

## Correspondence

those approved in 1926, kept by one convent in England, Wells, Those who keep the last-named Constitutions are not looked upon as belonging to a separate branch; like ourselves, they vow at their profession to keep the primitive rule until death.

Yours, etc.,

THE CARMELITES OF CHICHESTER.

### THE TIERCE DE PICARDIE.\*

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

SIR,—It almost disarms criticism to discover that one's reviewer is a personal friend—to wit, Fr. Moncrieff; but, alas! his letter leaves me no alternative but another 'gentle and joyous passage of arms.'

(1) My reviewer objected to my employment of the T.D.P.—*i.e.*, a final *major* chord, and gave no hint that his ear demanded any alternative save a *minor* one.

(2) I cited the rule which demands a major chord *or* the bare fifth as an alternative.

(3) My critic then (*for the first time*) plumps for the bare fifth, saying: 'Precisely; that is all I am asking for.'

(4) He adds that to the ear of himself and others it is irritating to hear T.D.P. 'repeated at the end of every verse of a carol,' though he would allow it in the final verse.

(5) He further adds: 'That' (*i.e.*, the sense of irritation produced by repetition) 'perhaps is why . . . Bach modified the earlier rule' (*i.e.*, the rule which demands T.D.P.). *Ergo*, the whole question is a matter of taste.

To which I reply:

(4) Bach's chorales contain usually more (never less) verses than most of my carols, yet when Bach employs T.D.P. he applies it to *every* verse.

(5) But did even Bach 'modify the earlier rule' to the extent presumed by my critic? Let us see:

(a) Bach's collected works contain harmonizations of 385 chorale-melodies.

(b) Of these, 219 are in major keys and are, therefore, irrelevant to our discussion.

(c) That leaves 166 (in minor keys, or in modes), to which T.D.P. is applicable.

\* For brevity's sake, I allude to it throughout as T.D.P.

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(d) All but 12 of these employ the 'irritating' T.D.P.

(e) BUT (and it is a big 'but') 11 of this dozen were handed down through the transcriptions of Bach's son—Carl Philipp Emanuel (the significance of this fact is obvious and need not be stressed).

(f) We are therefore left with only one *pukka* Bach chorale (*Wir Christenleut'* from the *Christmas Oratorio*) in which T.D.P. is not used.

(g) *But* when Bach uses the same tune in Cantatas 40 and 110, he employs T.D.P. in each case (in other words, 'irritates' us twice out of thrice).

(h) Since the bare fifth is 'precisely, all that (my critic) is asking for,' I wish him joy in his search for a single example in the whole of Bach's chorales.

Summed up, the case stands thuswise :

(i) I 'irritated' my critic in 26 carols out of 28; *i.e.*, I pleased him for only one-fourteenth of the time.

(ii) The reputed Bach 'irritates' 154 times out of 166; *i.e.*, he would please my critic for only six eighty-thirds of the time.

(iii) The undisputed Bach 'irritates' 165 times out of 166 (need I reduce this devastating ratio to vulgar fractions?). So much for his 'modification of the earlier rule.'

I apologise to my critic for any 'irritation' which my use of T.D.P. may have caused him. But I have sinned in the good company of Palestrina and Bach.

By quarrelling with Palestrina's ghost my critic merely placed himself in a false position, but by invoking the shades of Bach he is (I respectfully submit) 'hoist with his own petard.'

### ENVOY.

It is the old, old story—listening to the past with the ears of the present; applying modern criteria to ancient technique.

Parallel cases would be 'irritation' with Chaucer because he doesn't spell like Edgar Wallace; irritation with the architects of our Gothic cathedrals because they don't conform to the style of Spurgeon's Tabernacle; irritation with Tintoretto because he doesn't employ the technique of Whistler.

We were all born into and brought up on the modern key-system of harmony. We nearly all (try as we may to the contrary) think subconsciously in keys. Few of us achieve eman-

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icipation from the key sense. My critic's strictures indicate that his emancipation is not yet complete. When it is (as one day it will be) he will feel as much 'irritation' at the absence of T.D.P. as he now does at its presence.

R. R. TERRY.

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.*

SIR,—I apologise for taking up more of your space, but the friendly clash of arms is as joyful to my ears as to my correspondent's.

When there are but two alternatives, and I deliberately express dislike of one of them, I cannot be accused of 'plumping' for the other 'for the first time'—except in a case of crass ignorance, *which should not be presumed*. In my review I expressed dissatisfaction with the T.D.P. being given alone without any hint of the other equally ancient, equally scholarly alternative, thereby acknowledging my preference for the bare fifth, with the qualification 'that it was a matter of taste.' Surely this is allowable, even if unusual, so I must be excused from quarrelling with Palestrina's ghost.

Again I have already tried to suggest gently that if a writer of harmonies to ancient melodies wishes to be judged by so strict a canon as the rigid insistence on the T.D.P. implies, the *whole of his harmonies* must be in conformity; and I would submit that they are not so in this case.

I wash my hands of the introduction of Bach's name into this correspondence. The example was not mine but Sir Richard's; I have only encouraged him to follow the (apparently) strong scent of his own red herring.

With regard to the larger issues which Sir Richard now brings up, it is a matter of real regret that there is no space to discuss them. Can anyone imitate Bach or Palestrina? And what is more, should anyone try to do so? As to the personal implications, my own ears are unashamedly twentieth century, but that does not mean any the less appreciative or unhabituated to the music of older times; for nearly ten years I have listened to practically nothing but Plainsong. I submit that it is not a question of criticism of Wells or Rheims Cathedral, but of Pugin Gothic; nor of irritation with the Miller because he doesn't spell like the Ringer, but with the lady who calls her tea-shop *Ye Olde Cornyshe Bovere*.

FRANCIS MONCRIEFF, O.P.