
The English choir-band in literature

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In this paper Gilliam Warson draws on a small but important selection of English literature to see how contemporary writers reflect the activities of church and chapel musicians during the late Georgian period. Inevitably the work of Thomas Hardy is central to her discussion, although she includes references to the work of such authors as Butler, Eliot and Trollope. She also refers to one important diary of the period – that of the Somerset parson William Holland (1799–1818) – and makes full use of the satirical ‘Sketch Book’ by the American writer Washington Irving.

There are many books chronicling the period of upheaval in the Anglican church from the late 18th to mid 19th century. Readings of contemporary diaries, searches of parish documents, and census material provide plenty of information concerning church music, its performance practices, place within worship, finance, and the many social and religious implications of all these aspects. History, though, is not only facts and figures, and we can consider church music equally well through the work of the story-teller. We can read about the Oxford Movement, the rise and fall of the choir-band, and the establishment of a formal hymn-book. We can meet some of the characters involved in these changes as they go about their lives, fall in love, become old and die. Novels tell us much about the untrained musicians¹ who, through their occupancy of the gallery, were set to dominate the musical life of the church. Thomas Hardy in *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872)² provides the richest picture of rural church music, and the choir of Mellstock is typical consisting of a band of mixed musicians and singers drawn from various walks of life who were able, through their music, to enjoy an elevated social status. We can also learn about the reactions of the higher social classes in novels such as Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), and mourn the passing of this era with George Eliot in *Amos Barton* (1858).³

¹ This refers to a lack of formal training and does not imply that educational processes were not present within the bands under discussion. [CT]

² For references in this paper, dates of first appearance are used. The page references, however, are for modern editions, details of which are given in the references. [SG]

The galleries

The galleries are mentioned only in passing, but nevertheless we learn that, in Anthony Trollope’s *The Small House at Allington*, the gallery ‘was all awry, and looked as though it would fall’ (Trollope, 1864, p. 8), whereas the ‘singing-gallery’ at the home of George Eliot’s *Amos Barton* was decorated with ‘Inscriptions ... telling of benefaction to the poor of Shepperton, with an involuted elegance of capitals and final flourishes’ (Eliot, 1858, p. 42).

The high surrounds of the galleries, affording the occupants an enviable privacy, is implied by the writer traveller Washington Irving in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1820) as we read of ‘a most whimsical grouping of heads, piled one above the other’ (pp. 97–8), whereas the ‘singing pew’ in Mark Rutherford’s⁴ chapel was placed at ground level, ‘immediately under the minister’ (White, 1881, p. 6).

Social background

Historical documents, especially contemporary diaries and church records, provide information about the members of the bands, and it can be learned that these musicians were drawn from the lower social classes. They were, for the greater part, craftsmen, such as tailors and carpenters, as well as the more respected members of the farming community. These documents make excellent comparison with our novels for we are introduced to many such characters. The choir of Mellstock, for example, in *Under the Greenwood Tree* included, among many others, ‘Mr Robert Penny, boot and shoe-maker’ (Hardy, 1872, p. 6), and the observant traveller Geoffrey Crayon notices the ‘village tailor’ among the players (Irving, 1820, p. 98). Further examples are included in *The Way of All Flesh* by Samuel Butler, whose narrator, Mr Overton, was to become very attached to the village blacksmith, the ‘melodious Carpenter’ and the ‘brawny shepherd’ who served to make up the

³ ‘The sad fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton’ is the first of three stories which appeared in *Blackwood’s Magazine* and were published collectively as *Scenes of Clerical Life* in two volumes in 1858. [CT]

⁴ ‘Mark Rutherford’ was the pseudonym used by the writer William Hale White (1831–1913). [CT]

choir at Battersby-on-the-Hill (Butler, 1903, p. 57). It was the inclusion of these artisans which was to prove upsetting to the members of higher social groups, as each time the congregation met, the social stratification was evident with the gallery musicians occupying a place of prominence. This was, as we shall see, too much for many members of the middle class.

The instruments

There is documentary evidence telling us that church musicians played a variety of instruments. The novels reinforce this, and remind us of the mix between old and new instruments with the viol¹ and serpent surviving in church music long after they had become extinct in the concert hall. Thomas Hardy, who writes with first-hand knowledge, his father and grandfather having been members of the choir in Stinsford in his youth, writes in the conclusion to his *Far from the Madding Crowd* of the 'hideous clang of music from a drum, tambourine, clarionet, serpent, hautboy, tenor viol, and double-bass' (Hardy, 1874, p. 412).

Other novelists also list instruments, and William Hale White, as Mark Rutherford, writes of a choir-band in the early 1830s: 'the musicians being performers on the clarionet, flute, violin, and violoncello' (White, 1881, p. 6). Geoffrey Clayton notes 'a clarionet' and a 'bass viol' (Irving, 1820, p. 98), and the choir of George Eliot's *Amos Barton* included 'a bassoon' and 'two key-bugles' (Eliot, 1858, p. 43). The choir-band of Battersby-on-the-Hill, as it appears in Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, had 'a violoncello, a clarinet, and a trombone' (Butler, 1903, p. 57). This reference is further authenticated as Butler writes: 'I have described the choir with its orchestra accompaniments exactly as they existed at Langar in my own earlier boyhood'.²

The players seemed very attached in their various ways to their own instruments. The virtue of one instrument over another is the subject of debate in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, one musician suggesting that 'Strings be safe soul-lifters', but another retorting 'I don't for my part see that a fiddle is much nearer heaven than a Clar'net' (Hardy, 1872, p. 31).

¹ The word 'viol' was used as late as the 19th century as a synonym for the violoncello. One of the last known exponents of the bass viol was the German musician C. F. Abel (1723–1787) after whose time it fell into disuse. [CT]

² For correspondence on this subject see the editorial note (Butler, 1903, p. 372). [GW]

Quality in the quire

Opinions seem to differ over the actual quality of the music performed by the choir-bands, and again we must consider both the reality of contemporary documents and the romantic version of the novelist. There is plenty of humour used to describe the choirs in our novels which seems to suggest that those writing did not take the musical contributions seriously. When it is suggested to Geoffrey Crayon that he attends church to hear the band, Frank Bracebridge tells him that the choir has been sorted as one would sort a 'pack of hounds'. The following passages describes the singers:

for the bass he has sought out all the 'deep solemn mouths', and for the tenor the 'loud ringing mouths', among the country bumpkins; and for the 'sweet mouths', he has culled with curious taste among the prettiest lasses in the neighbourhood.

(Irving, 1820, pp. 90–1)

The preparations for playing on Christmas day in Mellstock gives a wonderful insight into the casual attitude of the players, as the strings are

examined and screwed a little above concert-pitch that they might keep their tone when the service began, to obviate the awkward contingency of having to retune them at the back of the gallery during a cough, sneeze, or amen.

(Hardy, 1872, p. 47)

This is all very colourful, but what did the clergy of the time think of the playing? William Holland, the Somerset parson and diarist, notices on Sunday 15 April 1804

A disagreeable fellow was playing his fiddle in the Church when I came in, without tune or harmony, intending, I presume, to accompany the Psalm singers.

(Ayres, 1984, p. 96)

Christmas music

Although at the time when the choir-bands were active they played all the year round, reading of both factual and fictional works suggests that Christmas was the season which gave them the most musical scope. If we follow the choir from Mellstock on their Christmas rounds we can learn much about performance practices of the time, including repertoire and instrumentation. The players do not allow themselves to be deterred from attempting 'a teaser', remarking that it is both 'a good tune' and 'a splendid carrel', although present-day musicians may well wince at their practice technique which includes 'half-an-hour's hammering'. Just before they leave, William Dewy issues some last-minute advice which shows us how choir-band music was performed:

'Now mind ... You two counter-boys, keep your ears open to Michael fingering, and don't ye go straying into the treble part along o' Dick and his set, as ye did last year.'

(Hardy, 1872, p. 28)

This shows us that the doubling of parts between instruments and singers was usual. An earlier paragraph tells us that the said Michael played the second violin and so a part lower than the melody. Dick played the treble violin, the highest part – or melody. If the 'counter-boys' were to take the treble part, then the melody would leave the top, and become part of the second or lower parts.

Fancy Day seemed very pleased with the sound she heard from her window and this accords with the writer-traveller Washington Irving who, visiting England in 1815, wrote with ebullience about every aspect of English rural life in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*¹ He gives us this warming picture:

I had scarcely got into bed when a strain of music seemed to break forth in the air just below the window. I listened, and found it proceeded from a band, which I concluded to be the waits from some neighbouring village. They went round the house, playing under the windows ... the sounds, as they receded, became more soft and aerial, and seemed to accord with the quiet and moonlight. I listened and listened ... and, as they gradually died away, my head sunk upon the pillow, and I fell asleep.

(Irving, 1820, pp. 73–4)

Both groups were better received than that of the parish of William Holland, who remarks, on Friday 25 December 1801, that 'the Singers at the window tuned forth a most dismal ditty, half drunk too and with the most wretched voices' (Ayres, 1984, p. 61).

Remuneration

Playing in such a group as the church choir-band brought social benefits; Thomas Hardy, writing from his somewhat romantic viewpoint in the preface to *Under the Greenwood Tree*, seems convinced that it was the love of music that made them travel 'on foot every Sunday after a toilsome week through all weathers to the church, which often lay at a distance from their homes' (Hardy, 1872, p. vi). He also notes that the choir-band members received some payment, including:

From the manor-house ten shillings and a supper; from the vicar ten shillings; from the

farmers five shillings each; from each cottage-household one shilling.

(Hardy, 1872, p. vi)

It is significant that when the choir-band of Mellstock set out on their Christmas rounds they started with the house most likely to pay well. Hardy does, though, romantically suggest that any money earned in musical pursuits would be used for the maintenance of musical instruments, as the players are clearly aware of their worth.

'Wonder where he's put that there fiddle of his. Why, that fiddle cost thirty shillings, and good words besides.'

(Hardy, 1872, p. 41)

Although it is comforting to think of lowly paid artisans financing their cultural activities, some historians such as Vic Gammon (1977) suggest that the choir-band did play for financial gain. A look at the 1841 census reminds us that musicians such as Michael Turner (a shoe-maker from Warnham, Sussex) earned a mere fifteen shillings a week throughout his life and ended his days in poverty. If this is so, the novelist's romantic viewpoint must surely be tempered.

Hymns and psalms

A reading of the novels of our period also tells us about the hymns that were sung at that time. Both printed music and the rich legacy of the oral tradition are represented in literature. With no hymn-book then, hymns and carols had to be transmitted orally through several generations, a point which Hardy makes in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, as our stalwart carollers from Mellstock sing the carol 'Remember Adam's fall'.² This is a fine example of oral literature as there is plenty of repetition to facilitate its memorisation, as well as a rhyming scheme which is not always exact.³ In carols such as this we see the oral tradition of the western world, where songs and poems are rhymed and largely strophic.⁴

Sternhold and Hopkins' (1562) version of the psalms (the 'Old Version') was to be the mainstay

² 'Remember O thou man' was first published in 1611 as 'A Christma Carroll' in Thomas Ravenscroft's collection *Melismata, Musically Phansies*. Hardy (1972, pp. 20, 33) makes it clear that the Mellstock Quire are performing from a written source where the carol is identified as 'number seventy-eight'. Further, it is described as a 'teaser', but a 'good tune, and worth a mint o' practice' which would seem to point to a notated rather than an oral tradition. [CT]

³ For a more detailed explanation see Buchan (1972). [GW]

⁴ For a more detailed discussion see Finnegan (1977). [GW]

¹ As with much of Irving's writing, *The Sketch Book ...* is a satirical work which portrays Squire Bracebridge as a latter-day Sir Roger de Coverley. [CT]

of English church music until well into the 19th century, and it is this that is mentioned at length in the first few pages of *Amos Barton* (Eliot, 1858). This was to remain popular for some time, and was never really replaced by the 'New Version' collected by Tate and Brady (1696). William Holland, in his entry for Sunday 23 February 1800, gives a hint of the opposition that any innovation was to receive, remarking that older members of the congregation are 'old Sternhold and Hopkins for ever' (Ayres, 1984, p. 26). Similarly, George Eliot describes how the 'New Version' was

regarded with a sort of melancholy tolerance as part of the common degeneracy in a time when prices had dwindled, and a cotton gown was no longer stout enough to last a lifetime.

(Eliot, 1858, p. 43)

This degeneracy refers particularly to the Methodists who had more success with their hymn-books than did the Anglicans. Indeed the opening of Eliot's *Adam Bede* suggests this in the first page; here we are introduced to Adam Bede himself as he sings Thomas Ken's 'Morning hymn', accompanied by his hammer (Eliot, 1859, p. 18). Hymn singing is also linked to preaching as Dinah brings her lengthy sermon to a conclusion with a Methodist hymn. George Eliot realised a point of conflict as she even suggests in *Amos Barton* that the hymn-book, as well as an evangelical style of preaching, might attract a nonconformist congregation to the Anglican church. As the choir-band fell into decline in the Anglican church the members were forced to join the nonconformists, and as we shall see, this did not go unnoticed by the novelists.

Colourful narrative

Before looking at the decline of the choir-band in the Anglican church, I would like to look at some of their more colourful appearances. Our novelists allowed the musicians moments of glory. For example, George Eliot in *Amos Barton* notes:

the greatest triumphs of the Shepperton choir were reserved for the Sundays when the slate announced an ANTHEM, with a dignified abstinence from particularization, both words and music lying far beyond the reach of the most ambitious amateurs in the congregation; an anthem in which the key-bugles always ran away at a great pace, with the bassoon every now and then booming a flying shot after them.

(Eliot, 1858, p. 43)

Still more colourful is the description of the anthem that Geoffrey Crayon heard on his Christmas visit:

But the great trial was an anthem that had been prepared and arranged by master Simon, and on which he had founded great expectation.

Unluckily there was a blunder at the very onset; the musicians became flurried; master Simon was in a fever, and everything went on lamely and irregularly until they came to a chorus beginning 'Now let us sing with one accord' which seemed to be a signal for parting company: all became discord and confusion; each shifted for himself, and got to the end as well, or rather as soon as he could, excepting one old chorister ... who happened to stand a little apart, and, being wrapped up in his own melody, kept on a quavering course ..., winding all up by a nasal solo of at least three bars' duration.

(Irving, 1820, pp. 99–101)

We may conclude from this that these anthems were no mean compositions, and that either the musical prowess of the choir-band far exceeded that in the congregation, or that such renderings were too much even for the choir-band members themselves.¹

For the modern reader, the episodes in the novels have a relevance for those with an interest in church music, and social historians. Certainly *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, so beloved by Charlotte Pontifex and so despised by Mr Overton, is standard fare in many Anglican churches today, and further references in Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* serve to emphasise that the repertoire has changed very little since Mr Overton's second visit to Battersby. He mentions chants which are contained in Anglican chant books of today, including the 'old-fashioned double chants by Lord Mornington and Dr Dupuis and others' (Butler, 1903, p. 339).

Samuel Butler is not the only novelist to mention familiar hymns, and I have already quoted Bishop Ken's 'Morning Hymn', used by George Eliot in *Adam Bede* (1859), in connection with the Methodists. In *Amos Barton*, she also mentions 'Lydia', which has its roots firmly in the nonconformist tradition, a fact which does not go unnoticed by the reformed congregation at Shepperton, who were 'scandalized' at it being set (Eliot, 1858, p. 56).² There is great debate in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886, p. 305) when Henshard insists on the singing of 'Psalm the Hundred-and-Ninth' and proposes the tune 'Wiltshire' which can be found today in *The English Hymnal* as number 502. A further reminder of the prominence these tunes had in eve-

¹ The anthem repertoire, which is generally modelled on the art music of the period, would undoubtedly have been performed by the psalmody singers without congregational participation. [CT]

² 'Morning Hymn' is also mentioned in Thomas Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native* (1878). [GW]

ryday life for rural folk comes in *Cousin Phillis* by Elizabeth Gaskell (1865).¹ Minister Holman is returning from the fields and discussing the day's tasks:

then, suddenly changing the tone of his deep bass voice to an odd suggestion of chapels and preacher, he added, 'Now, I will give out the psalm, "Come all harmonious tongues," to be sung to "Mount Ephraim" tune.' He lifted his spade in his hand, and began to beat time with it.

(Gaskell, 1865, p. 232)

Once again this hymn can be found in *The English Hymnal* as number 196.

A time of social change

Many of the novels I have been looking at are essentially historical novels of social comment allowing the writers time to consider the effects of both religious and social change. George Eliot in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858) illustrates a church in turmoil and reveals a little of the history of the hymn-book, which assumes historical importance when seen against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution. Even in *Under the Greenwood Tree* (Hardy, 1872), a warm-hearted novel, the community of Mellstock, through the changes to the choir and the subsequent installation of a harmonium, undergoes a change equal, some might argue, to any great revolution.

There is plenty of evidence in the novels to show us that the choir-bands were active at this time of social change. William Hale White (1881) helps us to date the activities of our musicians, telling us that he was born 'just before the Liverpool and Manchester Railway was opened' which was on 15 September 1830, before going on to describe the choir of his youth.

It was in the 1830s that the strong opposition to the choir-band started and gathered momentum over the next fifteen years through the influence of the Tractarian movement. Rural musicians were criticised for the quality of their music, the instrumentation, and for the compositions themselves. However, the greatest criticism of all concerned the pride of the musicians. Certainly we need look no further than the choir-band of Mellstock to see that the members enjoyed a certain amount of privilege within the community, and dictated the musical content of the services. Indeed, when the new vicar establishes himself at Mellstock, and makes known some of his plans to replace the choir, the choir members reflect on the

relaxed ways of the former vicar, especially with regard to hymn choosing, remarking that he 'was a very jinerous genelman about choosing the psalms and hymns o' Sundays. "Confound ye," says he, "Blar and scrape what ye will, but don't bother me!"' (Hardy, 1872, p. 92).

So, a 'cleaning up' of church music began. The choir-band's greatest critics suggested sweeping reforms. For example, J. A. La Trobe (1831) advocated disposing of the bassoon and fife, reducing the 'instruments to a single violoncello', in the pursuit of 'plain psalmody'. It is in *The Way of All Flesh* that these reforms are succinctly described. The protagonist of the novel, Earnest Pontifex, was born in the same year as Butler himself, 1835, so the descriptions of the choir correspond with our period. When Earnest's godfather, Mr Overton, makes an early visit to the Pontifex's household he hears the choir-band in its full splendour, playing 'a wild strain, a remnant, if I mistake it not, of some pre-Reformation litany' (Butler, 1903, p. 57). The rich description of the players is all the more poignant because the narrator knows they will soon be a victim of sweeping changes of the nature hoped for by reformers:

Gone now are the clarinet, the violoncello and the trombone, wild minstrelsy as of the doleful creature of Ezekiel, ... Gone is that scarebabe stentor, that bellowing bull of Basan, the village blacksmith, gone is the melodious carpenter, gone the brawny shepherd with the red hair, who roared more lustily than all.

(Butler, 1903, p. 57)

Pride in the gallery

La Trobe (1831) is especially critical of the 'Fondness for display' he considered to be prevalent within the choir-band. Certainly in the novels the players do enjoy themselves and take pride in their playing. Yet Samuel Butler hints at a modesty which is both touching and humorous in its manifestation. He writes that when the singers came to the words 'Shepherd with your flocks abiding' the shepherd in their midst was covered 'with confusion, and compelled to be silent, as though his own health were being drunk' (Butler, 1903, p. 57).

The sin of pride was also noted by diarists of the time. William Holland, writing on 12 July 1807, appears inclined to agree with the accusations of pride held by J. A. La Trobe which were to come some twenty-five years later:

Our Singers are become famous in the Country, which makes them vain and fond of Exhibiting themselves and I think they think more of their own Praise than the Praise of God.

(Ayres, 1984, p. 151)

¹ *Cousin Phillis* was originally published as a four-part serial in the *Cornhill Magazine* 1863–64. [GW]

Although the influence of the Oxford Movement was ultimately to remove the choir-bands from the Anglican church, Samuel Butler reminds us that there is something in an independent spirit which cannot be crushed by mere reform. Butler sees those original members of the choir-band, but in a new setting:

I saw three very old men come chuckling out of a dissenting chapel, and surely enough they were my old friends, the blacksmith, the carpenter and the shepherd. There was a look of content upon their faces which made me feel certain they had been singing; not doubtless with the old glory of the violoncello, the clarinet and the trombone, but still the song of Sion.

(Butler, 1903, p. 58)

Social and musical tensions are even evident in the light-hearted *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Although a novel with little or no 'story', the episode which sees Fancy Day at the harmonium is one of the climaxes of the book. Hardy attempts to unite the opposing forces through the love between Fancy Day and Dick Dewey. However, it is clear that the choir is ousted by the harmonium because the musicians cannot defend themselves. Indeed, when the Rev. Maybold presents his argument in favour of the harmonium, he says, 'I see that violins are good, and that an organ is good; and when we introduce the organ it will not be that fiddles were bad, but that an organ was better' (Hardy, 1872, p. 112). The tradesmen then have no substance to their argument.

It seems that prior to the 1840s no attempt was made to force the lower orders to accept the culture of the elite. This is illustrated in *The Way of All Flesh*. As Mr Overton entered church on that first visit to Battersby-on-the-Hill in 1831, only a few months after Theobold and Christina's marriage, there is a clear but comfortable distinction between the higher and labouring classes. The Pontifex family are happy to accept these lower classes - as long as they are respectful! On this first visit we learn that the members of the congregation

bob to Theobold as they pass the reading desk ('The people hereabouts are truly respectful' whispered Christina to me, 'they know their betters').

(Butler, 1903, p. 57)

A doomed tradition

However, even on this first visit Mr Overton recognises that the choir 'were doomed', and his later visit serves as an illustration to the great change in attitude and what this was to mean to church music. He remarks that 'The whole character of

the service was changed' (Butler, 1903, p. 339), suggesting that some intangible quality has been lost. This he describes as 'slovenly', but his words suggest not a careless but rather a carefree attitude; I feel that with this he is referring to a relaxed form of worship with which all members of society could feel at home.

Charlotte and Christina Pontifex are conscious of their social position, and anxious that Theobold should reflect this. It seems that they are more concerned with the opinion of a few influential ladies, rather than the feelings of the congregation as a whole. Theobold is prevailed upon to allow the canticles to be sung and in his absence sweeping changes are instigated until 'whole psalms were being chanted as well as the Gloria' (Butler, 1903, p. 340).

We have already seen in both *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *The Way of All Flesh* that the introduction of a harmonium was fundamental to the changes within church music. We also learn that the gallery was subsequently dismantled in Battersby. It would seem that the official reason for replacing the choir-band with a single instrument was cost, but removing the choir-band from its place of privilege in the gallery was also the intention. This meant that the erstwhile musicians had to cope with a new position within the church's hierarchy. Let us return to Mellstock to see how the choir-band there reacts to the installation of Fancy Day at the keyboard of the harmonium. We read of their 'humbled' hearts, and that they all felt 'awkward, out of place, abashed, and inconvenienced by their hands' (Hardy, 1872, p. 229). There can be no doubt, though, that not one of them was in favour of the innovation as they yearned the 'simpler notes they had been wont to bring forth' (Hardy, 1872, pp. 229-30).

The end of an era

Samuel Butler, in *The Way of All Flesh*, was to observe the many changes that were to occur within the Church of England over forty years. He writes that 'they go *Hymns Ancient and Modern*' (Butler, 1903, p. 340), which was introduced in 1861. It is also plain that any hope that the congregation previously had of being able to participate was banished by the fact that the chanting became much more complicated, as observed by Mr Overton:

And they changed the double chants for single ones and altered them psalm by psalm, and in the middle of psalms, just where a cursory reader would see no reason why they should do so, they changed from major to minor and from minor back to major.

(Butler, 1903, p. 340)

It seems that the choir-band from our novels went quietly enough. We know that the members from Battersby left to join the dissenters, and the choir from Mellstock reached some sort of compromise and joined Fancy and Dick at their wedding. The choir-band from Shepperton vanished along with much goodwill, and the choir-band of Mark Rutherford's youth seems to have disappeared along with his own faith.

So, the choir-bands were suppressed and the galleries, for the most part, removed and a revival of religious feeling and expression became the norm. There was also a new feeling of the importance of the dignity and humility of the church, its buildings, liturgy and music. Socially and aesthetically the old music of the choir-bands did not conform to the elite ideas, nor to the leading opinion within the church. However, in the novels I have mentioned, the choir-band lives on in all its rustic glory, to tell the real story.

