

Lecture delivered at St James' Finchampstead 24th April 2009

History of Music in the Church by Andrew Bosley

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I have to admit that when Revd Richard suggested I took part in this series of Lent lectures my first reaction was one of blind panic ! Not because I didn't want to do it but probably because I hadn't done it here before. I think the last time I did something like this was about 20 years ago when at St Peter's Caversham. My "audience" was the Music Group of the University of the 3rd Age in Reading – a rather formidable group made up largely of retired professional musicians, many of them lecturers with connections with the music departments of two universities of and the BBC. To describe them as "erudite" was something of an understatement !! Anyway, I must have done something right because I lived to tell the tale and actually got invited back. So, here we are – 20 years on – this time in Finchampstead with, may I say, a much more friendly looking gathering. This evening I shall attempt to trace the development of music in worship from its beginnings to the present day. If I were to do justice to each period of development we would probably need a full session for each one rather than cramming the whole lot into the short time we have together this evening. So, it will be very much a "potted" history of church music development. Before I get going I'd like to thank Revd Richard for his invitation to speak tonight and all of you for coming. It's a great honour and privilege to deliver this short talk – thank you. During this time there will be some opportunities for quiet reflection during which there will be some pieces of music played on CD to help us focus and reflect.

Before we go back into the mists of time, perhaps we should just think more generally for a little while about the role of music and its effect and influence on our worship. If we want our churches to be alive, our worship must be alive, and if we want our worship to be alive, our music must be alive. May I dare to suggest that most of us probably find that music – in whatever form – reaches and permeates our deepest feelings far more powerfully than words alone. It's my guess (and I'm probably just slightly biased) that few of us would really want to worship in a church where there was no music and if our experience of worship is boring it could be that we've probably experienced something sadly lacking in the music. Think, if you would, of festivals such as Christmas and Easter. Then try to imagine them without music ? In fact, music may well be the first thing that comes to mind when we think back on these high spots. Week by week, what makes you feel at home (or not at home as the case may be) as you worship in our church or visit a strange church, maybe when you're on holiday. Chances are that the kind of music you hear and are asked to sing has a lot to do with how you feel. Music is something we both hear and sing when we worship. This is related to the fact that worship is, as I heard someone describe it once, both call and response. The call of God reaches the depths of our hearts and our music and singing etc expresses the deepest response of our hearts to God. If we recognize the importance of music we do not detract from the centrality of Word and Sacrament – on the contrary, music adds immeasurably to the power of Scripture and preaching, prayer and Sacrament. This was beautifully summed up by a former incumbent of a previous church of mine when he described music as "The Bicycle of the Liturgy". It could also be described as the "Bicycle of Scripture" - we not only hear it read in our worship we also hear it sung. It could be said that setting the long succession of bible verses to music in Handel's masterpiece "The Messiah" have made those passages of scripture virtually unforgettable. Most of the anthems sung by our choir are settings of scripture. Don't forget the psalms and the canticles – still sung at St James' at Matins and Evensong. Finally, one of the most powerful hymns we sing – "Tell out my soul". At St James' we are blessed with gifted and effective preachers who regularly challenge us every Sunday – I'm sure that the effectiveness of their sermons and addresses would be just slightly compromised if not complimented by a hymn of preparation beforehand and followed by a hymn of response, as is the case at Matins and Evensong. Wasn't it St Augustine who told us that "when we sing we pray twice". Rarely does a congregation pray so powerfully as when they are singing great hymns of prayer such as "Breathe on me breath of God" or "Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me". The inherent power of the sacraments is also brought out by music. Think how much some meaningful and carefully chosen hymns add to a service of Marriage or Baptism. What a difference it makes at The Eucharist when choir and congregation offer anthems, hymns and chants during the administration of Holy Communion. How much more meaningful the acclamations in the ritual are when sung by everyone to a good musical setting rather than just read "parrot-fashion" or sung by a few brave souls up in a remote organ loft in some strange and, all too often, outdated musical style. I feel passionately that the music has a positive bearing on how everything else in the services go. When the music is uplifting the ministers and all who help lead the worship are in turn inspired to preach with a far greater power and conviction, while those in the pews find their hearts and minds opened even wider to hear more clearly and receive more fully the good news of the Gospel. I'm also convinced that when we leave the shelter of our church building to go about our daily lives we do so with more God-given power if there is music echoing in our hearts and a hymn tune on our lips !

CD Breathe on me, breath of God (Darlene Zschech)

So, let's turn to the development of music in the worship of the Church. How did we come to be where we are now ? In order to trace this development, we need to return to the early church and work back. It might be

worth bearing in mind also that the church building that stands over there – our beloved church of St James, Finchampstead – has proudly stood on that spot bearing witness to most of the different periods we'll be thinking about this evening.

Throughout the years, church music has changed immensely, continually producing new forms of worship and new opinions on how we should worship God. Beginning in the Middle Ages and ending up in the 21st Century, music has kept abreast of changing times and changing attitudes. European church music during the middle ages was sung in Latin and was known as Plainsong. There were several forms of Plainsong but the most popular was known as Gregorian Chant, and such was its popularity that it stayed in constant use throughout this long period and paved the way for other types of music. Gregorian Chant developed mainly in western and central Europe during the 9th and 10th Centuries. Many people believed an old story which says that Pope Gregory the Great wrote the songs and this new form of plainsong. Most people who study the history of music believe that kings such as Charlemagne brought this music from Rome to their kingdoms in France and Germany. This music became known as Gregorian Chant (after Pope Gregory) and it gradually replaced much of what could best be described as "local" music throughout Europe. Although the Roman Catholic Church no longer requires its people to sing Gregorian Chants it still says that Gregorian Chant is the best music for prayer. Sadly, this method of chanting is rarely heard in the Roman Catholic Church now – except perhaps in places like Westminster Cathedral or Brompton Oratory or maybe some of its Monastic Institutions such as Ampleforth or Douai. It might sound strange but you're more likely to hear Gregorian Chant nowadays in the more extreme Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England – even then, you have to know where to find it.

So, Christians have been singing songs and Psalms since the earliest days of the Church. Let's think for a few minutes about the Psalms. Until fairly recently many people believed that the Jewish songs called the Psalms which are common to both Jewish and Christian traditions, were an important part of early Christian music and prayer. Students of the history of religious music no longer believe this, because many early Christian songs were not from the Psalms and Jews did not sing Psalms for many centuries after their most important holy place, the second temple, was destroyed in the year 70 (??) However, some parts of Jewish Music and Prayer somehow ended up later in Gregorian Chant. The organised order of prayers called "canonical hours" come from the Jewish tradition. The words Amen and Alleluia are from the Hebrew and the prayer "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus" which means "Holy Holy Holy" comes from the Jewish prayer "kadosh kadosh kadosh". It goes to show how much we have in common with the Jewish tradition, also it highlights how ancient the roots of our music tradition are. However, these days we are more likely to hear the psalms sung to Anglican Chant – as is our custom here at St James'. Anglican Chant is a method of singing un-metrical texts such as prose translations of the psalms, canticles or similar biblical texts by matching the natural speech rhythm of the words in each verse to a short piece of metrical music. Anglican Chant was developed in England at the time of the Reformation and appears to be an adaptation of the plainchant method and by the 18th Century was well established. The earliest known examples are single chants (chants written to cover just one verse of the text) and some of these date from the latter part of the 16th Century, many written by Thomas Tallis and his contemporaries, so it seems likely that Anglican Chant was devised by them to provide suitable musical settings for the English language version of the Psalter translated by Coverdale, as published in the then new Book of Common Prayer. The earliest double chants are from about 1700 – these are chants written to cover 2 verses of texts (such as the Magnificat at Evensong) and even one or two quadruple chants written to cover 4 verses of text – those of you who come to Matins will remember that we occasionally use a quadruple chant for the Te Deum.

CD Psalm 84

So now we enter the 16th Century, during which came the Reformation. At the time of the Reformation the reformers wanted services to be conducted in the vernacular. They also insisted on hymns which could be understood and sung by the people, and they wanted to get away from plainchant, most of which could only be performed by monks. The reformers also demanded that the new hymns should have a strictly scriptural basis, so they began to introduce metrical versions of the psalms – where the psalms were given a rhyme and rhythm, and verse structure, making them easy to sing and be understood. Take "The Lord's my Shepherd" for example. In doing so they began to divide between psalms and hymns which caused so much controversy in the Anglican church later on in the 18th and 19th Centuries. The Reformation coincided with the groundbreaking introduction of printing and this gave churchgoers even greater access to vernacular hymns. Martin Luther made a huge impact on the Church and its music, particularly in the development of accessible hymnody. Not only was he a radical theologian and a fine musician, he also encouraged many with musical talent to use it for the glory of God. As well as influencing others, he himself wrote many hymns and rewrote former Gregorian chants to encourage better congregational singing. Many of Luther's hymns are still sung today – probably the finest example is "A safe stronghold our God is still" (based on Psalm 46) sung to his stirring tune "Ein Feste Burg". Many critics have claimed that Luther wrote hymns patterned after bar songs sung in taverns, but this is simply not true. Luther wrote many hymns in a medieval form called bar tune which was a pattern of stanzas for poetry writing; however, this had been misunderstood and misinterpreted as, quite literally, drinking songs! Although Luther did indeed use this method of bar tune or bar form, the suggestion that his hymns were inspired by lewd drinking songs is pure falsehood!! The Reformation was to open the way for contributions from composers such as J S Bach, but sadly, the church in this country had first to recover from a serious setback in its musical development whilst under the influence of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans. Churches and Cathedrals were

vandalised - stripped of all decoration, colour and any embellishments which could have been described as idolatrous. The music of the Church of England was restricted to a staple diet of plain unison psalm tunes, sung unaccompanied, painfully slowly and unrhythmically by apathetic congregations. Apparently the rest of the service was equally irreverent: some churches had to employ a dog catcher to stop them disrupting services and men would leave their hats on the Altar and in the Font. Hymns, with their vague scriptural references were still frowned upon. However, the average worshippers of the period were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with metrical psalms because their texts were not of the rhetorical quality of the Book of Common Prayer and many were extremely poor adaptations of scripture.

CD A nata lux de lumine (Thomas Tallis)

It was the great ISAAC WATTS who began the early 18th Century reform of congregational singing in the Church of England. He wrote many fine hymns – Joy to the world, Come let us join our cheerful songs and When I survey the wondrous cross are just three examples – and started from the principles that texts should express the religious feelings of the people. This was a complete turnaround from the previously held view that they should be scripturally based. Isaac Watts' principle still holds today, with the editorial committees of at least two hymnbooks still guided by that principle.

Now we're getting near to the "coming of age" of English hymn writing. It was the Wesley brothers, John and Charles who, early in the 18th Century and almost contemporary with Isaac Watts, set out to change worshippers' views of hymnody. They were not only the founders of Methodism but they insisted that hymns – both words and music – should be written to STIR the congregation, reinforce its religious emotions and play on the "feel-good" factor. The Wesleys made hymn singing the central feature of Methodist worship and it wasn't long before many people began to admire the Methodists for their hearty and fervent singing. (I can identify with that, being a Methodist in my childhood.) The qualities of sincerity and conviction were a vital part of the Wesley approach and congregations responded with vigour and enthusiasm. So powerful was this surge that many were attracted away from the Church of England into Methodism. I think it's safe to say that the biggest exodus was probably in the west country – Cornwall in particular. A number of forward looking Anglican clergymen began to see the need for a similar musical revival in their own Church. But many Anglicans resisted the introduction of the more evangelical style hymns because they were still wedded to (and entrenched in) the use of the metrical psalm – the musical embodiment of scripture. The matter came to a head in Sheffield in 1819 when the Vicar – Revd Thomas Cotterill – imposed Methodist style hymns on his congregation, who promptly rebelled and took him to the Diocesan Consistory Court. The case was heard by the Chancellor of the Diocese of York who, in a typical Anglican compromise, concluded that both hymns and metrical psalms were illegal in Anglican liturgy BUT, because their use was so widespread, he didn't feel able to enforce his decision !! This, of course, opened the floodgates to all manner of hymns – including Gospel songs – and, coupled with the pioneering work of Watts, Charles and John Wesley and other 19th century hymn writers and composers too numerous to mention, laid the foundation of Anglican hymnody as we know it today.

The other great impetus was the publication in 1861 of Hymns Ancient and Modern. Its enlightened editorial committee insisted that it should reflect the very best of the many traditions of hymnody. It was an amazing success – sales reached 500,000 annually (at a time when many people still couldn't read or write) and by 1912 it had sold a staggering sixty million copies – it's still in print today – despite its revision in 1950, the publication of A&M New Standard which incorporates the 200 "hymns for today" and more recently, Common Praise.

We're now going to listen to one of the great Victorian hymns – "Praise my soul, the King of heaven"

CD Praise my soul, the King of heaven

Up to the middle of the 19th Century many churches, particularly in rural areas, did not have organs and still relied on the services of the Village Band to provide accompaniment for the singing of hymns etc. This was known as "West Gallery Music". If you look closely at the west end of the nave of St James' church you will see evidence of a west gallery – this is where the band and the singers would have played and sung from during services. The band generally consisted of whatever instruments and voices happened to be available – maybe a string bass or cello, a bassoon, fiddles and violins and perhaps an accordion. However, by about the middle of the 19th Century the old church and chapel music was gradually becoming forgotten, not necessarily because its musical quality was poor but because its style no longer fitted in with the religious ideals of the period – this demise can also be linked to changes in society as well as religion. Non conformity flourished in the fast growing towns of the industrial revolution as chapels could be built wherever they were needed, whereas new Anglican Parish Churches required an Act of Parliament. Then along came the Oxford Movement and as its influence spread, country church music became increasingly conventional and correct – bands were replaced by organs, harmoniums or sometimes even barrel organs and the gallery choirs made way for all-male choirs placed in the chancel, under the watchful eye of the clergy. So, now we've arrived at the start of the 20th Century we have seen a freedom of style develop in what history calls the Liturgical Movement. We have also seen the transformation of church music to suit changing and evolving congregations. Sadly, it's not surprising that, in terms of church music development, the first fifty-odd years of that troubled and violent century yielded comparatively little. Music in Anglican worship continued relatively unchanged – many "low" and "middle of the

road” churches had adopted the services of Matins and Evensong whilst the Eucharist was the staple diet of the more Catholic wing of the Church and it is more than likely that, unless a church had a particularly fine music tradition which could support the use of ornate musical settings by composers such as Mozart and Haydn, you would find the service sung to the setting by Merbecke. The Parish Communion as we know it, had not yet arrived! Despite there being something of a dearth of new parish music at this time, there were two composers whose contributions to Church Music were beginning to “buck the trend”. Ralph Vaughan Williams was one and the other was Martin Shaw. Both men warrant more time devoted to them in this lecture than I am able to give tonight. Briefly, Vaughan Williams was editor of the “English Hymnal” created by Revd Percy Dearmer in 1906. Vaughan Williams also composed several hymn tunes, the most notable being the fine tune to “For all the Saints”. Martin Shaw, who had assisted Vaughan Williams in his research for the English Hymnal, had been organist of the famous north London church of St Mary, Primrose Hill where Father Dearmer was Vicar. Apart from his hymn tunes such as those written for “Hills of the north rejoice” and “Through the night of doubt and sorrow”, Shaw is probably best known for his “Anglican Folk Mass” which had the distinction of being the only alternative to Merbecke’s setting that we can say was widely known everywhere in England. Indeed, it is still used in some churches to this day.

During the post-war years and into the 1950’s changes which were to change the face of Church music were about to emerge. In the late 1950s The Revd Patrick Appleford was Vicar of a rather “down at heel” church in East London. Father Appleford was also an accomplished musician and, identifying the need for even more accessible and up-to-date music in his own Parish and finding nothing suitable in the Christian music market, he set about rectifying the situation by writing his own. He began in a very small way with a simple hymn for which he wrote the words and music in the then modern idiom. The year was 1960 and the name of the hymn was “Living Lord”. Can you believe that this was written nearly 50 years ago ?? Appleford continued to write hymn tunes etc for the church and his Communion setting, written for the Series 3 Communion service is still widely used and as popular as it was when it was first written – in fact it has just been revised for use with the Common Worship Communion services. Others grasped the mettle and began composing hymn tunes and other pieces but much of their work has been lost in the mists of time, simply because they wrote new tunes to traditional hymns. Little of their work survives – probably the most popular hymn tune from that period is “Camberwell” – written to be sung to “At the name of Jesus” and “Hatherop Castle” – written for “O Jesus I have promised”, popular in schools but not so popular outside the School Assembly Hall ! These two survived but some less successful compositions to go with “Firmly I believe and truly”, “Angel voices” and “Lord thy word abideth” (to name but three) seem to have disappeared without trace. Father Appleford had the advantage right from the start because he had the courage to write new music with new lyrics.

So, while Father Appleford was busy composing, other things were going on. Parish Communion and Family Communion had arrived with chancels and sanctuaries the length and breadth of the country being re-ordered so that Altars could be moved within sight of the congregations so that they could actually see what was going on. The wider Church was placing particular emphasis on reaching out to young people. Christian Unions within universities hosted evangelistic talks and provided Bible teaching for their members. Christian cafes opened and church youth groups were being set up. Some Christians felt that the Church needed to break from its stereotype as being formal and dull in order to appeal to the younger generation. Using popular music the Church restated the claims of the Bible through Christian lyrics, thus sending the message that Christianity was not outdated or irrelevant. Who remembers the Joystings ? Led by Joy Webb of the Salvation Army they were one of the first Christian pop groups to appear on television, in Salvation Army uniform, playing what was then Christian Pop Music. Since then much modern Christian rock and pop has developed and there is a thriving Christian Music business right across the world. Gradually amateur groups developed from church youth groups, also playing Christian music in the popular idiom, and as they did so many churches began to include their songs and their style in corporate worship. These early songs for communal singing were arguably the first examples of contemporary worship music and were characteristically simple, often using only the first three chords of the twelve bar blues in a repetitive pattern, well-suited for guitar strumming! “Youth Praise” published in 1966 was one of the first and most famous collection of these songs.

These foundations laid by those pioneers of Church music revival have formed the base on which their successors have continued to provide us with such a wonderful variety of good church music which has, rightly, found its way into our repertoires. The music of Billy Graham’s “Mission England” in the early 1980s played no small part in the furthering of this. From Mission England emerged what I still regard as one of the best hymnbooks to be published in the 20th Century - “Mission Praise”. From small beginnings (282 hymns and songs) and after no less than five revisions, this publication has mushroomed and offers over 1000 hymns and songs in one publication. Because of Patrick Appleford’s initiatives in the 1960s we in the Church of England are now blessed with more music settings of the Eucharist than we could ever hope to use, with settings by Dom Gregory Murray, Richard Shepherd, Martin How and not forgetting the works of David Thorne and Malcolm Archer which we use regularly here at St James’, and more are still being written – a far cry from the days when, in a country church you had the choice of Merbecke, Merbecke or even Merbecke !! Back on the hymn front the works of Timothy Dudley-Smith (former Bishop of Thetford) and Michael Baughen (former Bishop of Chester) have also found their way into our churches through Mission Praise and other hymn books such as we use here, with such hymns as “Christ triumphant, ever reigning”, “Tell out my soul”, “Lord for the years” and “Sing to God new songs of worship” now occupying pride of place in our music repertoires, as is the work of Graham

Kendrick. Graham began his songwriting career in the late 1960s. His most enduring accomplishment is his words and music for the song "Shine, Jesus shine" which has to be among the most widely heard songs in contemporary Christian worship worldwide. His other songs – which include "The Servant King" and "Meekness and majesty" have become well loved and widely used by worshippers in this country. Although now best known as a worship leader and writer of worship songs, Graham began his career as a member of a Christian band "Whispers of truth". Later he began working as a solo concert performer and recording artist in the Christian tradition. He worked for a time as a member of "In the name of Jesus" the ground-breaking mission team led by Revd Clive Calver. Calver went on to run British Youth for Christ and Evangelical Alliance before leaving the UK to do similar work in America. Graham Kendrick, however, has remained firmly fixed in the UK church as probably the most influential Christian songwriter of his generation. Graham is not quite so heavily involved at the sharp end of Christian music these days, but again, the foundations he has laid have been built on by other Christian musicians who are continuing this great work. People like Darlene Zschech, who we heard earlier in one of our reflection periods. Darlene is music pastor at the Hillsong Church just outside Sydney and is a major contributor to the Charismatic music scene. So far, we have only used one of her songs at St James' and this is one that occupies a very special place in the hearts of our junior choristers. The song is "Shout to the Lord" – you may remember it.

CD Shout to the Lord

The music of two Christian communities have also had a deep and lasting influence on the development of church music in this country, not least at Finchampstead. I refer, of course, to the communities at Iona and Taize. Iona is situated in the inner Hebrides. The Iona community, founded in 1938, is an ecumenical community of people of all ages and from different walks of life and Christian traditions. They are committed to seeking new ways of living the Gospel of Jesus in the world today. The community is a leading force in the present Celtic Christianity revival. Several Scottish kings are buried at Iona Abbey, as is John Smith, the former Labour party leader. Our Youth group has visited Iona, and their visit left a lasting impression on their lives. The Taize community in France is an ecumenical Christian monastic order, comprising a little over 100 brothers who come from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions. It has an interesting history. Brother Roger, the founder of the community, first purchased a house in Taize in 1940 and, being situated only a short distance south of the separation line that divided war-torn France, it became a sanctuary to countless war refugees seeking shelter from the Nazis. However, whilst on a trip to Switzerland to raise money for his refuge fund, the house was occupied by the Gestapo and Roger was not able to return there until the liberation of France in 1944. The rest of the Taize story is, as they say, history and Taize had evolved to become the internationally renowned centre of pilgrimage that we know today. Sadly, Brother Roger was murdered whilst at prayer at Taize in August 2005 at the age of 90. His memorial is the community, and what a legacy he has left. Taize has been a place of pilgrimage to members of our community here at St James on several occasions in recent years and its music is used here on occasions. Taize and Iona have one thing in common – their music is unique. As we approach Passiontide it is appropriate that we sing one of the seasonal Taize chants together now. The words and music are, in the spirit of Taize, simple. They are the words of the penitent thief – "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Let's sing it together now – if any choir members are here you might like to harmonize.

JESUS, REMEMBER ME

As we approach the end of this evening's talk we have arrived back in the 21st century and Christian music writers are still "about the Lord's business". This evening we seem to have gone full circle – remember I began by talking about the Psalms. Our penultimate CD track this evening features a new version of Psalm 23 by a young man Stuart Townend. We've used this once before at St James and it will definitely be back – sooner rather than later I hope. Stuart Townend, like Graham Kendrick, is a British Christian worship leader and writer of contemporary worship music. His songs include "In Christ alone", "How deep the Father's love for us" and "Beautiful Saviour" – some of you may just have come across these. Stuart is the son of a Church of England Vicar in Halifax, West Yorkshire. He started playing the piano at the age of 7 – at 13 he made a Christian commitment and began songwriting at the age of 22. The Christian website "Crosstalk" commented that "the uniqueness of Stuart Townend's writing lies partly in its lyrical content. There is both theological depth and poetic expression that some say is rare in today's worship writing". I'm convinced that we are going to hear much more of this young man and it's my prayer that the best of his music will, eventually, find its way into our repertoire here at St James'. Here is "The Lord's my Shepherd".

CD The Lord's my Shepherd

Finally, a postscript. I hope you'll forgive me for ending on a slightly more personal note. I'd just like to share with you an experience I had about 15 years ago which turned out to be the most profound and beautiful musical experience of my life. During a year's sabbatical in 1994 I was on pilgrimage at the Abbey House in Glastonbury. Each day began with the daily Eucharist either in the Abbey House Chapel or (as was the case on this particular morning) in the small and ancient chapel of St Patrick which stands in a quiet corner of the Abbey grounds in Glastonbury. The weather had been fantastic and this morning was no exception. The service began at 7-00 am celebrated very simply by the Vicar of Glastonbury in this plain and simple chapel. At the moment of consecration as the host was elevated we became aware of the most beautiful music being sung

close to the chapel, the sound wafting gently in through the open door. I have found a recording of this music and would like to share it with you now as we close this evening's talk.

CD (Birdsong – Blackbird)

Finally, a short passage from Colossians 3 : 16 "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (and that, my friends, includes the blackbird !!)