

## MESSIAH

'Thus saith the Lord of hosts'—'And He shall purify'  
(inclusive).

'Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened'.

'Thou art gone up on high' (From which I dissent).

'Let us break their bonds asunder'—'He that dwelleth  
in heaven'.

'The trumpet shall sound' (second part).

'If God be for us'.

I would add that Dr Coopersmith 'feels that a complete performance of *Messiah*, at least once a year, not only is artistically feasible, but also would be musically rewarding. It is not uncommon for concert-goers to hear the complete *Saint Matthew Passion* of Bach at regular intervals; but how many have ever heard a complete performance of *Messiah*? . . . Approached as a *musical* experience, a complete *Messiah* performance would do much to counteract the false traditions that have surrounded this work . . . It should be emphasised that it is far better to perform one part in its entirety than to present a distorted conception of the whole work.'

With all of which I agree.

## II

## THE CHORUSES

IT IS APPROPRIATE to consider, from the interpretative side, the choruses first. Four competent soloists (engaged at large expense) are hardly likely to give of their best if the choral background is artistically offensive. Nor will an orchestra, whether professional or amateur, consider its contribution carefully unless it is evident that the choir is doing so.

There are more than twenty choruses. The number is sometimes reduced by allowing 'Since by man came death' and 'For as in Adam all die' to the quartet of soloists. I suspect that difficulties of *pianissimo* and in-tune singing often advise this sentimental departure from Handel's score. Keep the choir if the full solemnity of the phrases is to be understood.<sup>3</sup>

None of the twenty-odd choruses is easy. On the contrary they are all difficult and require lengthy and intensive rehearsal. Never, therefore, rely on those who 'know the music'. They never do.

Note accuracy depends on individual effort. Each singer should learn the coloratura in particular as homework. The necessary foundation is soft tone. This again is contrary to frequent experience. A singing

<sup>3</sup>C.f. a similar and even finer sequence in the *Funeral Anthem*: 'Their bodies are buried in peace'—'But their name liveth for evermore.'