deliberately lied, yet this chameleon-like behaviour is possibly not as strange as it may seem, especially when one bears in mind that he was the product of a father who was a vehemently anti-clerical rationalist and a mother who was an equally fervent Roman Catholic convert. Their son was educated by Jesuits, whose educational mantra runs: 'Give me the child until he is seven, and I will show you the man'. Elgar almost certainly retained a good deal from those early years of tuition: in dedicating *Gerontius* and the two oratorios 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam' (AMDG) he used the motto of the Jesuits. So far as religious observance was concerned, he was always less faithful than his wife or daughter, even allowing for the fact that sometimes he did not attend church through illness. During the years in Malvern Elgar normally worshipped at St Joseph's in Little Malvern, while Alice and Carice used the Benedictine chapel, 'Connellan', in College Road. At Hereford, despite his friendship with Dolman, he was far less regular, and ultimately stopped attending altogether.

Whatever his own beliefs, Elgar had little time for organised religion, with its petty interdenominational disputes, especially when they attempted to interfere in the realm of music. 'Why will people quarrel over religion[?]', he asked Jaeger.³⁶

While visiting America in 1907 he was asked to lead a prayer meeting against the proposed performance of Richard Strauss's *Salome*: the faithful believed that the composer of oratorios would be sympathetic to their opposition. Of course he declined. And in 1926 he defended Wagner from the criticisms of Canon Lacey of Worcester Cathedral, who had objected to a performance at the Three Choirs Festival of the Prelude to *Parsifal*, describing Wagner as a 'sensualist'. In 1927 Elgar wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his appointment.

Bred in another form of religious observance I stand aside, unbiased, from the trivialities with which controversies are mostly informed; whatever differences exist there remains the clear, wide & refreshing Christianity, desired by all men, but obscured by the little darkness of their own imperfect vision. To the better understanding of such broad Christian feeling I am thankful to have been permitted, in a small way it is true, to exercise my art.³⁷

On the theme of Christian unity I have always thought it significant that in the final chorus of *The Apostles* – the most elaborate *tutti* he ever wrote – Elgar gives to the Mystic Chorus the words of Jesus from John 17:11: 'Holy Father, keep through

Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are’.

My own view is that, like many if not most people, Elgar moved from belief into unbelief and back again according to circumstance. This is not surprising, given that he was acknowledged by all to be a man of moods, and it is largely confirmed by a passage in Basil Maine’s biography, based on extensive interviews with the composer during the last two years of his life. Maine wrote:

Elgar looks back upon his life as a series of struggles against complex and unaccountable difficulties ... He was continually being involved in theological controversies in connection with the performances of his works. His opponents in these were of the clergy, laymen though they were in matters concerning music.

In despondent mood, Elgar is prone to interpret such incidents ... as the working of a malignant force in his life ... But the good angels were at work too, and in other moods, Elgar with a naïve touch of mystery and awe, will relate the unmistakable manifestations of their guiding presence.

Maine here recounts two incidents: Elgar finding William Allen’s grave, and the discovery of a pamphlet in Queenhill Church which gave the composer words for the Mystic Chorus in *The Apostles*. Maine goes on:

Events of this nature can be explained, of course, in a number of different ways. For Elgar, however, there is but one interpretation. He refuses to believe that they are the result of mere coincidence. They cannot be fully accounted for, he thinks, without admitting that some external factor had been involved. And he is inclined to believe this, too, of what others recognise as inspiration in his music.³⁸

C.S. Lewis put it in a similar way:

Just as the Christian has his moments when the clamour of this visible and audible world is so persistent and the whisper of the spiritual world so faint that faith and reason can hardly stick to their guns, so, as I well remember, the atheist too has his moments of shuddering misgiving, of an all but irresistible suspicion that old tales may after all be true, that something or someone from outside may at any moment break into his neat, explicable, mechanical universe.³⁹

As a final comment, I give an extract from an unpublished memorandum which H.C. Colles made of a conversation with Billy Reed. The two of them travelled back together to London on the train after the memorial service for Elgar in Worcester Cathedral on 2 March 1934. The subject of Elgar’s faith and his links with the Roman Catholic Church came up. Reed replied:

‘You know after Lady Elgar’s death he took up with a set of people who were not those of his old life at all and who made him think that it was smart or up-to-date or something to be irreligious’.

‘Bernard Shaw, I suppose’, said I.

‘Exactly: he was awfully flattered because instead of lampooning him Shaw gave out that he (Elgar) was the only great composer, the only man indeed who could do anything at all in music’.

‘Was the friendship with Shaw an old one?’

‘No. It was quite a long time after Lady Elgar’s death that they got into close personal touch. It was not a real friendship. Elgar liked Shaw’s brilliant talk. He took to asking me to come round to tea because Shaw was going to be there and I used to go in afterwards whenever I could. I preferred that. I always knew that that sort of thing was not Elgar’s real self. You know how he loved doing anything in the country; messing about, killing wasps or doing any old thing. And when we were alone together and his talk became natural I could discover that for all his professed anti-religion his faith was really as profound as my own’.

(That last phrase impressed itself on my mind because I had known nothing of Reed’s personal faith and the simplicity with which he asserted it, taking it as a matter of course[.] impressed me very deeply).

‘Sometimes’, Reed continued, ‘I used to pull his leg, when he had been saying how impossible it was to believe in anything, by arguing that our church (C of E) was more sensible in this or that than the Roman Church. Then he would turn round and argue that the Church of England was impossible and absurd and the Roman Church the only possible one, and I used to chuckle to myself’.

* * *

Elgar’s theological library is frustratingly incomplete. We know little of why he acquired the books; some, we know, were recommended to him by such as Gorton, others were referred to in books he already owned, especially reference books, such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. As stated earlier, the books are a real theological mix, and his annotations should not be assumed to be affirmation of the views expressed. Many of them were acquired shortly after publication, which may suggest that he read reviews of them in newspapers. They also stand as a sad reminder that for various reasons he was not able to complete the great trilogy he had planned since childhood. The simultaneous creation of libretto and music was disastrous, causing delays in composition.

It is probably a forlorn hope at this late stage, but it is just possible that members of the Elgar Society might know the whereabouts of some of Elgar’s missing theology books, and if that is the case I would be delighted to hear of it, via the editor of the Journal.

- 1 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and His Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 450.
- 2 Op. cit., 512.
- 3 British Library (BL) Add MS 47906 ff.18-22.
- 4 BL Add MS 47904B f.226.
- 5 BL Add MS 47905B f.119.
- 6 Loc. cit., ff.183-91, 198-99.
- 7 Moore, *Publishers*, 589.
- 8 Moore, *Publishers*, 619.
- 9 Ernest Renan, *The Apostles* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1890), 192-4. See also *The Musical Times*, 1 April, 1903, 228-9.
- 10 Renan, op. cit., 63, 64.
- 11 Renan, op. cit., 80, 84.
- 12 BL Add MS 47905B f.108. Actually Elgar was wrong here: communication between the people gathered in Jerusalem would have been quite feasible, through Aramaic – common to all Jews – or even Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean world at the time.
- 13 BL Add MS 47905B. ff.208, 222.
- 14 Loc. cit., f.248.
- 15 Loc. cit., f.214.
- 16 Loc. cit., f.165.
- 17 Loc. cit., f.229.
- 18 BL Add MS 47906, f.9.
- 19 Moore, op. cit., 474.
- 20 Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (London: SCM Press, 1987), vol. 2, 59, 107.
- 21 BL Add MS 47905, f.58.
- 22 BL Add MS 47906 ff.76-7.
- 23 Loc. cit., ff.78-97.
- 24 BL Add MS 47906 f.41.
- 25 Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: the Record of a Friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 168-9.
- 26 20 January 1904. Percy M. Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 134.
- 27 T.F. Taylor, *J Armitage Robinson* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1991), 33.
- 28 Henry J. Wood, *My Life of Music* (London: Gollancz, 1946), 249.
- 29 Byron Adams, 'Elgar's Later Oratorios', in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 83.
- 30 Eric Fenby, *Delius as I knew him* (London: Icon Books, 1966), 124.
- 31 BL Add MS 47906 f. 122.
- 32 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 818.
- 33 Phyllis Matthewman, *Sir Malcolm Sargent* (London: Cassell, 1959), 85.
- 34 BL Add MS 47904B f.214.
- 35 Gerald Cumberland, *Set Down in Malice* (London: Grant Richards, 1919), 83.
- 36 7 May 1903. Moore, *Publishers*, 436.
- 37 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 397.
- 38 Basil Maine, *Elgar: His Life and Works* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1933) vol.1, 116-7.
- 39 C.S. Lewis: 'Religion: Reality or Substitute', quoted in Clyde S. Kilby, *A Mind Awake* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1968), 138.

TELEVISION REVIEW

Imagine: Elgar and The Missing Piano Concerto

BBC1, 23 November 2005

The Great Music Show with Aled Jones

BBC2, 9 February 2006

Two programmes on BBC television about Elgar, within a bare four months of each other! *What on earth was going wrong*, I wondered. As it turned out, a little bit in one, and quite a deal more in the other.

Imagine was one of Alan Yentob's documentaries about the arts, which he seems to be all over the place doing these days. This was his 'take' on the reconstruction of Elgar's Piano Concerto from the assorted sketches and fragments our man left behind, and which the composer Robert Walker knocked into a performable state: the story, Yentob told us, was one of 'mishaps and controversy'. The main clues were a sheaf of sketches in Elgar's hand, and some 'long lost recordings', by which I think Yentob meant the Five Piano Improvisations, which have actually been available to the public for thirty years or so.

It started promisingly; but for a high-profile arts programme it quickly dipped into the commonplace. The footage of Elgar arriving to conduct at the Abbey Road Studios in 1931 was shown, but Yentob's commentary went for the obvious: 'In the early 1930s Edward Elgar was a national institution' – so far, so good – 'But behind the pomp and circumstance...' Oh dear. The enthusiasm of David Lloyd-Jones as conductor, but especially David Owen Norris as soloist/dedicatée (and sometime co-reconstructor), and Robert Walker as reconstructor-in-chief, was as clear as the noonday sun in a cloudless sky. Their affection for the ideas and the man who created them was irresistible: Norris, on discovering the 'interlocking butterfly' method needed to play a certain passage, mused on Elgar thinking 'How long will it take old Norris to figure out what I mean?'.

Elgar appeared to have set our contemporary musicians rather a puzzle. The challenge, initially one of juggling with three dozen sketches, was according to Yentob 'like playing sudoku with virtual numbers', a concept I found difficult to get my head round. But Walker rose to the challenge and found links between them, if obscure ones. 'You cheeky old b _____' he exclaimed, when facing Elgar's fiendish japery at constructing musical puzzles for himself in order to solve them (Walker's

expletive self-deleted). Much was made of Alice Stuart Wortley's 'midwifery' of a work which proved sadly fragmentary at Elgar's death, Norris commenting dryly that the composer 'was inspired more by women to whom he *wasn't* married.'

Controversy reigned for some time, which always makes for good television. Walker, on first examining the sheaf of sketches for the concerto held in the British Library, found a strange gap in the page numbering which would have been filled by the slow movement sketches, and ascribed this to the Library's 'quirkiness'. He therefore pressed the fourth Piano Improvisation into service as the missing movement and orchestrated it. Then a 1950s performing version of this very movement, put together by Percy Young, turned up; Young apparently claimed that his version was based on Elgar's own manuscript, which seemed to be the bit missing in those British Library sketches. After Dr Young's death, the MS resurfaced in the Library somewhat mysteriously ...

The story of the first performance and subsequent revised versions had me just as gripped, it has to be said. The initial (Dartington) performance of *Fragments of Elgar*, as the work was first known, was 'dogged by disasters'. Walker began to think it a 'jinxed' work; certainly the circumstances of the first performance of the full orchestral version at Worcester in 1998 seemed somewhat bizarre, with the conductor announcing to the waiting audience that he was abdicating responsibility for the work's performance, just before Norris came onto the platform to play the solo part. Not withstanding some doubtless rather clever cutting of the *Imagine* footage to gee things up, Norris seemed genuinely taken aback to hear, seven years on, that such a bombshell had been dropped back then. As for what we have now in all its glory, Walker is sure it is a 'late romantic piano concerto using ideas by Elgar'; Norris is certain it is Elgar's concerto through and through.

Although one may quibble a little – as some do – about the resultant shape and style of the concerto, it seems to be music that is far too valuable to be left in the hands of music scholars. It is living, vital – and needs to be heard, just as Anthony Payne has enabled us to hear at last the shape, scope, melodic pattern and magnificent detail of the Third Symphony.

Imagine showed us many things, but one in particular stood out for me, and that is the great personal affection for Elgar, and reverence in which Elgar is held, by people who have never met him. Elgar's music has a strange knack of drawing people together in a spirit of fellowship and generosity (well, most of the time).

* * *

When Elgar mounts the podium at Abbey Road in the 1931 newsreel film and tells the orchestra it is going to be 'a very light programme', he could easily have been describing *The Great Music Show with Aled Jones*, which was so light as to be virtually airborne. This was an attempt to introduce the Cello Concerto to an audience more used to daytime treats such as *Cash in the Attic*. While the sane, erudite presence of the Birthplace Museum's own Cathy Sloan, and the fine English 'cellist Paul Watkins, ensured there was some serious and informative element to it, Aled Jones took the programme to a level of blandness I didn't think possible. Right at the start he announced in his strangely stilted and breathless method of presentation: 'I'll tell you everything you need to know ... about the man ... behind the music!!' – which is, if you think about it, a bit of a rash claim to make about half-an-hour's television.

I would guess that in the bare thirty minutes given over to this unequalled piece of music, roughly twenty of it was spent on jawing, and three-quarters of that by Aled Jones. It got just a little wearisome to see him, a vision of appalling jauntiness, appearing suddenly-but-casually from out of some Malvern shrubbery every five minutes like a modern *Man at C&A*, thumbs tucked into his belt-straps, telling us Certain Big Things about Elgar's life.

This was 'Elgar-lite', like a Classic FM pastiche produced by a vaguely abstracted stray from the *Songs of Praise* team. If it was aimed at a broad market, then the production team grossly misjudged the viewers' intelligence. If I may be seen to be cavilling about a documentary about our own Elgar, then I do so because it is difficult to find much point to something which seemed so desperate to jemmy his music into the bland style so beloved of daytime television producers. We were told by the fresh-faced presenter that we would learn how 'the horrors of the First World War affected his life and his music': the film cut from archive footage of Tommies going over the top probably into an horrific death, to some of Aled looking unaccountably cheerful, and saying 'Take a listen to *this!*!' Cue the desolate, profound opening bars of the Concerto, over which he then talked for some time. The music was constantly interrupted throughout the programme for us to learn about this and that, and even the sublime Adagio was sabotaged after a few seconds by Aled informing us all about Elgar's state of mind when he composed it. I think people could probably find that out for themselves if only they could hear it uninterrupted ... Is music like this really *so inexpressive* that it has to be talked over all the time? Surely a masterwork like this great Concerto deserves better than the treatment it got here? It should be allowed to sing its own magnificent song without interruption. As someone once said about something, *It won't do at all*.

Dominic Guyver

BOOK REVIEW



Elgar Foundation
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'It's the only wish I've got': the story of The Elgar Birthplace
by Andrew Neill.

I have always believed that the houses in which great artists died are more important than the ones where they were born; after all, a house in which they choose to live is surely of more significance than their place of birth, over which they have no control. And Elgar could not remember living at Broadheath, as the family moved back into Worcester within two years of his birth.

Yet the unprepossessing cottage known as 'The Firs' held a special, almost spiritual place in his affections. His first extant composition is the single-line *Humoreske – a tune from Broadheath*, written in 1867 during one of the holidays he spent there. He wrote a children's entertainment, *The Wand of Youth*, set in the garden of 'The Firs', which became a 'Woodland Glade'. A brook divided the land between 'the fairyland', and the other side representing 'the ordinary life which we forgot as often as possible'. So the Broadheath garden represented a microcosm of Elgar's real world – the 'ordinary life' of the city of Worcester with its noise, dirt and smells; and 'the fairyland' of the Worcestershire countryside to the west, separated by the great 'brook' of the River Severn. Many years later Elgar wrote of the experience he and his friend Hubert Leicester had as they ferried the river to school each day: 'our walk was always to the brightly-lit west ... at our backs 'the unseen sun shot vital gold', filling Payne's Meadows with glory and illuminating for two small boys a world to conquer and to love'.

For Elgar, then, this 'world' which contained his birthplace was a place of fancy and dreams. In 1931 he chose Broadheath as the title of his baronetcy; he took his friends and family to see the house, including towards the end of his life Herbert Howells, to whom he said: 'I don't expect much from the nation, but if ever they think it worthwhile, I wish they would buy this little cottage. It's the only wish I've got, about the nation and me'. Well, as we know, the nation *didn't* buy it, and so followed years of financial uncertainty and the difficulties which they brought, including the appalling privations experienced by a succession of curators. Andrew Neill covers all this in great detail, despite the lack of archival material for much of the period.

Andrew Neill's book is an expansion of the chapter he wrote (with the same title) for *Cockaigne*, the volume of essays based on lectures given to the London Branch, edited by Kevin D. Mitchell and published in 2004 by Elgar Editions (reviewed in the Journal, November 2004). It is expanded, with a new chapter on Bernard Van Dieren and the debacle of The United Kingdom Elgar Society, and it is good to have the events described in full. It can now be seen that the demonisation of Van Dieren was unjustified, his major crime being incompetence; also that one of the reasons that the affair created such a stir was the bullyboy tactics employed by Sir Gerald Nabarro, who had recently become a trustee. A little more patience and diplomacy, one thinks, and matters would have been better handled. Another topic receiving fuller attention is the Elgar Centre, with details of the problems the trustees had in convincing many people, including members of the Elgar family, of the need for such a building. Andrew ends by affirming that the Birthplace is Carice's legacy; it 'has survived thanks to the vision, determination and generosity' of her and a few other devoted individuals.

Glitches are mercifully very few, though A.H. Fox Strangways gains an 'e' to give him the same name as a well-known prison. There are over 25 illustrations – more than double the number permitted in *Cockaigne*, and many of a very interesting nature – and a typically eloquent Foreword by Dame Janet Baker, President of the Elgar Birthplace Trust. The book is nicely produced and will be welcomed by all who treasure Elgar's first home.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

CD REVIEWS

The Apostles, Op. 49

Anna Leese (soprano/Blessed Virgin Mary), Louise Poole (mezzo-soprano/Mary Magdalene), Andrew Staples (tenor/St John), Roderick Williams (baritone, Jesus), Robert Rice (baritone, Judas), Colin Campbell (baritone/St Peter), Canterbury Choral Society, Girls of the Crypt and Chamber Choirs of the King's School Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral choristers, Philharmonia Orchestra

Conducted by Richard Cooke



Quartz
QTZ 2017

Reviewed by Geoffrey Hodgkins (GH) and Paul Adrian Rooke (PAR)

GH We are by now accustomed to professional orchestras marketing their own recordings – most notably the LSO and Hallé – but this is surely a first from a provincial choir. The Canterbury Choral Society is to be congratulated on such a courageous venture. No choral lollipops or *Messiahs* for them, but Elgar's largest work, previously only recorded on two occasions, and often neglected by choral societies due to the expense of hiring six soloists. Furthermore, the LSO Live productions use the safety net of two performances, in case of the odd glitch: the Canterbury forces had to get it right on the night.

PAR It was a great privilege in January 2005 to be invited to talk on *The Apostles* to members of Canterbury Choral Society and their friends; and the following week, thanks to Richard Cooke, to be able to attend a rehearsal in Canterbury Cathedral prior to the evening performance. Performances of *The Apostles* are still special events, so I was especially grateful to be able to hear one in the perfect setting of the Cathedral where Elgar himself conducted performances in 1914 and 1922.

For the rehearsal, I had the Cathedral to myself, and I was able to move around, savouring the sound from different perspectives. It was a most pleasurable experience – apart from one small item. This was the singing of the bass soloist (Judas). He was obviously ill at ease in his great soliloquy in Part 2, after which there was much gloomy conversation between him and the conductor.

GH Quite a number of Society members were present at the performance. I sat towards the back and inevitably some detail was lost, although the great choral *tuttis* sounded very impressive in the spacious acoustic: others sitting nearer the front found a lack of balance in the sound.

PAR What a superb recording – performance, rather (for it was recorded live) – it is. There is so much to commend it, not least that it exists at all. I like very much the soprano, Anna Leese, who is as clear as a bell, just right for The Blessed Virgin. The tenor, Andrew Staples, has a fine, lyrical voice; there is just the occasional hint of a frog in the throat (Fig. 36), but he is particularly well matched with Leese in

'The sword hath pierced mine own soul'. From the dramatic role of Mary Magdalene I might prefer a contralto voice (as designated by Elgar), but the mezzo-soprano of Louise Poole has depth and richness. Colin Campbell (Peter) is authoritative right from his first entry. Roderick Williams is one of our most intelligent and cultured baritones and has a beautiful and rich, velvety voice. His enunciation of the Beatitudes lets the music speak for itself – art concealing art – while his voice sounds effortless over the whole range.

GH Roderick Williams sings the difficult part of Jesus with just the right amount of 'distance': a thoughtful characterisation, well executed. Judas is sung by Robert Rice, who was only brought in at the last minute (almost literally – 4.30 p.m. on the day of the performance!) due to indisposition, yet he sings with complete assurance. Louise Poole loses power rapidly below the stave, but sings with passion and intelligence, most notably in her 'conversion' in Scene 3. The New Zealand soprano Anna Leese is a real find as the Angel and the Blessed Virgin. Andrew Staples and Colin Campbell also perform creditably in their smaller roles.

PAR As it turned out, when the soloists all walked on at the start of the performance, I could see that there was a replacement Judas: Robert Rice. I especially enjoyed the very characteristic interpretation he gave of the soliloquy. Going 'back-stage' after the performance to thank and congratulate Richard Cooke, I congratulated Rice on his fine performance. I then, innocently, asked him whether he had sung the role often. 'This was my first time', he said. 'I learned the part coming over in the taxi'. I was, as my dear old Granny would have said, 'gabberflasted'. The hero of the hour has a slight wobble, audible at his entry after Figure 151. It could be nerves – or adrenalin – but it is not obtrusive. It certainly makes him appear as a very troubled spirit – apt for the part. At least he sounds involved in his fate while singing 'My punishment is greater than I can bear'. There is, remarkably, only one bar where he seems to come slightly unstuck (the third bar of Fig. 183, where the orchestra has to wait for him to get to the end of the bar). In contrast, his singing of '... yet am I unto myself more grievous than the darkness' is masterly in its observation – and interpretation – of Elgar's notes and markings.

GH Richard Cooke has a strong choral pedigree – St Paul's Cathedral and King's College, Cambridge – and years of experience as a choral conductor. He is currently director

of the Royal Choral Society, among other posts. His Elgarian credentials feature most notably *King Olaf* and *The Kingdom*, when as conductor of the London Philharmonic Choir (1982-91) he prepared them for recording, by Handley and Slatkin respectively. He has conducted the Canterbury Choir since 1984, and here they produce a lovely clear and incisive sound, helped no doubt by the presence of members of the Cathedral choir, and girls from the King's School. Just occasionally they are found wanting; at the opening phrase of the Prologue I missed the air of mystery which is surely needed; it sounds rather dull. And the women lack that vindictive waspishness required at 'This man, if He were a prophet'. However, they make up for it later at 'And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter', beautifully realised, and with the Cathedral boys giving a serene top edge to the sound. Overall the singing is superb, and clearly the choir had been well prepared. Worthy of note is the genuine *ppp* after figure 137 at 'and he will remember their sin no more': and Cooke brings the combined forces to the work's triumphant conclusion, with splendid singing in 'Give us one heart...'

Unfortunately in this section the choir is often barely audible when singing with the soloists. This is especially so during the louder passages; it is less of a problem with a reduced dynamic, such as 'Turn you to the stronghold' at the end of Part I. However, I have to say that it is refreshing for once to *hear* the solo parts in the tutti, as in other recordings they often get overwhelmed by the chorus.

PAR The singers of Canterbury Choral Society produce a wonderful range of vocal sounds and textures, opulent in the sonorous passages and telling in the quiet ones. Their diction is clear and their overall sound pleasing and well-coached. The girls of the Crypt and Chamber Choirs of the King's School, and the Cathedral choristers, all conducted by David Flood off-stage, take the parts of the Angels and the Chorus in heaven, and impart a youthful edge to these passages. An added attraction is the sense of distance. Good use is made here of the Cathedral's architecture, as with the 'off-stage' oboe and cor anglais players in the Mountain scene near the start of Part I. The Philharmonia is, as one might expect, excellent. There are very few slips: just a little lack of ensemble at the *allargando* two bars before Fig. 28 and at the second bar of Fig. 117.

I know that it was Richard Cooke's stated intention to take all the music at Elgar's speeds. He doesn't, of course – at least not all of them. His speeds are good, which means that he does not hang about, but they are not always exactly Elgar's. For instance, the first climax of the piece, from Fig. 35, is taken at about 54

crotchets per minute as against Elgar's metronome mark of 80. But it is a tremendous performance of this passage and I for one do not mind the slower speed. More in line with Elgar's intentions, from Fig. 49, Cooke makes the music move forward at a good pace instead of dragging as in some other performances, so that the relaxation at the end of the movement does not descend into immobility, and 'Turn you to the stronghold' is spot on at 88 crotchets per minute as Elgar marked. Because the general intention is right, this performance has a vitality and urgency that set the more contemplative passages in context. Cooke has the measure both of the work's overall architecture and its detail: he can see both the wood and the trees. A minute example of the latter concerns the singers' observation of staccato dots. These are often ignored. In this performance they are observed by soloists and chorus alike – not all of them, but a great many.

GH Cooke conducts with a firm control of structure, and takes no obvious liberties with the score. His performance is ten minutes faster than Boult and fifteen faster than Hickox, yet the work does not feel rushed, and he manages the numerous little changes in tempo well. It was an excellent idea to hire the Philharmonia: the score is taxing, and one wonders when they last played it, yet they respond as one to every nuance of Elgar's orchestration.

PAR It is not my brief here to discuss the textual and musical merits of *The Apostles*. I know that some people have problems with the work. Its complicated text and its very individual music, which contains a plethora of pedal points, false relations, chromaticism, mystical harmonies and scoring, and late Romantic/Wagnerian procedures, has a very special appeal. On a recent weekend course on *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* which I tutored, only half of the students (all but one of them members of The Elgar Society) had heard a live performance. Suffice it to say that, if you are not yet persuaded that it is one of Elgar's greatest works, or even – like me – the greatest, then this is a good CD set with which to acquaint yourself with it.

Finally, as a member of the 'Elgar in Performance' group that sponsored this performance of *The Apostles*, I am proud to have been associated indirectly with this recording. As the Chairman of our group has been heard to say more than once at the end of a performance we have sponsored, 'Money well spent'.

GH If this had been the premiere recording, it would have been welcomed unreservedly. As it is, I urge all members to buy it, not least to encourage the brave initiative of the Canterbury choir. Perhaps *The Kingdom* next?



BBC Legends
BBCL 4170-2

BBC Legends: Menuhin and Boult

Violin concerto Op.61; Introduction and Allegro Op.47; Funeral March from *Grania and Diarmid* Op.42

Yehudi Menuhin (violin)

London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra

Conducted by Sir Adrian Boult

Launched in 1998, the BBC Legends series is a proven treasure trove of live performances from the twentieth century. The catalogue for this label already lists over 150 CDs (152 to be precise), and makes interesting reading. It is of course subtitled 'great performers of the twentieth century', so composers to a certain extent take a back seat; nevertheless the rationale behind the choice is sometimes curious, or at least produces some surprising results. Before this disc, there has only been one entirely devoted to Elgar (BBCL 4106-2), on which Barbirolli conducts the first symphony and *Introduction and Allegro* (a second bite at the cherry for this work as it also appears on the disc under review here). Otherwise there's Kathleen Ferrier's wonderful rendition from 1951 of 'Land of Hope and Glory', to conclude BBCL 4100-2 (another Barbirolli CD), and the unlikely pairing of Pierre Monteux and 'Enigma' Variations (BBCL 4172-2) in that wonderful Indian summer for the octogenarian Frenchman, when he headed the LSO during the 1960s (reviewed below). Of the post-Second World War British conducting knights, Barbirolli has eight discs, Beecham six, and Boult only two, which is surprising until one realises that Sargent has none. There is lots of Horenstein, Tennstedt and Giulini, resulting equally in lots of Beethoven, Bruckner and Mahler symphonies. This is not carping, far from it; these are great works in the hands of great conductors. But it could be described as a request for balance in future selections.

For many of us 'of a certain age', say those over the half-century, many of these performances could be personally familiar, making us, the listeners, part of the legend. Listening to them awakens memories, especially of those Proms in the sixties, though sadly in that decade alone three of the knights moved on to the great podium in the sky, leaving behind 'Sir Boult' (as German radio announcers would invariably call him on air) for a further thirteen years until he died in 1983, aged 93. This disc comprises performances from 1965, 1969 and 1975. In 1965 Boult accompanied Menuhin in the concerto. Both men knew Elgar and worked with him, the violinist making the famous recording as a boy with the composer himself 33 years earlier with the LSO at Abbey Road, while Boult remained

a staunch advocate of Elgar's music throughout his life. He recorded the concerto with Menuhin in December 1965 at the Kingsway Hall, so this concert performance ten months earlier at the Royal Festival Hall was something of a dry run (Boult chose the concerto again, again with Menuhin, for his eightieth birthday concert on 8 April 1969). 'Dry run' is apt, for in 1965 the RFH had recently been acoustically changed. This was the opening concert, and the occasion another birthday celebration, this time Tippett's sixtieth; he conducted his own *A Child of our Time* in the second half. This incongruous pairing of works seems bizarre today, but presumably followed some logical thought process by a 'BBC Wallah' (when things were not going quite right at rehearsal it was using this description that I once heard Boult summon some unfortunate technician *plena voce* at the Royal Albert Hall).

Boult is a wonderful accompanist after a strikingly measured opening, and as well as bringing an especially Elgarian stylish sound, his antennae are on full alert throughout this flexible score, and once his soloist has joined the proceedings; ensemble is immaculate. Despite the RFH's dryness, Menuhin gives a passionate account; technically in full command (intonation would be the first component to desert him in later years), his G string sound full-blooded, the technically complex moments in total control. In his autobiography *My Own Trumpet*, Boult recalled Menuhin's playing of the concerto that year as 'eloquent', though a few years on he worried about a certain missing 'it' when they performed together. Not here though, particularly in the Andante, in which lyrical, sweet tone dominates his playing and inspires the LPO to wonderful extremes of tenderness and solemn beauty. If there are moments which later in the year would have been assigned another take by EMI at the Kingsway Hall, they occur in the finale, certainly some rough edges (around the references to Brahms) and speculative leaps into the ozone-layer on the E string. But the cadenza is wonderfully paced and inspiringly accompanied by those miraculous thrumming guitar-like violins ('distant Aeolian harp flutters under and over the solo', Elgar told Ernest Newman, but surely this Spanish colour is meant to remind us of the work's motto inscription *Aquí está encerrada el alma de (Herein is enshrined the soul of)*). Whatever the truth, as he told Frank Schuster in a postscript to a letter of 4 July 1912: 'That last movement is good stuff!'. Never a truer word; this performance is good stuff, a must for Elgarians, the applause deservedly thunderous.

It gets better. For thunderous applause a Prom audience cannot be matched, and after a glorious account of *Introduction*

and *Allegro* there is plenty of it for the 86 year-old Boult at the head of the BBCSO in the Albert Hall (what a contrast to the RFH just heard). The strings fill the hall with their thick textures when in full cry, yet a remarkable intimacy is achieved in the chamber music sections for the string quartet. Again Boult has a wonderful feel for *rubato*, bringing to Elgar what an Italian conductor might naturally do in a Puccini opera. At his advanced age he can still exert a strict yet flexible control over all he surveys. Listening to this stunning account, it is hard to believe that by now (4 September 1975) he was frail and walking to the podium aided by a stick. Clearly his mental faculties were anything but impaired, as I know from a letter he wrote to me answering a question about an added cymbal clash, not in the score, on his recording of Vaughan Williams's Eighth symphony, a work I was conducting overseas at this time. To conclude, there is an eloquent account of the 1901 Funeral Music from *Grania and Diarmid*, recorded with the LPO at Barking Town Hall on 26 November 1969. But for this reviewer it is the *Introduction and Allegro* that is a fitting reminder of how great an Elgarian Boult was.

Christopher Fifield



Elgar and Walton Violin Sonatas

Lorraine McAslan (violin), John Blakely (piano)

Sanctuary Classics
RSN 3060

I really enjoyed listening to this CD. The playing is at once aristocratic and passionate, and I am not just referring to Lorraine McAslan, the violinist; she is ably matched by John Blakely, the pianist. Right from the start, their playing is firm and committed: we begin *in medias res* and are swept up by the ardent presentation of the first subject of the first movement. But I do have one or two minor reservations and I would like to get these out of the way first so that, as I enjoyed the rest of the playing, you may enjoy the rest of the review.

Here are the things I find surprising. The main one is the rather pronounced decelerations that take place at some of the points marked *allargando* or *largamente*. The first of these occurs just before Fig. 2. Indeed, the marking is *poco allargando*, whereas, in my opinion, the music is submitted to a *molto allargando*. The same exaggeration occurs three bars before Fig. 3, two before Fig. 11, and one before Fig. 12. In my opinion they are misjudged and halt the flow of the music. (Curiously, in the slow movement, three and seven bars after

Fig. 24, the *molto largamente* strikes me as being too little observed.) I am not fond, either, of the quavers in the violin passage just before Fig. 1 (and its reappearances). They are marked with *tenuto* signs; Elgar, quoting Brahms, was known to have said, 'Don't starve the quavers'. I am afraid that McAslan's are positively anorexic – pronouncedly staccato. Nor is Blakely going to escape my critical attention: he holds the sustaining pedal down right through the first two bars of Fig. 5 and he also seems to ignore the second of each pair of Elgar's pedalling marks in the passages just after Fig. 6, and to sustain the bass notes beyond their written crotchet length by over-pedalling up to Fig. 7. There is also an extraordinary 'double hit' – da-dum – on the B flat in the bass of bar 237. Lastly, the bottom E two bars before Fig. 19, marked *staccatissimo* and without pedal marking, is pedalled right through to 19 itself.

But these are minor points when compared with the playing overall. What I love is the wonderful tone which McAslan possesses, whether in the loud passages or in the quiet, whether at the bottom of the violin's range or at the top. She really makes her violin sing, even when it is humming to itself. She is truly visceral and passionate on her lowest string at the climax at Fig. 12; and yet, nine bars after, she is at her most delicately sweet in the upper register. And, talking of dynamics, her (and her pianist's) distinction between *p* and *pp* and between *f* and *ff* are wonderful to hear. What I also like is that every note is true: her intonation is impeccable, even on the high harmonic notes onto which Elgar sometimes asks her to pole-vault. Excellent, too, is the interplay between the two musicians in such passages as that at Fig. 5. Elgar's markings are very precise, but she interprets beyond the markings with subtle shades of tone. The last four bars of the first movement are wonderfully majestic, a result of the careful architectural planning that has gone into her playing.

The performance of the second movement is the best I have heard. It doesn't 'hang about', setting off at a good *Andante* ('moving'). There is an attractive, intense, throaty tone at the beginning, some lovely, distanced playing from Blakeley, and not a small hint of ghostly goings-on – note the violinist's delicately placed pizzicato and the pianist's careful observation of the [*subito*] *mf cresc.* marking three bars after Fig. 22 and in similar places. The middle section enters beautifully *pp dolcissimo*, and, fortunately, the oddly slow initial speed in this section soon gathers momentum. What is really fine is the section from Fig. 33 to the end, including the pianist's cadential passage (in which he achieves a true *ppp*), and the violinist's *con sordino* recapitulation of the first section. This is completely absorbing playing, with murmurings and mutterings-under-the-breath and

will-o'-the-wisps and aural cloud-puffs flitting before our ears. The last six bars are magical.

A completely committed and musical performance of the last movement rounds off the Elgar sonata. It is finely judged, with some lovely tone. Typical of McAslan's playing is the masterful way she integrates the seemingly inconsequential fragments just before Fig. 42. They are marked *espress*, and Elgar wanted them to 'tell'. They certainly do in her hands; even the isolated quaver E has expression. Typical, too, is the last climax. Like all the others it has tone and depth, without bombast, bringing to a conclusion a very fine interpretation. My reservations – listed in paragraph two – are merely the nit-pickings of an amateur critic. The general thrust and argument of this performance sweeps aside all such carping in a display of true musicianship.

The Walton Sonata is a fine companion piece, finely played. It is in two movements, a sonata allegro and a set of variations. The playing is rich, rhythmical, precise, impassioned. Among its many joys is the second movement variation with the tune in the piano and the violin gently plucking away in regular lazy rhythm like a one-stringed guitar. Beautiful!

Small points: the inlay booklet does not add much to the sum of human knowledge, with very spare notes by Malcolm Walker and a horrible mis-spelling 'Loranne' McAslan on the front. But I recommend wholeheartedly that you buy this disc.

Paul Adrian Rooke



Sanctuary Classics
RSN 3060

Choral Music of Parry

The Soul's Ransom;* The Lotos-Eaters;+ *Blest Pair of Sirens*§
Invocation to Music;¶ *I was glad*.§

Anne Dawson (soprano)¶, Della Jones (mezzo-soprano)*+,
Brian Rayner Cook (baritone)¶, David Wilson-Johnson
(baritone)*, London Philharmonic Choir*+¶, London Symphony
Chorus§, London Philharmonic Orchestra*+¶, London
Symphony Orchestra§, Roderick Elms (organ) §, conducted by
Matthias Bamert*+¶ and Richard Hickox§.

Chandos's re-release of choral works by Parry in a box-set of two CDs provides a useful cross-section of the composer's output in the genre of large-scale music for soloists, chorus and orchestra. Two of the best known works are *Blest Pair of Sirens* and the Coronation anthem *I was glad*, both conducted by

Richard Hickox in convincing performances. Hickox succeeds in conveying the spacious architecture of *Blest Pair* so wonderfully allied to Milton's Pindaric structure, but it rather lacks that vital momentum in the final section ('To live with him'), where the composer's quintessential 'hurrying on' (dubbed by his students and colleagues 'Parrymando'), has greater élan in David Hill's performance on Argo. But the detail in *Blest Pair* is deftly handled – the horn solo just before the first entry of the choir, the chorus's hushed opening, the contrapuntal clarity (which gets rather lost in Boult's older recording on EMI), the warmth of the brass, the general sense of ensemble, and the spacious close. Though I have always found Philip Ledger's gargantuan performance of *I was glad* (recorded in 1987 and now re-released on EMI Classics) to be irresistible for its sheer majesty of sound (the CUMS chorus, quite stunning; the incisive extra brass of the band of Kneller Hall; and the generous acoustic of King's College Chapel), Hickox's interpretation of the anthem is an impressive marshalling of the huge forces Parry demands, and the clarity of the eight-part counterpoint is illuminating.

The three works undertaken by Mathias Bamert provide a valuable musical insight into some of Parry's choral experiments after the success of *Blest Pair*. *The Lotos-Eaters*, written for Cambridge in 1892, is one of the composer's most sensuous canvases, a fact abundantly evident in the opening prelude (it was a work Elgar much admired and performed with the Worcestershire Philharmonic). The gossamer-like texture of much of this score contrasts vividly with the grandiose rhetoric of *Invocation of Music*, composed for the Leeds Festival in 1895 to mark the bicentenary of Purcell's death, while *The Soul's Ransom* of 1906 formed part of Parry's attempts to create a deeply personal genre of 'ethical oratorio', reflecting his own brand of humanitarian heterodoxy. *The Lotos-Eaters* lacks the recited poetry of the introduction that Parry specified, and Bamert's interpretation seems rather stiff and diffident, lacking passion in the choral sections (though better in the orchestral passages and interjections). Even in the magical chorus 'The Lotos blooms', more ardour is surely warranted. As I hear it, the emotional temperature is only raised with Della Jones's expressive solo contributions, such as 'Lo! in the middle wood' and 'How sweet it were', which sounds almost Mahlerian.

The somewhat introverted, indeed private, sentiments of the neo-baroque *The Soul's Ransom* (modelled as a *Sinfonia Sacra* after Schütz) make it, at the best of times, a difficult work to shape and interpret. Parry's works of this kind lack the essential dialectic of drama and reflection, and the meaning of the libretti (freely compiled by Parry from the Bible, often with

the interpolation of his own words) is not always clear. Elgar much admired Parry's *A Vision of Life*, written a year after *The Soul's Ransom*, and it may well have been a potent influence on the production of *The Music-Makers*, but whereas Elgar always possessed, intuitively or otherwise, a dramatic sensibility, Parry's gifts were elsewhere, and in *The Soul's Ransom* the endless reflective moralising seems relentless. There are some attractive moments – the polyphonic opening chorus ('Who can number the sands of the sea'), the soprano solo ('Why are ye so fearful'), and the choral ritornello ('It is the spirit') – but for the most part the performance fails to catch fire. It is, nevertheless, good to have this work on CD, for though it may not represent the high point of Parry's work as a choral composer, its genre hugely influenced Vaughan Williams, Bliss, and Howells in their own ethical choral excursions after World War 1.

In the extrovertly romantic Invocation to Music Bamert seems more at home with Parry's 'breezy' muscular style (an affinity confirmed in his interpretation of much of the Fourth Symphony), though some of the composer's slightly awkward transitional passages between sections are not always perfectly calculated in tempo. The chorus, for the most part, also possesses a greater conviction both in the massive architecture of the opening and closing numbers, and in the truly magnificent 'Dirge' (where Bridges paraphrased Job in 'Man born of desire') – music scandalously neglected yet of the same heady quality as *Blest Pair* and *I was glad*. Here Brian Rayner Cook's solo, with its wonderfully wistful refrain 'And drinketh up our tears as dew', has a yearning quality that foreshadows those exquisite moments of nostalgic introversion in Elgar. There are also sympathetic performances from Arthur Davies, Lynn Dawson in the ravishing duet 'Love to Love calleth', a thoroughly Wagnerian essay, and with Rayner Cook in the passionate trio 'O enter with me the gates of delight', a rare example of such a genre in Parry's works.

Jeremy Dibble



BBC Legends
BBCL 4172-2

Pierre Monteux

Weber: Jubel-Ouverture, Elgar: Variations on an Original Theme 'Enigma'; Chabrier: Fête Polonaise (London Symphony Orchestra)

Ravel: Le Tombeau de Couperin; Pijper: Symphony No. 3 (BBC Symphony Orchestra)

Pierre Monteux was a versatile conductor whose interests were by no means confined to the French and Russian traditions

with which he is most associated – and which contribute to the delightfully lucid textures and sprightly rhythms of the Ravel. Association with modernism did not preclude fine interpretations of Romantic repertoire, including the then unfashionable Berlioz (his *Roméo et Juliette* is a benchmark for later recordings) and, here, Weber, doing his best with a piece whose promising build-up climaxes unfortunately with no big tune, but 'God save the [as it then was] King'. Behind a splendid moustache – I mean Monteux's, though the same can be said of Elgar's – lay an acute musical brain, and a profound sense of duty to the composer. Stravinsky said of Monteux, the first conductor of *The Rite of Spring*, that 'almost alone among conductors, [he] never cheapened Le Sacre nor looked for his own glory in it ... he continued for to play it all his life with the utmost fidelity'. If I can't say as much for his Pijper, it is because this is the first time I have heard this curious and austere 15-minute symphony.

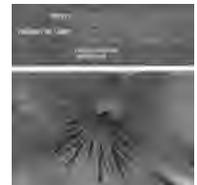
The performance of Elgar's variations is accordingly no Frenchification of an English masterpiece, but a faithful and delightful rendition (it is of course an English orchestra). The delicate colouring of some passages (e.g. 'Ysobel') is down to Elgar. Some may find Monteux over-indulgent in *ritardando*, notably in the early stages; the slowing of the bars prior to 'Nimrod' is beautifully handled, and 'Nimrod' itself is intimate, tender, as it should be. On the other hand, I would be frightened to meet Dan the bulldog if he was as ferocious as this. XIII, following the introspection of the cello-based XII, opens with a glimpse of sunshine, and the wistful, rather than tragic, interpretation of this ultra-enigmatic '***' is what the score calls for, however one may interpret the piece biographically. And as far as I can hear, Monteux takes the liberty of not having the organ clog things up near the end. The finale is splendid; get quickly to the off switch if you don't want to follow it by the exuberant Chabrier; but I think EDU would not have minded us carrying on listening.

Julian Rushton

English String Music

Tippett: Concerto for Double String Orchestra; Little Music for String Orchestra. Vaughan Williams: Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus', Partita for Double String Orchestra

English Sinfonia, conducted by John Farrer



Sanctuary Classics
CD RSN 3057

This CD seems worthy of note in this Journal as an example of what followed the regeneration of English music usually – though not uniquely – attributed to Elgar. It was of course he who gave us the first undoubted masterpiece of English string music since the seventeenth century. *Introduction and Allegro* is yet another thing we owe to A.J. Jaeger, who suggested something for a body of strings like Bach's third 'Brandenburg' concerto. The next masterpiece of this kind, Vaughan Williams's 'Tallis' Fantasia, is not included here; instead, all the pieces are taken from the decade that included the second world war. It is thus curiously pointless (as well as unkind) of the writer of the insert note to say that Vaughan Williams's attractive *Partita* (the most recent piece recorded) is 'certainly no match' for the Fantasia. Not only do nearly 40 years separate them, but they have entirely different aspirations, and on their own terms work equally well. The author might have added that *Partita* is not as searching as the beautiful meditation *Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus'*. But there is room in my library at least for the playful allusions of *Partita* (and of Tippett's *Sellinger's Round*), as well as more overtly spiritual music.

The title *Partita* alludes to the historic forms and processes Vaughan Williams uses, rather than alluding to the past by borrowing material, as in the 'Tallis' Fantasia and *Variants*. All four works show allegiance to Elgar's masterpiece by similarly imaginative play with earlier musical forms, and by reference to folk idioms like those evoked in the so-called 'Welsh' tune of *Introduction and Allegro*. This is especially so in the slow movement of Tippett's electrifying Double Concerto, marginally the earliest piece recorded and given a rhythmically infectious reading here. The *Little Music* is deliberately modest, like Elgar's *Serenade* with which it shares a three-movement design with strikingly short finale. Throughout the playing is fresh and attractive, as on a parallel disc of wind music by Vaughan Williams and Holst also reissued by Sanctuary Classics. More power to them.

Julian Rushton



Elgar: Complete Works for Wind Quintet
Athena Ensemble

Chandos earns gratitude for reissuing this splendid collection, originally from 1978. That Elgar composed over 100 minutes of music for wind quintet may seem surprising, in view of his later concentration on vocal and large-scale symphonic works; even the late chamber music consists of only three masterpieces. But the quintets arose from an immediate practical need, for music to play among friends, in a shed or wherever was convenient; the

familiar photograph is duly included with an informative note by Noel Goodwin. Of personal interest to me was to learn that the parts that survive in the British Library were once owned by John Parr of Sheffield, as I recall playing from some of his material many years ago – including a set of parts, probably of the Schubert Octet, which said (approximately) 'no repeats if after 9.00 p.m.', doubtlessly so the players (never mind the audience) could get to the pub before closing time.

The Leicester and Elgar brothers (Frank on oboe, the composer on bassoon) were joined by another fine flute player, Frank Exton. Elgar may have been aware of the repertory of music for five winds, largely though not exclusively French in orientation, in some works by Reicha, Lachner, and Onslow, and rivalling the string quartet or quintet in dimensions and formal design. Elgar's quintets are important in his output for showing his early assimilation of the lighter, French-orientated type of 19th-century music, easily overlooked in his aspiration towards the Germanic symphony but an important part of an output that includes so many masterly lighter works. *Harmony Music No. 5* is his first known substantial essay in the multi-movement design typical of sonata, string quartet, and symphony; it lasts nearly half an hour. Many of the other pieces resemble incidental music. The listener who knows the later Elgar will treasure these pieces the more for hearing the first versions of melodic ideas that resurface in his maturity, and as late as the *Severn Suite*. But perhaps what is most remarkable is the confidence and competence of the self-taught composer, who has assimilated so much in a short time, despite living where he did.

The neglect of these enchanting pieces by woodwind quintets is easily explained. This ensemble normally includes only one flute, and the fifth member is an honorary woodwind instrument, the horn, which, 'as everyone must know, is not an easy thing to blow'. Presumably no suitably qualified player was available, and Exton was; moreover the horn is an occasional source of problems of balance and distribution of material among the instruments – I am not alone among my wind-playing acquaintance in finding a quintet, or sextet, better with at least one instrument paired. Elgar's problem was a clarinettist not of an equal standard to the others, but his rapidly developing taste and skill allowed William Leicester musically worth-while passages without making technical challenges equivalent to those brother Hubert evidently enjoyed meeting. Some of the flute writing, in particular, is virtuosic, and is here despatched with clean articulation and much charm in phrasing by Richard McNicol and Sebastian Bell. Indeed, the whole Athena ensemble plays throughout with relish. A delight, as well as an essential for anyone wanting the whole of Elgar.

Julian Rushton

100 YEARS AGO ...

On 1 May – the opening day of the Cincinnati Festival – Elgar received a telegram to say that his father had died two days earlier. He and Alice decided not to go to the opening concert and had a quiet day together. The following day saw a successful performance of *The Apostles*, with David Ffrangcon-Davies and John Coates among the soloists. On 3 May came *In the South*, and two days later *Introduction & Allegro* in the afternoon, and *Gerontius* in the evening. On 7 May they left for New York, via Niagara Falls: 'No description can convey what it is', wrote Alice. Despite the heat, Edward continued with his orchestration of *The Kingdom*, before they sailed for home on 18 May, reaching Hereford on the 27th.

On his return Elgar was initially unwell, and Alice tried to persuade him to go to London to see a doctor. *The Kingdom* was still to be completed, and time was running out, so he was forced into composition. His local doctor advised a holiday in the mountains, so on 12 June they left for New Radnor, about 30 miles distant, just over the border into Wales. Elgar was still far from well, and caught a cold. Alice, Carice, and May Grafton enjoyed walking in the local hill country. After a week or so, Elgar was able to work a little, but on 25 June he slipped on some wet stones when posting a letter, and they returned to Hereford immediately. At the beginning of July work proceeded again. Elgar was in a much better frame of mind and enjoying the summer weather: on 6 July 'E. often with his darling baby swallows'. Julia Worthington came to stay for a few days, and Professor Sanford was another visitor. On 13 July 'E. very busy finishing his great Soprano Scene', which was of course 'The Sun Goeth Down'. He and Alice then had a three-day break at The Hut, Frank Schuster's house by the Thames at Bray. Claude Phillips and the Stuart Wortleys were also there., and they were 'immensely impressed' when Elgar played them parts of the new work.

Back in Hereford there was still the final scene of *The Kingdom* to complete, and 'E. [was] very hard at work' for the next few days. The diary was able to report on 23 July: 'E. really finished the composing of his beautiful work – Most thankful'. Two days later, Elgar went up to Novello in London, where he talked with Jaeger about the latter's Analysis of *The Kingdom*. On the 26th he lunched with Professor Sanford, Paolo Tosti and two world-famous singers – Enrico Caruso, and the baritone Victor Maurel, the first Iago and Falstaff for Verdi, and the first Tonio for Leoncavallo.

Elgar was immensely relieved that the long task was over. Alice wrote to Mrs Stuart Wortley on the 27th: 'He was looking so well & so lighthearted now such a burden was lifted'. Orchestration of the complete work was resumed on 29 July. On 1 August he sent a copy of the libretto to Canon Gorton, who was to write an interpretation of the words as he had for *The Apostles*. Elgar worked at a furious pace, telling Jaeger on 7 August that he had scored seventy pages that week. On the 14th they celebrated Carice's sixteenth birthday with an enjoyable day at Ludlow. However, the next day 'Heard Moss [Jaeger] cd. not finish Analysis – very concerned'. Two days later, thanks to Alfred Littleton's intervention in relieving Jaeger of some of his duties, they heard that he would continue with it. Elgar wrote: 'I am so glad you are going on with the Analysis & hope you have an easier time with it; when can you come down?'; he arrived at Hereford on the 25th, but Alice noted the next day that he was 'far from well'. Ivor Atkins spent several days at Plas Gwyn correcting proofs, and the orchestration was finished on 31 August.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

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