CORRECTING THE ‘GROSSEST FAULTS’:
CHARLES JENNENS AND THE COMPOSITION
OF HANDEL’S MESSIAH

BY DONALD BURROWS*

OF THE LIBRETTISTS FOR HANDEL’S ENGLISH ORATORIOS, CHARLES JENNENS (1700–73) IS THE ONE WHOSE ACTIVITIES HAVE RECEIVED MOST ATTENTION AND ABOUT WHOM MOST IS KNOWN. UNLIKE THOMAS MORELL, HE DID NOT LEAVE A FIRST-HAND MEMOIR OF HIS EXPERIENCES OF WORKING WITH THE COMPOSER, BUT HIS ROLE IN COLLABORATIONS WITH HANDEL OVER THE LIBRETTOS OF S AUL, L’ALLEGRO, MESSIAH, AND BELSHAZZAR IS WELL DOCUMENTED, AND ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO HIS MUSIC COLLECTION, HIS PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL SITUATION, HIS LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL INTERESTS.  


JENNENS’S DISSATISFACTION WITH HANDEL’S TREATMENT OF HIS TEXT IS EXPRESSED IN THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN HIM AND HIS FRIEND EDWARD HOLDSWORTH, FROM WHICH THE QUOTATION IN THE PRESENT TITLE DERIVES. THIS, HOWEVER, NEEDS TO BE MATCHED WITH INFORMATION FROM MUSICAL SOURCES AND THE LIBRETTI IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY THE SUBSTANCE OF JENNENS’S COMPLAINTS, THE EXTENT TO WHICH HANDEL RESPONDED, AND THE CHRONOLOGIES OF JENNENS’S CONTACTS WITH

* The Open University, Milton Keynes. I thank Ruth Smith and John H. Roberts for reading and commenting on a draft of this article, Chris Scobie (British Library) and Martin Holmes (Bodleian Library) for facilitating access to the autograph and performing score, Katharine Hogg (Gerald Coke Handel Collection) and Nicholas Sternberg (Henry Watson Music Library, Manchester) for their assistance with the Plates, Andrew Tinson, Blaise Compton, and Martin Clarke for assistance with text and music examples, and Bonnie Blackburn for her assiduous copy-editing.

The following abbreviations are used:

**A** Lbl, R.M. 20.I.2 (Handel’s autograph score)

**B** Ob, MSS Tenbury 346–7 (Handel’s performing score)

**J** Mp, Newman Flower Collection, MS 130 Hdl, v. 196–v. 200 (Jennens’s score)

**J2** Washington, DC, Library of Congress and Ultimo (New South Wales), Powerhouse Museum (three-volume score from the Aylesford Collection; see below, pp. 550, 558–9)

**Lbl** London, British Library

**Lfom** London, The Foundling Museum

**Mp** Manchester, Central Public Library, Newman Flower Collection

**Ob** Oxford, Bodleian Library

the composer and the music. Traces of evidence for these matters can be found in Handel’s performing score of *Messiah* and in various manuscript copies of the oratorio, including a score from Jennens’s own library. Interpreted in the light of comments in the correspondence, the musical sources thus provide some clues to understanding the nature of the working relationship between the composer and the librettist.

The formal record of their professional and social contacts runs for about twenty years, from Handel’s letter to Jennens of 28 July 1735, in which he says that he has arranged for Jennens to be provided with a manuscript copy of his opera *Alcina*, to his presence at a private dinner given by Jennens in 1756. Their association must already have been well established before 1735, however. Jennens’s previous interest in Handel’s career is shown by the appearance of his name in the subscription lists to editions of Handel’s music from *Rodelinda* (1725) onwards, but Handel’s willingness to arrange the provision of a complete full score of an opera, beyond the published collection of movements, indicates a positive relationship, reflecting his confidence in Jennens, and even perhaps a recognition of some professional indebtedness. For the latter, relevant evidence is to be found in Handel’s use of music supplied to him by Jennens in 1732–3. In April 1732 Holdsworth reported that he had purchased manuscripts of opera scores by Vinci and Alessandro Scarlatti in Rome for Jennens ‘so that if you think they deserve it, you may have them perform’d on the English theatre’. Soon after the arrival of the manuscripts in London Jennens must have lent them to Handel, because music from the Scarlatti scores found its way into the composition of Handel’s *Athalia* and *Arianna* in 1733. During 1729–37, the period of the Handel/Heidegger opera company at the King’s Theatre and Handel’s subsequent opera seasons at Covent Garden, Handel had the benefits and disadvantages of artistic control: he did not have to negotiate with company directors and around other house composers (as had been the case with the Royal Academy of Music in the 1720s), but he did have to provide enough repertory for annual seasons of about fifty performances. Jennens wanted to assist Handel directly on the repertory problem by supplying suitable scores, and Handel did indeed take advantage of this facility, though not in the way that Jennens expected, by also using the scores as a resource for his own compositions. This episode reveals both the circumstance of Jennens’s direct access to Handel and his desire to influence the direction of his activity. By the time Handel came to compose the score of *Messiah* in 1741, therefore, he would have been well aware of Jennens’s interest in his

---


3 ‘There is a possibility, though rather unlikely, that the name on the earliest subscription lists (as ‘Mr Jennens’) refers to Jennens’s father.

4 Holdsworth to Jennens, 6(17) Apr. 1732; *Handel Documents*, ii. 510.


6 A decade later, concerning another consignment of music from Italy, Jennens wrote that ‘Handel has borrow’d a dozen of the Pieces, & I dare say I shall catch him stealing from them; as I have formerly, both from Scarlatti and Vinci’ (letter to Holdsworth, 17 Jan. 1743; *Handel Documents*, iv. 51).

career; moreover, during the immediately preceding years they had worked together on the creation of Saul, L’Allegro, and probably Israel in Egypt.  

JENNENS, HANDEL, AND MESSIAH: COMPOSITION AND FIRST PERFORMANCES

The chronology of the collaboration between Handel and Jennens on the composition of Messiah is established primarily from the dates that Handel entered in his autograph score, and from references in the correspondence of Handel, Jennens, and Holdsworth. Jennens’s first draft of a text for Messiah may have been written in 1739 as a follow-up to Israel in Egypt, referred to in his letter to James Harris on 29 December 1739: ‘I have been preparing a Collection for him [Handel] from Scripture, which is more to my own Tast & (by his own Confession) to his too: but I believe he will not set it this year, being desirous to please the Town with something of a gayer Turn.’ It is unclear from this whether Jennens had shown Handel a text, or whether it had merely been a topic for conversation, but a complete libretto must have been to hand at least a month before Handel began drafting his score, as described by Jennens in a well-known letter to Holdsworth on 10 July 1741:

Handel says he will do nothing next Winter, but I hope I shall persuade him to set another Scripture Collection I have made for him, & perform it for his own Benefit in Passion Week. I hope he will lay out his whole Genius & Skill upon it, that the Composition may excell all his former Compositions, as the Subject excels every other Subject. The Subject is Messiah.

In their previous collaboration on L’Allegro, Handel and Jennens had met several times in London during December 1739 and January 1740 to develop the revision of James Harris’s original draft libretto while the musical composition evolved, but for Messiah, as with Saul in 1738, there was no contact during the period that the score was written: as his subsequent letters show, Jennens was then at Gopsall, his family home in Leicestershire, and not in London.

Before beginning on the full score Handel no doubt made sketches of musical incipits for several movements, comparable to the page that happens to survive with fragments for ‘He was despised’, ‘Let all the angels of God’, and the ‘Amen’ chorus. In addition, the interplay between the use of the same themes in Messiah and in Italian-text duets composed by him the previous month provides some evidence of Handel’s current musical thinking: he must have had the themes in his mind as he read through the libretto. The draft composition score of Messiah (Lbl R.M. 20.f.2, hereafter ‘the autograph’, identified as A in the music examples) occupied him from 22 August to 12 September 1741, followed by a couple of further days during which he ‘filled in’ details (probably mainly in orchestral parts) of passages that had been left incomplete. He then moved on to

---


9 Jennens to Holdsworth, 10 July 1741; Handel Documents, iii. 712. The back-reference in ‘another Scripture Collection’ is presumably to Israel in Egypt, though there is no further independent evidence of Jennens’s authorship.

10 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MU MS 263, p. 58/f. 29v. Beyond the ambit of this sketch, Handel’s aria ‘He was despised’ incorporated a musical idea from another of the scores provided by Jennens (Scarlatti’s Griselda), via an aria in Handel’s Arminio; see Roberts, ‘Handel and Charles Jennens’s Opera Manuscripts’, 163, 197.

11 Composition dates in Lbl, R.M. 20.f.2, fos. 1r, 52v, 106r, 132v. The present fos. 38 and 133–40 are later insertions and were not part of the 1741 sequence. The score has been reproduced three times in facsimile, most recently in colour and including the Cambridge sketch leaf (see previous note): Georg Friedrich Händel, Messiah HWV 56 (London and Kassel, 2008).

535
draft the score of *Samson*, in which more ambitious requirements than *Messiah* for singers and orchestra seem to suggest that he was planning for a forthcoming oratorio season in London. However, soon after completing a draft score of *Samson* on 29 October he set off for Dublin, apparently responding to an invitation to perform at the new concert room in Fishamble Street, arriving there in mid-November. We do not have information about the reason for, or the timing of, this apparent change of plans, but one thing is certain: he had not informed Jennens, who eventually discovered from other people that *Messiah* had been composed, as he wrote to Holdsworth on 5 December:

> As soon as I came to Town, I heard to my great Satisfaction, that He had set Messiah, but this receiv’d some allay from the Account given me at the same time, that he had carry’d it into Ireland; where it seems there is a Subscription for him of 500 guineas.

> I hope, we shall see you in Town after Christmas, & before you leave it we shall hear the Messiah, as well as another Oratorio which he almost finish’d before he went, call’d Samson, (I suppose, Milton’s Samson Agonistes alter’d) by Mr. Hamilton….

> Beard is come home again, & should have gone with Handel into Ireland, but Fleetwood said he should want him to sing in an English Opera. Handel took only Miss Edwards & one Mrs. Maclean with him; & for the rest depends on the Dublin Choirs.  

This reads as if Jennens expected Handel to return to London in time for a Lenten oratorio season in 1742, but that did not happen.

In Dublin Handel gave two six-concert series of subscription concerts, from 23 December 1741 to 7 April 1742, but did not include *Messiah* in his programme. However, the subsequent performance in April 1742 as an event in support of three Dublin charities may always have been Handel’s intention, and linked to his dependence on the ‘Dublin choirs’. A minute from a meeting of the Governors of Mercer’s Hospital (one of the charities supported from the *Messiah* performance) in January 1742 suggests that he had sought co-operation from the Cathedrals for the participation of their singers in his concerts, in return for ‘having offer’d & being still ready in return for such a favour to give the Governors some of his choicest Musick, & to direct & assist at the Performance of it for the benifit of the Hospital’. Evidence from the musical sources suggests that he did indeed have some of the choirmen as performers for his first subscription series, but that for the second series these were no longer available and he had to look for other singers, bringing in Calloghan McCarty and Susanna Cibber as soloists. (The tenor ‘Calloghan’ was an established Dublin singer; Cibber was already in Dublin for the season, acting with the theatre company at Aungier Street theatre.) For the subsequent *Messiah* performances, Cibber joined Christina Avolio (referred to by Jennens above as ‘Mrs Maclean’) but Calloghan was not needed because, as the advertisements proclaimed, ‘the Gentlemen of the Choirs of both Cathedrals will assist’. Handel distributed various solo movements around ‘the Gentlemen’, including provision for their alto soloists in a new setting of ‘How beautiful are the feet’. Revisions to the performing score show that for Dublin Handel also extended the recitative ‘He that dwelleth in heaven’ for one of the

---

13 There is a possibility that the scores represent planning for two possible outcomes, in London or Dublin, though subsequent concentration on the composition of *Samson* suggests that even in Oct. 1741 Handel thought the London option more likely.

14 Jennens to James Harris, 5 Dec. 1741; *Handel Documents*, iii. 746. Charles Fleetwood was manager of Drury Lane theatre company.

15 Minutes of Governors of Mercer’s Hospital, 23 Jan. 1742; *Handel Documents*, iii. 770–1.

16 For the identification of ‘Mrs Maclean’ with ‘Avolio’, see *Handel Documents*, iv. 91–2.
altos, as a substitute for the original (tenor) aria ‘Thou shalt break them’, and shortened ‘Why do the nations?’ to the version of forty-five bars (from 96 bars), perhaps to reduce the load on one of the Cathedrals’ bass soloists, but also to tighten the pacing of the movements.\(^{17}\)

**HANDEL’S RETURN TO LONDON AND JENNENS’S INITIAL EXPERIENCE OF MESSIAH**

Handel returned from Dublin to London in late summer 1742, having attempted unsuccessfully to visit Jennens at Gopsall in the course of his journey, writing thus to Jennens on 9 September: ‘It was indeed Your humble Servant which intended You a visit in my way from Ireland to London, for I certainly could have given you a better account by word of mouth, as by writing, how well Your Messiah was received in that Country.’\(^{18}\)

He presumably had some further communication with Jennens about his future plans soon afterwards, since Jennens was able to tell Holdsworth on 29 October 1742: ‘You was misinform’d about Mr. Handel, who does not return to Ireland till next Winter; so that I hope to have some very agreeable Entertainments from him this Season. His Messiah by all accounts is his Masterpiece.’\(^{19}\) It is clear that Jennens had not yet seen the music of the oratorio, which is not surprising since he was then still at Gopsall.

The date at which Jennens did see the score for the first time is uncertain, and affects the interpretation of references in his subsequent correspondence. However, on his return to London Handel certainly sent a copy of the printed wordbook from the Dublin performances to Jennens (then at Gopsall), who was not pleased with what he saw, as he wrote to Holdsworth: ‘I have a copy, as it was printed in Ireland, full of Bulls, & if he does not print a correct one here, I shall do it my self.’\(^{20}\) The ‘Bulls’ (misprints) included a typographical fault in ‘He gave his back to the smiters’ and some incorrect words—‘a Highway for our Lord’ in ‘Comfort ye, my people’, and the repeated substitution of ‘Death’ for ‘Dead’ in the opening movements of Part III. (The last is found in Handel’s autograph score, so this error may have come from the composer himself.) More serious was the initial omission of the recitative ‘Unto which of the angels’ from the text, subsequently corrected by a paste-in slip: Jennens may have received the first state of the wordbook without this correction.\(^{21}\) The original error occurred at a page-turn, and there was a parallel situation with ‘But who may abide the day of his coming’, which was also designated ‘Recitative’, probably in error, but uncorrected. The latter had longer-term consequences because the ‘Recitative’ heading was repeated in the London wordbooks from 1749 onwards, where it was manifestly incorrect.\(^{22}\)

Above all, it was from the Dublin wordbook that Jennens probably learned for the first time that

---

\(^{17}\) Handel probably retained the shorter version of ‘Why do the nations?’ in at least some subsequent London performances, and it is the one found in the Foundling Hospital material reflecting his performances in 1754.

\(^{18}\) Handel to Jennens, 9 Sept. 1742; *Handel Documents*, iv. 3–6 (letter and enclosed ‘observations’ from the Bishop of Elphin).


\(^{22}\) A recitative setting of ‘But who may abide’ is found in three 18th-c. scores of Messiah, with rubrics along these lines: ‘If – The foregoing Song [the 3/8 Bass setting] is to be left out, as it was in the performance at Dublin – Sing this Recitative upon the very same words’ (this version is quoted from the ‘Mathews’ manuscript, copied in the 1760s, Dublin, Marsh’s Library, MS Z 1.2.26). The wording is ambiguous: ‘as it was in the performance at Dublin’ may simply be a reference to the 1742 wordbook. The origin of this recitative is uncertain: it may have been someone’s attempt to provide music to match the erroneous heading in the wordbooks.
Handel had replaced the aria for ‘How beautiful are the feet’ with the duet-and-chorus setting, involving the substitution of a text from Isaiah 52 for that given by Jennens from Romans 10, with the consequent loss of the second clause beginning ‘Their sound is gone out’ which had formed the B section of the aria. It is not known whether Handel received advice in Dublin about the choice of biblical texts, but the duet-and-chorus setting provided new musical opportunities: an agreeable showpiece for two of the cathedral altos and a strong choral ending (with ‘Thy God reigneth’), to prompt immediate dramatic reaction in ‘Why do the nations?’. Jennens usually came to London from Gopsall in the autumn, following a conventional annual social timetable for the gentry, but this year he set out later than usual, travelling at the very end of 1742, as he reported to Holdsworth in mid-January 1743:

I came not to town till the last day of the old year, & had it not been for your Business, should have come up even then with reluctance, having in my own mind fix’d the beginning of February for my Journey, about a fortnight before the time of Handel’s Oratorios… .

He has compos’d an exceeding fine Oratorio, being an alteration of Milton’s Samson Agonistes, with which he is to begin Lent. His Messiah has disappointed me, being set in great hast, tho’ he said he would be a year about it, & make it the best of all his Compositions, I shall put no more sacred Words into his hands, to be thus abus’d.23

His disapproving comments here seem to be mainly based on the brief period of composition, though it is doubtful that he ever saw the autograph with Handel’s composition dates.24 Even a month later it is uncertain whether he had had access to a score, and his specific criticism (noted above) seems to be directed to the text as he had found it in the Dublin wordbook:

As to the Messiah, ’tis still in his power by retouching the weak parts to make it fit for a publick performance; & I have said a great deal to him on the Subject; but he is so lazy & so obstinate, that I much doubt the Effect. I have a copy, as it was printed in Ireland, full of Bulls, & if he does not print a correct one here, I shall do it my self, & perhaps tell him a piece of my mind by way of Preface… . What adds to my chagrin is, that if he makes his Oratorio ever so perfect, there is a clamour about Town, said to arise from the B[i]sho[p]s, against performing it. This may occasion some enlargement of the Preface.

[Ps.] Last Friday Handel perform’d his Samson, a most exquisite Entertainment, which tho’ I heard with infinite Pleasure, yet it increas’d my resentment for his neglect of the Messiah.25

23 Jennens to Holdsworth, 17 Jan. 1743; Handel Documents, iv. 31. The social timetable, based around the dates of Parliamentary sessions and the King’s Birthday, largely defined the period of the London opera and theatre seasons.

24 In his copy of Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel (1760) Jennens annotated the list of oratorios on p. 152 with dates of composition derived from Handel’s autographs: see Winton Dean, Essays on Opera (Oxford, 1990), pl. 11. There are annotations for Israel in Egypt, L’Allegro, Saul, and Belshazzar, but, significantly, not for Messiah.

25 Jennens to Holdsworth, 21 Feb. 1743; Handel Documents, iv. 48. The 1743 wordbook published by Wood (for which, see further below) included no preface. Perhaps Jennens decided against it in view of the ‘clamour’. He was not identified as the author in any of the Messiah wordbooks, but that was general practice in the oratorio books, even when a dedication was involved. The earliest public identification of Jennens as the librettist, as currently known, was in The Public Advertiser of 14 Feb. 1771, but in a form suggesting that his authorship was common knowledge: ‘The Compilation of the Messiah has been ever attributed to him.’ In 1768 there were two rival publications of the Messiah wordbook, one of which claimed to be ‘From a Copy corrected by the Compiler’, but this book was from successors of the Watts/Dod publishing house; see Donald Burrows and Watkins Shaw, ‘Handel’s Messiah: Supplementary Notes on Sources’, Music & Letters, 76 (1995), 356–68 at 366–8.
The rider at the end about the ‘neglect’ of Messiah must reflect conversations with Handel about his plans for the season: so far Handel had only given a single performance (of Samson, on 18 February), and Samson then provided all six nights of his first subscription. If indeed there was already a ‘clamour’ about the prospect of performing Messiah at Covent Garden (perhaps following submission of the libretto to the Lord Chamberlain’s Office), Handel would have been understandably circumspect about the work, and probably thought that it would have more chance of acceptance if it was delayed until Passiontide. Furthermore, Jennens had little justification for complaining about that, since he had specifically stated his intention for Messiah, that Handel should ‘perform it for his own Benefit in Passion Week’.

Jennens’s next letter was written the day after Handel’s introduction of Messiah to London on 23 March (see Pl. 1):

Messiah was perform’d last night, & will be again to morrow, notwithstanding the clamour rais’d against it, which has only occasion’d it’s being advertis’d without it’s Name; a Farce, which gives me as much offence as any thing relating to the performance can give the B[ishop]s, & other squeamish People. ’Tis, after all, in the main, a fine Composition, notwithstanding some weak

26 Jennens to Holdsworth, 10 July 1741: see n. 10 above.
parts, which he was too idle & too obstinate to retouch, tho’ I us’d great importunity to perswade
him to it. He & his Toad-eater Smith did all they could to murder the Words in print; but I hope
I have restor’d them to Life, not without much difficulty.27

Once again Jennens here complained about the wordbook printed in Dublin, and
indeed he had taken that matter in hand. The 1743 London edition of the wordbook,
produced by a different publisher (Thomas Wood) from all the subsequent London
books, is by far the most accurate and well-presented text of Messiah from Handel’s life-
time; it also has a feature that was not included in the subsequent editions published
by the partnership of John Watts and Benjamin Dod, of section numberings equivalent
to theatrical ‘scenes’.28 Whether or not Jennens had had an opportunity to peruse the
score, in advance of the day of performance he certainly must have had some contact
with Handel for the preparation of the wordbook, and had foreknowledge of (if not actual negotiation about) the music that Handel intended to perform. The 1743 word-
book corrected errors that had occurred in the Dublin text, in particular heading ‘But
who may abide?’ as ‘Song’. Although retaining the Isaiah text ‘How beautiful are the
feet’ as ‘Duetto and Chorus’ (presumably at Handel’s insistence), it was followed by
a new ‘Song’, ‘Their sound is gone out’—the aria setting, presumably demanded by
Jennens in order to restore this text. Jennens must have undertaken the commissioning
of the wordbook himself, choosing Wood as his publisher: the wordbooks for Handel’s other performances of the season were published by Watts/Dod and Tonson. The text
was more correct and more elegantly printed than that in the 1742 Dublin wordbook,
but it followed the same general layout, with some improvements to the page-breaks:
as in 1742, the second and third ‘Parts’ commenced on pages 9 and 14 respectively, so
that once again the complete text just fitted the practical ambit of sixteen pages (two eight-page signatures). Space was saved by avoiding the repetition of text for ‘Song’ and
‘Chorus’ in ‘O thou that tellest’; that said, the introduction of a semi-chorus presenta-
tion for ‘Lift up your heads’ instead expanded the text. There would have been a limited
opportunity for a ‘Preface’ (as threatened by Jennens) on the verso of the title page, but
perhaps Jennens or Wood thought better of it. In contrast to the other wordbooks for the
season (Samson, and L’Allegro with the St Cecilia Ode) there were no decorations to the
pages, another feature in common with the Dublin edition. As with all the wordbooks
for Handel’s performances of Messiah, the voices for solo movements were not specified.

JENNENS’S ‘CORRECTIONS’ TO HANDEL’S PERFORMING SCORE

Jennens’s reference to Handel’s refusal to ‘retouch weak parts’ implies conversations
about the music of the score beyond verbal or structural matters that can be identified
from the wordbook. The introduction of ‘Their sound is gone out’ is the only substantial
clue provided by the wordbook to his criticisms of the score. Jennens, as the librettist,
could reasonably have expected that Handel would supply him a copy of the score, or
at least that he would be given access to the music, before the first performance, but

27 Jennens to Holdsworth, 24 Mar. 1743; Handel Documents, iii. 69. Jennens seems to have made an assumption that the
Dublin book was set up from a manuscript copy of the libretto by Christopher Smith. Here I refer to Handel’s associate
as ‘Christopher Smith’, the form found in all his signatures and in his will: see Donald Burrows, ‘Do We Need “John”?’,
Handel Institute Newsletter, 30/1 (Spring 2019), 3.

28 The wordbook is published in facsimile by the Handel & Haydn Society: Messiah: A Facsimile of the 1743 Wordbook,
with an Introduction by Christopher Hogwood (Boston, 1995). The text of the 1743 book was repeated, typographically re-set,
in Messiah, A Sacred Oratorio, Set to Musick by Mr. Handel, And performed by The Academy of Antient Music, on Thursday, February
14, 1743 [i.e. 1744] I. London, Printed in the Year, MDCCXLIV. Jennens similarly added scene numbers on his copy of the
1760 wordbook for J. C. Smith’s Paradise Lost (Lbl 840.k.7(15)).
at that time Handel and his copyists would have been busy with arrangements for the other performances. If Handel had found Jennens’s ‘importunity’ about Messiah stressful during that time, he may have kept him at a distance. Jennens’s second reference to ‘retouching the weak parts’ on 24 March suggests that he may have seen a score by then, but the time allowed for his inspection may have been limited, so that his first close contact with the music of Messiah could have been when he attended the performance on 23 March, from which he gained movement-by-movement impressions. In that case he may have been considerably offended by some of the things that he heard—matters of stress in the word-setting, and unacceptable variants in the words themselves.

Although it is thus uncertain whether Jennens’s more detailed criticisms influenced the first London performance, they must have affected subsequent performances in 1743 and 1745, and the nature of these criticisms can be established from the musical sources. The primary evidence is found first in Handel’s performing score of Messiah (Ob, MSS Tenbury 346–7, hereafter ‘the performing score’, and identified as B in the music examples), which was almost certainly copied in London soon after the completion of the autograph in 1741. Annotations of singers’ names show that Handel used this score in Dublin (there would have been no need for him to take the autograph with him) and it

---

**Pt. 2. (a) Text and music for ‘If God be/is for us’ amended by Jennens in Handel’s performing score (Ob, MS Tenbury 347, fo. 120r). Reproduced from the facsimile edition, Handel’s Conducting Score of Messiah (Scolar Press, 1974)**

541
Pt. 2. (b) Text and music for ‘If God be/is for us’ amended by Jennens in his own score (Mp, MS 130 Hd4 v. 200, p. 61: source J). Henry Watson Music Library, reproduced courtesy of Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives, Manchester City Council

continued in regular use for his subsequent performances in London. The manuscript has a large number of alterations in ink by Jennens (see Appendix), which reveal interventions comparable to those found in the autograph of Saul. Jennens’s handwriting is well established from his surviving correspondence (see Pl. 1 above), and there is no doubt about the identity of the writer in the amendments to ‘He shall feed his flock’ and ‘If God be/is for us’. These were the places where he altered Handel’s music most radically, adding syllables at ‘Come unto him all ye’ and altering ‘If God be for us’ in both text (to ‘If God is for us’) and rhythm (to bring the stresses into parallel— for us/ against us’). See Plate 2(a) and Example 1, which shows Jennens’s revisions and also variants from Walsh’s Songs in Messiah that will be referred to later. Some of Jennens’s amendments were made with a thicker quill than he used for his correspondence, especially where heavier strokes were needed to cover previously written words. There is no doubt that they were written

29 The present binding of the score in two volumes (Part I in Tenbury 346 and Parts II and III in Tenbury 347) is an arrangement that appears to date back to the 18th c., because the folio conjunctions in MS Tenbury 347 run across the join of Parts II and III. The music pages are published in colour facsimile: Handel’s Conducting Score of Messiah (London, 1974). This does not reproduce a few of the pencil annotations, but on the other hand it provides a record of some that have since faded: see also Burrows, ‘The Autographs and Early Copies of Messiah’, App. 2. The score continued in use for the performances by John Christopher Smith after Handel’s lifetime, and thus also includes annotations from the 1760s. A second manuscript score, now Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Carl von Ossietzky, Musikabteilung, M A/1030, then came into play, with some overlap in its employment.


542
by him: the letter-forms match his other texts and the same thicker pen-strokes are found in the corrections to his own score (Mp, MS 130 Hd4 v. 198–v. 200, source J, referred to below), for example at bars 76–7 of the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus, and the altered bars in ‘If God be for us’ (see Pl. 2(b)). The quantity and distribution of these alterations in the performing score indicate a comprehensive critical review of the Messiah text. In all there are more than thirty changes, some of them with multiple occurrences, giving a total of about seventy amendments (again see Appendix). One particularly substantial alteration was in the chorus ‘He trusted in God’, where Jennens altered Handel’s ‘he might deliver him’ to ‘he would deliver him’ at the opening entries (see Pl. 3), and Christopher Smith, the original copyist of the performing score, then amended subsequent occurrences to conform.

The first question about the alterations in the performing score concerns timing: when were they written? It is possible that the score received Jennens’s attention over a period of years, but it is more likely that he made a single thoroughgoing inspection and revision, perhaps supplemented by a few further changes shortly afterwards. (For Messiah, in contrast to the situation with Saul, Handel apparently did not let Jennens anywhere near his autograph.) Such a review could have taken place initially—though not necessarily involving physical alterations at that stage—at about the same time that Jennens was preparing the wordbook for the publisher, a short time ahead of the performance. This hypothesis is supported by another circumstance. It was Handel’s normal practice to mark up his performing scores with the names of the allocated singers, usually in pencil, in advance of the performances, presumably as a guide to the music copyists who wrote out or amended the performing parts. In the case of preparations for the Messiah performances in 1743, however, Handel began by writing these directions (using pencil in Part I, then ink in Part II) into the autograph, instead of the performing score, and subsequently transferred them to the performing score (in pencil), where further amendments followed. Although similar use of his autographs can be found in other works, it does not occur on a comparable scale to that found in Messiah, where the annotations run on into the middle of Part II, up to an ‘NB’ where Handel broke off to write a new setting of ‘Thou art gone up on high’ for soprano voice, probably with the same pen. This unusual situation could have occurred if, at the time, the performing score was with Jennens, in which case the first London performance may already have incorporated his revisions. Alternatively, the performing score may have been with Smith at that time in order to make last-minute revisions to the performers’ partbooks, so that it would not have been available to Jennens. In that case, Jennens’s revisions might have been implemented for the second or third performances; for the second performance, Smith would have had less than forty-eight hours in which make alterations to the partbooks.

Jennens’s revisions do not feature in one large group of early manuscript scores which derive from copies dating from around 1743, previously identified by Watkins Shaw as

31 Jennens’s authorship of the alterations in the performing score is confirmed by their incorporation into source J during the copying; the subject of his own manuscripts of Messiah is considered below.

32 Jennens’s ‘heavy pen’ alterations to the words are obvious at the entries for Tenor and Alto voices (bb. 7, 11). He seems to have missed the first occurrence (Bass, b. 2), but this was then revised by Smith: the erasure of ‘might’ is apparent from a repair to the stave-lines there, and can also be seen similarly at subsequent occurrences.

33 See n. 24 above.

34 The situation may have been complicated by a coolness in relations between Handel and Smith at this time: see Smith’s letter to James Harris, 28 July 1743, Handel Documents, iv. 100–1.
Ex. 1. Variants in text-setting

He shall feed his flock

The ‘S/X’ line, because the ancestry of that source-chain was principally from the autograph, not from the performing score. However, the period of Jennens’s amendments is clarified beyond doubt by the ‘Granville’ copy of Messiah (Lbl Egerton MS 2937), a

Pt. 3. ‘He trusted in God’, with text amended by Jennens in Handel’s performing score (Ob, MS Tenbury 347, fo. 30\textsuperscript{v}, detail). Reproduced from the facsimile edition, *Handel’s Conducting Score of Messiah* (Scolar Press, 1974)

Pt. 4. ‘O thou that tellest’, ‘say’ incorrectly added by Jennens to Handel’s performing score (Ob, MS Tenbury 347, fo. 37\textsuperscript{r}, detail). Reproduced from the facsimile edition, *Handel’s Conducting Score of Messiah* (Scolar Press, 1974)

manuscript score that was copied from the performing score at some time in 1743–4; that is, between Handel’s first London performances in 1743 and his following revival of *Messiah* in 1745.\textsuperscript{36} This score, written by Christopher Smith, incorporates within its text all the relevant alterations listed in the Appendix below, and even reproduces an obvious mistake on Jennens’s part at bars 71–2 of ‘O thou that tellest good tidings to Sion’.\textsuperscript{37} In the performing score Smith had accidentally omitted the first word at the vocal entry in bar 71, and Jennens filled in the blank space below the quaver, but with the first word of the second clause (‘say unto the cities of Judah’), resulting in the words ‘say, thou that tellest good tidings to Sion’ (see Pl. 4).\textsuperscript{38} In the Granville score, the biggest variation from Jennens’s revisions is that Handel’s original word-setting for ‘If God be for us’ is retained, because the Granville copy has the alto-voice setting of this movement

\textsuperscript{36} Although there are many early manuscript copies of the score of *Messiah*, most of them derive from the autograph and only two (‘Granville’ and ‘Townley’) were copied from the performing score as it stood at the time of Handel’s 1743 performances, i.e. before his 1745 revival. (This state of the performing score is further represented in the later copies ‘Savage’ and ‘Powell’.) The Townley score (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 3590) also incorporates Jennens’s amendments. Jennens’s own score J, although originating at that time, was subjected to subsequent revisions, as noted below. A score from that period owned by James Harris, now lost, also derived from the performing score c.1743. Its contents are known partially, from a later manuscript by John Mathews: see Donald Burrows, “Mr Harris’s Score”: A New Look at the “Mathews” Manuscript of Handel’s *Messiah*, *Music & Letters*, 86 (2005), 560–72.

\textsuperscript{37} The amendment to ‘How beautiful are the feet’ does not apply here, because Jennens shortened the original dal segno aria in J, and Bernard Granville’s copy has the duet-and-chorus setting of the movement instead, as performed in 1743. In the performing score Jennens amended details of text in the original soprano-voice setting; it is not surprising that his hand is not found in any copy of the duet and chorus.

\textsuperscript{38} Bar numbers for movements in *Messiah* here follow the edition by John Tobin, Hallische Händel-Ausgabe, Serie I, Band 17 (Kassel, 1965).
instead of the soprano-voice version on which Jennens made his amendments. Perhaps both settings were present in the performing score when Smith made the Granville copy, and Smith attended to the current alto setting because it preceded the soprano one. The presence of the alto version in the Granville manuscript suggests that the aria was sung by Susanna Cibber in 1743, as she had done at Dublin the previous year.39

While the Granville copy usefully reflects the state of the performing score in 1743, it does not necessarily preserve the version of Messiah exactly as performed then, but it does imply that (for example) the full ninety-six-bar setting of ‘Why do the nations’ may have been restored. Allowance has also to be made for the possibility of changes between the 1743 performances: the performing score shows that at some point the tenor John Beard became unavailable and his music was reallocated to the soprano Christina Avolio.40 Nevertheless, the Granville score fixes Jennens’s amendments to 1743 (i.e. before Handel’s next revival of Messiah, in 1745), and consequently also implies that the Dublin performances had been prepared from the performing score in its ‘pre-Jennens’ condition. (Jennens could not have influenced the Dublin performances, since he had not yet seen the score.) Thus, for example, the audience at Fishamble Street would have heard ‘He trusted in God that he might deliver him’, as found in Handel’s autograph and in the performing score as originally copied, instead of ‘he would deliver him’ as subsequently altered by Jennens.41 Unfortunately the Granville score does not resolve the question as to whether Jennens made his alterations before or after the first performance.

FURTHER COLLABORATION FOR THE 1745 REVIVAL, AND SUBSEQUENT ASSOCIATION

Even after his adjustments to the performing score, Jennens remained discontented about Messiah, apparently feeling that Handel had not responded sufficiently to his criticisms. In October 1743 Holdsworth wrote (from Florence) to Jennens:

You have staid too long there [at Gopsall] already; It has had an ill effect upon you, and made you quarrel with your best friends, Virgil & Handel. You have contributed, by your own confession, to give poor Handel a fever, and now He is pretty well recover’d, you seem resolv’d to attack him again; for you say you have not yet done with him.42

Jennens’s reply in December shows that he had not mellowed, and indeed had hardened into a dismissive and self-righteous attitude over his relationship with Handel: ‘It is not Leic[ester]shire that has made me quarrel with Handel, but his own Folly, (to say no worse,) if that can be call’d a quarrel, where I only tell him the Truth; & he knows it to be Truth, yet is so obstinate he will not submit to it.’43

39 Cibber’s name is written against the movement in the annotated copy of the 1742 wordbook (Lbl Mk.8.d.4). The original music copy of the alto-voice version (which would have originated in Dublin) does not survive, but was presumably still present in the performing score when the Granville manuscript was copied. The earlier copy of the soprano version in the performing score has Handel’s pencil markings for transposition of the orchestral parts: these do not conform exactly to the alto aria as found in the Granville copy, and it is probable that they relate to a new alto version of the aria for Caterina Galli c.1750, for which no copy survives.


41 The Dublin 1742 wordbook, as well as the 1743 London edition, correctly printed ‘he would deliver him’, but there can be little doubt that it was performed as ‘he might’ in Dublin, from music copies as they then stood.

42 Holdsworth to Jennens, 17(28) Oct. 1743; Handel Documents, iv. 117.

43 Jennens to Holdsworth, 5 Dec. 1743; Handel Documents, iv. 140.
Relations remained distant over the next year, and there was no occasion to revive the dissention about Messiah because Handel did not include the work in his 1744 programme. Soon after the end of that season, however, the deadlock was broken from Handel’s side because he needed new repertory for the extended oratorio season that he planned for 1744–5 at the King’s Theatre, as Jennens wrote on 7 May 1744:

Handel has promis’d to revise the Oratorio of Messiah, & He & I are very good Friends again. The reason is, he has lately lost his Poet [James] Miller, & wants to set me at work for him again. Religion & Morality, Gratitude, Good Nature & Good Sense had been better Principles of Action than this single point of Interest, but I must take him as I find him, & make the best use I can of him.

In consequence, Jennens was ‘set at work’ on the libretto for Belshazzar, and Handel’s letter on 19 July 1744 in acknowledgement of the first consignment is fairly explicit about the deal that this had involved:

At my arrival in London, which was Yesterday, I immediately perused the Act of the Oratorio with which you favour’d me, and, the little time only I had it, gives me great Pleasure… .

Be pleased to point out these passages in th[e Messiah which You think require altering.

It is perhaps rather surprising, in view of Jennens’s previous critical tone, that the alterations for Handel’s 1745 revival of Messiah were not very radical or substantial. There are no further detailed amendments to the word-setting in the performing score, but Handel undertook recomposition in two areas that involved new movements. For ‘How beautiful are the feet’ the duet-and-chorus version was discarded, to be replaced with the first part of the original dal segno soprano aria followed by a new chorus movement for ‘Their sound is gone out into all lands’, the text of which had already been introduced as the continuo-accompanied aria in 1743. Perhaps Jennens had specified a chorus movement in his original draft libretto, or thought that, to provide weight for the reaction to ‘Their sound is gone out’ in ‘Why do the nations?’, something stronger than the aria was required after ‘Break forth into joy’ in the duet-and-chorus setting. (The untrustworthy da capo direction to the chorus section ‘Break forth into joy’ after the aria in the ‘Mathews’ manuscript score probably represents some later person’s attempt to remedy this situation.) The aria had also left a solo voice to represent the ‘company of the preachers’. The new chorus for ‘Their sound is gone out’ was more substantial and facilitated the appropriate tonal disruption (E flat major to C major) at the ‘scene change’, as indicated by a numbered heading in the 1743 wordbook at ‘Why do the nations?’. By contrast, the earlier sequence from ‘The Lord gave the word’ onwards (B flat major, D minor, F major, C major) had been smoother. Jennens was probably pleased with the new chorus for ‘Their sound is gone out’; in any case he no doubt felt justified that his original text from Romans had at last been restored in full. Possibly, he had expressed particular dissatisfaction with the quality of Handel’s two new continuo-accompanied

44 Messiah did, however, receive a private performance by the Academy of Antient Music in Feb. 1744, for which the evidence is a wordbook: see n. 28 above.
47 The date of composition for the new movements in 1745 was first identified in Hans Dieter Clausen, Händels Direktionspartituren, Hamburger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft, 7 (Hamburg, 1972), 173; previous Messiah scholars had attributed them to 1749.
arias in 1743: ‘Their sound is gone out’ because it was insufficiently forceful, and ‘But lo, the angel of the Lord’ because it interrupted the narrative.

If the other 1745 revision, the common-time setting of ‘Rejoice, greatly’, was also at Jennens’s insistence, it is less easy to see the grounds for an objection to the previous 12/8 versions: the substitution avoids the succession of two compound-time movements (though these were distinct in mood and tempo) and has a rather livelier effect than its 12/8 predecessor. More fundamentally, Jennens may have considered that the 12/8 version had inappropriately continued the pastoral mode from the scene of the angel and shepherds: his ‘scene number’ above ‘Rejoice, greatly’ in the 1743 wordbook implies a new topic in the narrative of the Messiah. 48

A letter from Jennens to Holdsworth after the 1745 performances reads as if Holdsworth had known nothing of the previous problems, and reveals that Jennens was even then still obsessed by Handel’s treatment of his libretto:

I shall show you a collection I gave Handel, call’d Messiah, which I value highly, & he has made a fine Entertainment of it, tho’ not near so good as he might & ought to have done. I have with great difficulty made him correct some of the grossest faults in the composition, but he retain’d his Overture obstinately, in which there are some passages far unworthy of Handel, but much more unworthy of the Messiah. 49

However, after Handel’s revisions in 1745 Jennens appears to have lost interest (or calmed down) on the subject of Messiah since there are no further diatribes, though our evidence from the correspondence ceases abruptly with the death of Holdsworth in 1746. Following the 1745 performances Handel did not perform Messiah again until 1749, and this was then succeeded by regular annual performances at Covent Garden and the Foundling Hospital. But there were no further changes to the literary content, and the only new music was resettings of three arias in 1750 for the castrato Gaetano Guadagni. Jennens kept up to date with copies of two of the ‘Guadagni’ arias in one of his miscellaneous manuscript collections of movements, and also the short form of ‘Why do the nations?’, but did not have the Guadagni version of ‘How beautiful are the feet’. 50

He apparently saw no reason to take his own score apart again in order to incorporate the latest music. He may have continued his annual pattern of winter/spring residence in London, but matters at Gopsall must have claimed considerable attention in the late 1740s when he inherited the estate. In 1752, when that situation had probably stabilized, he established his own London house in Great Ormond Street, in succession to his residence at ‘brother Hanmer’s’ property in Queen’s Square, and this probably implies a return to his former schedule. There are only occasional hints of his continuing interest in Handel’s performances of Messiah thereafter. On 1 May 1756 Thomas Harris wrote to his brother: ‘I write this from Ch[arles] Jennens’s after having been at the foundling Hospital where the Messiah was performed to a great audience. The Voices did well, but youll be surprizd to hear that there was no sort of accuracy in the instrum[en]ts.’ 51

---


49 Jennens to Holdsworth, 30 Aug. 1745; Handel Documents, iv. 344–5. The address panel from this letter does not survive, but the content and style of the text indicate that it was written to Holdsworth.

50 Lbl R.M. 19.a.2, fos. 54–66. The contents page in Jennens’s hand has nine numbered items, including ‘7. Alterations in Messiah’.

51 Thomas Harris to James Harris, 1 May 1753: Handel Documents, v (forthcoming), 1 May 1753; Burrows and Dunhill, Music and Theatre in Handel’s World, 290.
minutes of the General Committee of the Foundling Hospital on 12 June 1754 recorded the receipt of ‘Ten Guineas, being Mr Jennens’s further Benefaction to this Hospital’, so he may have attended that year’s Messiah performance at the Hospital as well. Furthermore, a reference in another letter from Thomas Harris in February 1759 suggests that Jennens continued to attend the Covent Garden oratorio seasons right up to the end of Handel’s lifetime: ‘I dined today with Ch: Jennens, who desired his compliments & that he thought these would be the last Oratorios you would ever hear performed by Handel; which I am afraid is too likely to be the case.’ This report also indicates that in February 1759 Jennens knew about Handel’s medical condition, and probably also his plans for the season, before they became public knowledge.

**THE ‘AYLESFORD’ COPIES OF MESSIAH AND JENNENS’S ALTERATIONS TO HIS OWN SCORE**

There is another layer to the story of Jennens’s response to Handel’s setting of Messiah, which can be traced through the various manuscript copies of the music owned by or associated with him. These reveal further concerns over details of word-setting, even possibly still in the period 1743–5, and may also point towards his preferred performing version of Messiah.

Jennens built up a substantial library, in which music was a significant part. As noted earlier, the first documented contact between Jennens and Handel related to the copying of an opera score for him, and manuscripts of Handel’s works featured extensively in his music collection. On Jennens’s death in 1773 his library passed by bequest to his cousin, then 3rd Earl of Aylesford but better known from Handel’s lifetime by his previous title as Lord Guernsey. He died only four years after Jennens but his music collection (in which he had added to that inherited from Jennens) remained in his family for over a century, after which it was sold or dispersed, the principal event for the present purpose being a sale by auction in 1918. In the absence of an inventory from Jennens’s lifetime, the most valuable information relating to his music library is to be found in the catalogue of the 1918 sale. The entries of relevance for Messiah are listed below, with modern library references for those items that can be identified today, and such pressmarks relating to Jennens’s library shelves as are to be found in the volumes. Copyists are identified by the designations given by Jens Peter Larsen, as S1, S2 etc.

Lot 239

Lamentations of the Israelites, 15 Parts, MS, half calf, 4to [= instrumental and vocal partbooks for Israel in Egypt and Messiah, bound together] (pressmarks ‘NV/3 Set’

52 *Handel Documents*, v (forthcoming), 12 June 1754. No record has been found of a previous benefaction from Jennens; other (unrelated) people named Jennens or Jennings were more involved with the Hospital.

53 Thomas Harris to James Harris (in Salisbury), 27 Feb. 1759; *Handel Documents*, vi (forthcoming); Burrows and Dunhill, *Music and Theatre in Handel’s World*, 358. Thomas Harris also says in the letter that Handel had visited him the previous Saturday (24 Feb.) and had described his plans for the forthcoming Covent Garden season, to conclude with Samson, Judas Maccabaeus, ‘then the Messiah’.


and ‘NV/16 vols.’. Mp, MS 130 Hd4 vv. 142–9, supplemented by Trumpet and Timpani parts in vv. 247–8, 353 from Lot 262. Copyist: S1.)

Lot 245

The Messiah, Manuscript Score, folio, red morocco, gilt borders and ornaments (lost)

Another copy, 3 vol. oblong quarto, red morocco gilt (lost)


Another copy, 3 vol. half bound (pressmarks ‘NO/18, NO/19 and NO/20’. Mp, MS 130 Hd4 v. 198–v. 200. Copyist: S2. Source J)

5 Part Books (MS.) (Mp, MS 130 Hd4 vv. 201–4; 4 Part Books. Copyist unidentified.)

Lot 246

The Messiah, calf gilt. Randall & Abell, n.d. (not identifiable at present from any surviving copy)

Lot 267

Concertos, Additions and Alterations in Belshazzar, etc. (a miscellany volume of movements in score, including ‘Alterations in Messiah’ [‘Guadagni ‘settings of ‘But who may abide’ and ‘Thou art gone up on high’, and the 45-bar version of ‘Why do the nations’]) (pressmark ‘NO/17’. Lbl R.M. 19.a.2. Copyist: S1)

To these can be added a manuscript keyboard/vocal score in Jennens’s hand, uncompleted and breaking off after bar 36 of ‘Glory to God’ (Lbl R.M. 19.d.1). Although of Jennens/Aylesford provenance, this had probably already found its way into the Royal Music Library by the 1780s.58

The pressmarks, written on the front paste-down of the volumes, must relate to the library room that Jennens created at Gopsall, probably soon after he inherited it on the death of his father in 1747 but possibly planned in preceding years. They thus clearly identify items that originated from him, rather than the Guernsey/Aylesford line. From the sale catalogue list, the undoubted ‘Jennens items’ known today are therefore the partbooks in Lot 239, one of the three-volume scores from Lot 245, and the miscellanies volume Lot 267. Almost certainly, at least one of the lost morocco-bound scores in Lot 245 would also have been from Jennens’s library.

I shall return to the ‘Jennens status’ of the other items presently, but first I need to refer to two of the definite Jennens items that are now in the Newman Flower Collection at Manchester Public Library. The three-volume score (v. 198–v. 200, Source J noted above) is in the hand of copyist S2, but Jennens added extensive revisions to the word-setting in ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ which are not found in any other surviving copy of Messiah.59 (See Pl. 5.) The details of these alterations will be examined below, but Jennens’s general intention, as revealed in all of his revisions, was to keep the verbal text consistent and in a progressive sequence. Watkins Shaw established that the music text of


59 See Shaw, A Textual and Historical Companion, 78, where Jennens’s versions of bb. 28–33, 56–66, 111–15 are transcribed. Full comparative transcriptions of the relevant passages as found in Handel’s autograph, Jennens’s score, and Walsh’s editions are given here, with interpretation in the light of Jennens’s correspondence. Larsen identified Jennens’s handwriting in R.M. 19.d.1 but was not aware of the amendments to ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ because he did not have access to Jennens’s score J, then in Sir Newman Flower’s possession.
Jennens’s score was derived from the performing score rather than Handel’s autograph and, as originally copied by S2, it incorporated Jennens’s amendments from the performing score that are listed in the Appendix, throughout the oratorio. Investigation of the manuscript, however, has revealed that it also has further revisions embedded in it, concentrated in Part I, which are not found in the performing score (see Ex. 2). These involve rhythmic alterations to Handel’s music, in order to regularize the sequence of the text (to read ‘and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together’ instead of ‘and the glory, the glory of the Lord, and all flesh shall see it together’) or to modify stress-patterns in the text-setting. (Jennens’s version of ‘And the angel said unto them’ does not sit well with Handel’s melodic line.) Since S2 copied the score with the amended versions, the revisions must have been made by Jennens previously on another copy, possibly one of the lost ‘morocco’ volumes. They are also found, as part of the copying sequence, in Jennens’s autograph vocal-score version R.M. 19.d.1, as far as that goes. Jennens had perhaps planned a larger project following his ‘corrections’ to the performing score, to work through Messiah again, movement by movement, correcting what

60 For the derivation of the text, see Shaw, A Textual and Historical Companion, 137, Diagram ‘A’; Jennens’s score J appears there as ‘Flower’ (i).
he regarded as Handel’s ‘faults’ in setting the English texts, without reaching Part III by the time S2 copied score J.

As noted, the amendments that were incorporated by S2 as he copied J are concentrated in Part I, but there may have been other changes in a (lost) originating copy. The hypothesis that the present three-volume score was not copied directly from Handel’s performing score, but from an intermediate copy, provides an explanation for one apparently anomalous feature. In ‘If God be for us’ Jennens had altered both rhythm and text in the performing score (see Pl. 2(a) above), but Handel’s original setting was copied by S2 into J and Jennens had to alter it again there (see Pl. 2(b) above). Remarkably, he did not do so consistently, writing ‘If God is for us’ (twice) in the performing score but ‘If God be for us’ (twice) in J, as if working from memory, and perhaps changing his mind about grammar or emphasis. The need for Jennens to make the amendments in his score indicates that, before Jennens made his alterations in 1743 (or 1744 at the latest), S2 must originally have been copying this soprano-voice version from a source derived from the performing score. At that time, the performing score would have contained the aria ‘But lo, the angel of the Lord’ as the current version. This does not appear in S2’s score, and quite likely Jennens insisted on the substitution of the recitative (‘And lo, the angel of the Lord’) instead. A choice was also involved with ‘Why do the nations?’, which had been

Ex. 2. Revisions in Jennens’s score

And the glory of the Lord

Thus saith the Lord

the dry Land, all na-tions I’ll shake
even the mess-en-ger of the co-ve-nant

the dry land, all Na-tions I’ll shake
even the mess-en-ger of the co-ve-nant
performed in the short (45-bar) version at Dublin, but Jennens apparently preferred the longer (96-bar) version. The lost originating copy of the score owned by Jennens may have had the shorter version; again, Jennens may have insisted on its replacement when S2 produced J.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{61} When Handel amended the performing score, replacing bb. 39–96 of the aria with the short recitative ending, the redundant pages (fos. 75–8) were probably sewn together and the autograph leaf with the short form (now MS 347, fo.
Larsen chose ‘S’ codes for the Handel copyists because he imagined them as a ‘Smith scriptorium’—that is, an organized group working under the management of Christopher Smith to produce copies for Handel’s performances and for the libraries of patrons. There is some justification for this, and it is supported by Handel’s agreement to supply Jennens with the score of *Alcina* in 1735. S2’s hand is found occasionally in Handel’s performing scores from the 1730s, but in the 1740s my analysis suggests that he was instead employed directly by Jennens, to write partbooks and second copies from scores of Handel’s works that Jennens already owned.\(^{62}\) This activity was particularly characteristic of the mid-1740s when Jennens was expanding his library, and the musical content of score J is consistent with the pattern.

Jennens’s alterations to ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ (see Ex. 3 and Pl. 5) reveal an attitude to word-setting that was different from Handel’s. As with the example from ‘And

\(^{62}\) Copyist S2 may have been the violinist Thomas Rawlins: see Donald Burrows, “‘You can’t have it of Smith except you’ll have it wrote out on Purpose’:: Eighteenth-Century Copyists of Handel’s Music in London and the “Smith Scriptorium”,” in Julian Rushton and Peter Lyman (eds.), *British Music, Musicians and Institutions c.1630–1800: Essays in Honour of Harry Dock Johnstone* (Woodbridge, 2021), 225–39 at 233–5. For S2’s activity as found in Jennens’s music collection, see also Varka, ‘Charles Jennens’s Collection of Handel’s Sacred Oratorios’, i. 213–23.
the glory of the Lord’, Jennens regarded continuity of the text at every occurrence as paramount: his correspondence refers in various places to ‘good sense’ and ‘nonsense’. (This is in keeping with what we know from other contexts about Jennens’s attitude to texts.) For Handel, once the sense and meaning of the text were established, musical elaboration thereafter was a matter of rhetoric, led by choices in emphasis and by compositional logic. His priorities are clearly stated in one of his letters to Jennens concerning the libretto for Belshazzar: ‘Your most excellent Oratorio has given me great Delight in setting it to Musick and still engages me warmly. It is indeed a Noble Piece, very grand and uncommon; it has furnished me with Expressions, and has given me Opportunity to some very particular Ideas, besides so many great Chorus’s.63

The ‘Expressions’ and ‘Ideas’ in ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ prompted Handel to vary and extend the initial statement of affirmation in creative ways at the repetitions. While Jennens wanted to regularize the accentuation, Handel viewed the text from different angles (‘and that he shall stand’, ‘and that he shall stand’, ‘and he shall stand’), thereby renewing the momentum of the aria, Jennens’s versions of bars 26–35 and 53–66 introduce rhythmic alterations that are rather fussy and run counter to the lyrical flow of the aria, introducing a clatter of repetitions, extra syllables, and short notes at bars 33–4, 57, 61, and 64; his rewriting of bars 26–35 and 57–66 breaks up the trajectory of Handel’s phrases.64 Above all, Jennens’s amendment to bars 111–15 (see Pl. 6) destroyed the rondo-like pattern of presentation within the ritornello structure, in which Handel used ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ to initiate a new musical continuation; it also obviously set the wrong words to the tune.65 Here Jennens probably objected to the word sequence ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth, for now is Christ risen’ in Handel’s version, which had no exact biblical authority, though it is strikingly effective in musical/dramatic terms as a restatement of faith. Handel’s approach to communicating the text was clearly different from Jennens’s.

63 Handel to Jennens, 13 Sept. 1744; Handel Documents, iv. 224.
64 See also John Tobin, Handel’s Messiah: A Critical Account of the Manuscript Sources and Printed Editions (London, 1969), 146–7. Tobin noted the alterations and the conflict with Handel’s intentions for the delivery of the text. He was not aware that they were in Jennens’s hand, or of Jennens’s views about ‘nonsense’: the ‘frequent repetitions of short groups of words’ he attributed to a suggestion from a singer ‘to give opportunity for the frequent taking of breath’.
65 Handel had followed a similar plan in the aria section of ‘O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion’ by introducing the opening phrase three times (there, always in the tonic), leading to a different continuation each time; the third version (‘O thou that tellest … Arise, shine’) is not found in the 1743 wordbook, which presumably reflects the text as supplied by Jennens.
Similarly, the passage referred to earlier in ‘And the glory of the Lord’ (see Ex. 2 above) communicates perfectly well in context as set by Handel, because the overall sense of the text has been well established by bar 76. The exposition of the three clauses (each to its own characteristic theme) had been completed in bar 63, reinforced by a return to the tonic key from bar 43, and Handel thereafter worked his musical material with combinations of the themes and contrasts of choral texture: at bars 76–9 the defining feature for him was the theme in the bass part, with its associated text. Once again Jennens’s revision set the wrong words to the tune, and also broke up the strength of the choral statement with extra percussive consonants.

It is not known whether Jennens ever showed to Handel his attempts at these ‘corrections’, but if so Handel’s reaction can easily be imagined: the alterations in the performing score probably indicate the limit of interference that he was willing to tolerate. Jennens’s amendments to ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ may also represent his second attempt at ‘correcting’ Handel there. Other word-settings, different from Handel’s and different from Jennens’s revisions in J, are found in that movement as published by Walsh in 1755 and 1763, which must have derived from a manuscript (designated ‘S’ by Watkins Shaw) dating from 1743.66 (The variations in Walsh’s publications are included in Ex. 3; see also other variations in Ex. 1 and Ex. 2.) Although there is no definite evidence of Jennens’s involvement with Walsh’s printed editions (or their source score), these alterations are not casual and may reflect an earlier attempt by him to control the music of Messiah as it would be seen by the public. Score J does not show any attempt to revise Handel’s word-setting for ‘incorruptible’ in ‘The trumpet shall sound’, but perhaps Jennens had given up before he reached that far in the manuscript, or he made revisions in another copy: again, variations that are found in Walsh’s publications of the aria may reflect some influence from Jennens.

THE ‘AYLESFORD’ COPIES, AND JENNENS’S PREFERRED SCHEME FOR THE SCORE OF MESSIAH

The set of partbooks with Jennens’s pressmarks (Mp, vols. 142–9, etc.) in the hand of S1, a separate music copyist from that in Jennens’s score, presents a different but no less intriguing situation. While the pattern of variant readings in score J shows that it was based on a source derived from the performing score, the pattern for these partbooks indicates derivation from the autograph instead: the copyist, who appears to have been Smith’s most trusted assistant at this period, apparently had access to the autograph that Jennens himself did not. Furthermore, many details reveal that the parts were copied individually from the autograph itself, and not from an intermediate score.67 The most curious and explicit evidence on this matter concerns the ‘Pifa’. In the autograph Handel at first wrote the Pifa as a movement of eleven bars, but then decided to extend it with music of comparable length that could serve as the middle section of a da capo scheme. This idea came to him after he had already proceeded with the next music for Part I, so the extra section was written on a leaf that was inserted at the nearest point. (This

66 For copy ‘S’ (unconnected with the codes for copyists), see Shaw’s ‘Diagram A’ (p. 35 above). Shaw correctly inferred its existence from variant readings. Part II has since been recovered and is now Lfom 1274: see Donald Burrows, ‘Making Sense of a “New” (and “Old”) Manuscript Score of Handel’s Messiah’, Händel-Jahrbuch, 68 (2022), 193–213. ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ was first published in Walsh’s Songs Selected from Handel’s Latest Oratorios, Part 2 (Vol. iii Part 4) in 1755; the arrangement of the text there is the same as in Walsh’s Songs in Messiah published eight years later, and both clearly derived from the same ‘1743’ source. See Donald Burrows, ‘Handel, Walsh and the Publication of Messiah’, Music & Letters, 97 (2016), 221–48, the illustration at 242.

67 We might otherwise have suspected that they had been copied from one of the lost ‘red morocco’ scores once owned by Jennens.
insertion, written on five staves cut from the usual 10-stave folio, is now fo. 39 in A; it is cued with ‘NB’ to the end of the 11-bar original on fo. 38v. Handel first drafted this middle section to end in F major, but then deleted it and on the other side of the leaf wrote the definitive version ending in G major. When S1 came to copy the Pifa he accidentally transcribed the wrong side of the leaf in the partbook for Violin II, but correctly copied the G major version in the other books. This can only have happened if S1 was copying the partbooks individually from the autograph. (It also provides a fair guarantee that the partbooks have never been played from.) This was an unusual lapse by S1, as he is usually one of the most reliable copyists from the ‘Smith circle’. The general picture from the partbooks is that, while S1 made some obvious corrections to the verbal text as he worked, and also incorporated Jennens’s revisions in ‘He shall feed his flock’, the most characteristic readings from the autograph score were carried forward (and were not altered by Jennens). Thus, the partbooks have ‘He trusted in God that he might deliver him’, as well as Handel’s own word-settings in ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ and ‘If God be for us’. At the famous patch of confusion in the autograph at bars 76–7 of the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus on fo. 105r, where previous copyists had made their own interpretations of the spaces left by Handel, S1 copied what he found in the autograph as far as he could make it out, so that the unison phrase has ‘and Lord of Lords’ in the Tenor and Bass partbooks but ‘and He shall reign’ in the Alto book. In J, as noted above, Jennens had emphatically corrected all the parts with his thickest pen-strokes, to read ‘and Lord of Lords’.

Watkins Shaw correctly identified derivation of the S1 partbooks from Handel’s autograph, but also realized that this did not provide a complete explanation: on his stemma diagram for the Messiah sources he placed the partbooks (there called ‘Flower (iii)’) as descendants from the autograph, but with a dotted line to the other side of the diagram for the performing score, to indicate ‘cross-fertilisation’ from another source.

The reason for the mixture can now be explained. While Jennens apparently instructed S1 to copy Messiah as he found it in the sequence of Handel’s autograph, in some places he wanted movements to be replaced by versions that were not to be found there: the common-time aria for ‘Rejoice, greatly’ and the chorus setting of ‘Their sound is gone out’. That leads us back to the contents of Jennens’s score (J) and the remarkable circumstance that with one minor exception (the da capo/dal segno alternatives for ‘The trumpet shall sound’) the score and the partbooks are identical as to variant movements. This, however, disguises a more complex situation, for, while the partbooks were produced from the autograph as a single integral task (though also using a supplementary source), Jennens’s score J is the product of two distinct periods of transcription from the performing score.

Analysis of the construction and paper characteristics of J (gathering structure, watermarks and rastra) reveals that sections of the manuscript have been replaced in all three volumes: original leaves were removed and new ones substituted. The changes in musical content were as follows:

---

68 The alternative possibility that S1 was copying from an early set of partbooks (incorporating this error) is unlikely: Handel had already replaced the F major continuation before the performing score was copied.

69 Shaw’s ‘Diagram A’ (n. 35 above).

70 The autograph of the chorus is now in Lbl R.M. 20.f.2 but may not have been filed with the main autograph in the 1740s. A variant reading at bb. 29–30 in the tenor part shows that the chorus movement in Jennens’s partbooks was derived from the performing score.

71 The two-stage history of Jennens’s score J is identified and described in Burrows, ‘The Autographs and Early Copies of Messiah’, 207–10. A new detailed examination of the early sources for Messiah, bringing in evidence from
Part I (v. 198): ‘Rejoice, greatly’: common-time setting, replacing one of the 12/8 versions.

‘Then shall the eyes of the blind’/‘He shall feed his flock’: all-soprano version, presumably replacing the all-alto version.

Part II (v. 199): Chorus ‘Their sound is gone out’ inserted. The score was originally copied with the dal segno aria for ‘How beautiful are the feet’. In the revision, the opening bars of the B section were deleted, one folio with the continuation was removed, and the cue ‘Sigue Chorus’ was added (by S2) after the A section of the aria.

Part III (v. 200): ‘If God is for us’: soprano-voice version, presumably replacing the alto setting. This involved recopying the end of the previous movement and the beginning of ‘Worthy is the Lamb’, in order to preserve continuity.

Because the replacement movements were written by the same copyist and on paper with the same rastra type as the original score, the substitution is not immediately apparent, though an unnecessary empty-stave page in Part III should have aroused suspicion. The difference in watermark types, however, leaves no doubt that the replacement sections are of later date than the original state of the manuscript, and furthermore they elucidate the history of the score: it was originally copied in 1743–4 and then revised, with substitution of the new 1745 movements (as prompted to Handel by Jennens), superseding the earlier settings.72

The replacement of ‘He shall feed his flock’ and ‘If God is for us’ seems to indicate a preference by Jennens for the soprano arias over the alto versions, even though there were not very significant differences in musical content. Another factor may have been in play, however. In the performing score Jennens had altered Handel’s word-settings for these two movements in the soprano-voice versions, but they were most likely sung in 1743 by Cibber in the alto versions. Perhaps the copies of the alto movements were not in the performing score at that time, for some reason, and were therefore not altered in parallel with the soprano versions. The contemporary copies of them in the Granville and Townley scores have the alto settings with ‘pre-Jennens’ texts, and that was also probably what Jennens found in his own score as delivered by S2, so that he then wanted them to be replaced with the soprano versions that he had amended. In addition, he may have preferred the first and last arias of Part III to be taken by the same singer, prompting substitution with the soprano version of ‘If God is for us’.

The alignment of variant movements in the revised version of score J with the part-books copied for Jennens by S1 is remarkable, despite the circumstance that they were the work of different copyists and derived from different primary sources. This leads to consideration of the other surviving ‘Aylesford’ manuscripts of Messiah that do not carry Jennens’s library codes, in which we find further alignment of the contents. The manuscripts involved—the score J2 and the part-books Mp, v. 201–v. 204—were, on the evidence of the paper types, copied c.1745–7, and so did not need to be subjected to other manuscripts and also from Jennens’s correspondence, has prompted the more wide-ranging interpretation that is presented here, relating the contents of the score to the other ‘Aylesford’ copies.

72 The volumes were originally copied on paper with watermark C90; the replacement sections have watermark Cn; the rastra throughout are 10 @5 90. For watermarks and rastra, see Donald Burrows and Martha J. Ronish, A Catalogue of Handel’s Musical Autographs (Oxford, 1994). Type Cn does not occur in Handel’s autographs; for this, see Clausen, Händels Direktionspartituren. The sections of J with watermark Cn would have been copied at some time in 1745–7, most likely in 1745: after his sustained pressure on Handel for revisions over a two-year period, Jennens would surely have wanted to incorporate them into his own score as soon as possible.
to revision to accommodate the 1745 music, which was present there from the start. Although they do not have the ‘Jennens’ pressmarks, these copies may have been prepared to his directions, the partbooks perhaps for Lord Guernsey. Furthermore, while pressmark codes seem to be specifically related to the Gopsall library, there is a possibility that Jennens kept further copies in London, and these would not have had the library codes: on 4 November 1745, while Holdsworth was staying at Jennens’s residence in Queen’s Square, Jennens wrote from Gopsall that he had ‘sent to Mr. Hetherington the key of the Book-Cases in my Musick-Room which I am sorry I could not furnish you with at your first coming there’. The surviving three-volume score J2 and the two lost morocco-bound scores may therefore have included at least one copy that Jennens kept in London, and this may even have been the situation initially with score J: it is uncertain whether the new library wing at Gopsall was completed by 1747, so the pressmarks may have been added later, when the shelves were set up there. From other references it is clear that Jennens had a pianoforte in London in 1740 (at Queen’s Square) and in 1756 (at Great Ormond Street), but there is also a description of one in the Music Room at Gopsall in 1750. It is unlikely that the room was finished at the time that Jennens’s score J was copied in the mid-1740s (Gopsall Hall would then have resembled a building site), so perhaps Jennens’s unfinished vocal score of Messiah (Lbd R.M. 19.d.1) was a project that he attempted while he was in London, arranged from the music in J or from a now-lost morocco-bound score in which he had made revisions. In the opening section of the Sinfony Jennens thickened up the chords in a manner that was surely prompted by the musical characteristics of his pianoforte. It may also be significant that, in this keyboard reduction, he did not modify the rhythms, even to adjust the bass to the upper parts in bar 8. Jennens’s copy of the overture in Walsh’s Six Overtures fitted to the Harpsichord or Spinnet … Eighth Collection (Cambridge, King’s College, Rowe Library Mn 13.9; Jennens shelfmark NZ/28) has no amendments or additions to the printed music text. The uniformity of content with regard to variant movements in the surviving ‘Aylesford’ copies suggests that, whether or not all of them were directly owned by Jennens, they reflect his influence and present a form of the oratorio that he favoured, thus:

Ev’ry valley: 84 bars
But who may abide: Bass voice (3/8 version)
Pifa: 21 bars and da capo
And lo, the angel of the Lord: recitative
Rejoice, greatly: common-time version
Then shall the eyes/He shall feed his flock: all-soprano version

---

73 Jennens to Holdsworth, 4 Nov. 1745; Lfom, Gerald Coke Handel Collection 7697.
74 The library (room and contents) was built and set up by 1750, when it was described by John Grundy: see Brenda Sumner, ‘Gopsall Hall: “Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair”’ (MA diss., University of Leicester, 2009), 54. One detail indicates that the pressmarks were added after 1750: the miscellaneous volume now Lbd R.M. 19.d.1 with the pressmark NO/17 (and thus presumably shelved directly before Jennens’s three-volume score) includes ‘Guadagni’ Messiah arias from 1750 and music from Handel’s 1751 revival of Belshazzar.
75 See Donald Burrows, ‘Handel and the Pianoforte’, Göttinger Händel-Beiträge, 9 (2002), 123–42, and Brenda Sumner, ‘Charles Jennens’ Piano and Music Room’, Handel Institute Newsletter, 22/2 (2011), [1–3]. After the end of the period of correspondence with Holdsworth, there are only occasional references to Jennens’s whereabouts in subsequent years, though they appear to support the hypothesis that he resumed seasons in London after establishing himself at Great Ormond Street in 1752–3.
76 See Burrows, ‘Handel and the Pianoforte’, for Jennens’s similar treatment of the introduction to Alexander’s Feast.
Thou art gone up on high: Bass aria

How beautiful are the feet: 24-bar Soprano aria, followed by chorus
‘Their sound is gone out’

Why do the nations: 96-bar Bass aria

Thou shalt break them: Tenor aria

In Parts I and II the contents of the four surviving ‘Aylesford’ manuscripts for the complete oratorio (two scores, two sets of partbooks) conform exactly in the pattern of variant movements. They were the work of four different copyists and (taking into account the final form of Jennens’s score) they all date from the period 1745–7. Only in Part III do they diverge in content: the S1 partbooks have the dal segno version of ‘The trumpet shall sound’ (instead of the da capo version as in the other copies), and the partbooks Mp v. 201–v. 204 have the twenty-four-bar version of ‘O Death, where is thy sting’ instead of the forty-one-bar version. In view of the overall alignment, however, I suggest that these copies reflect an ideal or preferred form of Messiah for Jennens in the 1740s, a situation that matches Natassa Varka’s conclusions about Jennens’s copies of other works by Handel.

Although the interim provenance of several of the ‘Aylesford’ manuscripts of Messiah is uncertain, there is a possibility that Jennens acted as agent when other members of his family wanted a copy of Messiah, so his ownership may not have been the only defining factor. And perhaps, one day, the lost morocco-bound scores will turn up, or an Aylesford copy of the published full score with amendments by Jennens, though we have good reason to assume that such variations would not have been accepted by the composer.

It seems that Jennens, having established a favoured version of the oratorio, was less interested in the subsequent development of the score: as noted above, while the new ‘Guadagni’ settings of ‘But who may abide the day of his coming’ and ‘Thou art gone up on high’ from 1750 were included in one of Jennens’s miscellaneous manuscript volumes as ‘Additions in Messiah’ (thus described in the list of Aylesford manuscripts above), he made no attempt to bring score J further up to date, even though the new versions of these arias became standard in Handel’s performances during the 1750s.

78 Schedule A in Shaw, A Textual and Historical Companion (following p. 96), does not include a record of the versions from the J2 score of Part II now at Ultimo (New South Wales), Powerhouse Museum, which was unknown to Shaw at the time.

79 See Varka, ‘Charles Jennens’s Collection of Handel’s Sacred Oratorios’, i. 228–31. Varka describes the alterations that produced Jennens versions of several Handel oratorios, and also draws attention to the large number of his amendments in L’Allegro and Joseph and his Brethren, for which his annotated ‘red morocco’ scores (described by Varka as Jennens’s ‘first scores’) survive.

80 The copy of the printed score now Mp, B. R. f530 Hd6554 (Messiah an Oratorio; Randall and Abell) has no markings by Jennens and is unlikely to have been the one from Lot 246 in the Aylesford sale; the same also applies to copies of the early editions of music from Messiah, B. R. f530 Hd6593 and Hd65932. However, there may have been an annotated copy of the Randall and Abell score of Messiah, comparable to the Walsh edition of Samson that has Jennens’s pressmark and was heavily amended by him (B. R., f530 HD665); see Donald Burrows, “Something necessary to the connection”: Charles Jennens, James Hunter and Handel’s Samson’, Handel Institute Newsletter, 15/1 (2004), 1–3. The List of Subscribers in Messiah an Oratorio includes ‘Charles Jennens, Esq; 3 Books’, but does not have an entry for the Earl of Aylesford.

81 These two arias are found (as composed for alto, or in transposed versions for soprano) in the Foundling Hospital partbooks (Lfrom 2558, representing Handel’s 1754 performance) and in two authoritative scores from 1758–9 (Lfrom 2485 and Hamburg M A/1030). The ‘Guadagni’ version of ‘How beautiful are the feet’ probably did not make it into Jennens’s supplementary manuscript because its performance was limited to 1750 (and possibly 1751), and the music was not available after it had been removed from the performing score.
'WEAK PARTS' IN THE COMPOSITION?

In the overall plan of the oratorio, Jennens’s main concern was apparently to rescue the Romans text for ‘How beautiful are the feet/Their sound is gone out’, which had almost certainly been specified for a da capo aria in his original submission of the text to Handel. This was achieved in two stages: the addition of ‘Their sound is gone out’ as an aria in 1743, and then the new aria-plus-chorus scheme, restoring the full Romans text, in 1745. Beyond that, as outlined above, musical sources reveal Jennens’s alterations to text-setting and to individual words. The amendments in Jennens’s hand that are found in the performing score were presumably accepted by Handel, but others (found in Jennens’s own score) apparently went no further, though they may indicate some of the matters on which Jennens ‘us’d great importunity’ with the composer. From the preferred scheme of movements which is suggested by the Aylesford copies of Messiah we may infer, for example, that the aria setting of ‘But lo, the angel of the Lord’ did not meet with his approval. Thus, the musical sources provide at least some clues to the conversations between Jennens and Handel that are indicated by references in the Jennens–Holdsworth correspondence.

That, however, prompts a final look at the musical sources to see if they carry any other evidence bearing on Jennens’s criticisms of the ‘composition’. As noted earlier, on the day after the first London performance Jennens wrote ‘Tis, after all, in the main, a fine Composition, notwithstanding some weak parts’, and in August 1745 (after Handel’s 1745 revisions) he wrote: ‘I have with great difficulty made him correct some of the grossest faults in the composition, but he retain’d his Overture obstinately, in which there are some passages far unworthy of Handel, but much more unworthy of the Messiah.’ What were the ‘grossest faults in the composition’ to which Jennens objected? One hint at a minor technical ‘fault’ in the music can be found in J, Jennens’s manuscript score. Jennens was assiduous in adding continuo figurings to the bassi lines in his manuscripts. In ‘Rejoice, greatly’ (one of the 1745 revisions), his labours revealed consecutive fifths over the barline at bars 87–8, and he drew attention to their occurrence with ‘NB’ (see Pl. 7). If Jennens’s conversations with Handel ran to such details, it is possible that Handel himself then cast a critical eye over his score. At two places in ‘All we like sheep’ (bb. 24–5 and 63–4) Handel amended the bassi line in his autograph to avoid similar motion (though not direct consecutives) with the violin parts (see Ex. 4). Those revisions

82 The manuscript also has some cross marks that draw attention to errors by the copyist, but these were probably added by a later hand.
Ex. 4. Handel’s revisions in ‘All we, like sheep, have gone astray’

Pt. 8. ‘But who may abide’, detail from the performing score, with Handel’s amendment to the viola part at b. 39 (Ob, MS Tenbury 346, fo. 24 v). Reproduced from the facsimile edition, Handel’s Conducting Score of Messiah (Scolar Press, 1974)

were not carried forward to the performing score. However, in the performing score Handel similarly revised the viola part in bars 38–9 of the bass-voice setting of ‘But who may abide’, to correct consecutives with the bassi: see Pl. 8. That amendment dates from 1749 at the latest, since he did not perform the bass-voice version of the aria thereafter; it is not found in any secondary copies. These seem to be alterations that were noted by Handel as intended technical improvements, but may not have been applied to his performances. Another example is found in the performing score at bar 27 of the chorus ‘And he shall purify’, where the second note in the alto part has been altered from $c'$ (as in the autograph) to $a^b'$, This corrects consecutives with the bassi part, but introduces a falling diminished seventh into the melodic line. The Granville copy shows that the amendment must have been made in 1743–4; furthermore, the revision is found clean in Jennens’s score and in his ‘score-reduction’ autograph. The handwriting of the alteration in the performing score may possibly be Handel’s, but it looks more like Jennens’s.

And what of the ‘Overture’? Because of long-standing familiarity with the Sinfony, it is difficult for us to hear it as Jennens did, and in general terms it seems perfect for its context: a serious-toned piece (in both movements) with a Corellian gravitas that

83 The amendments were, however, made in one early manuscript copy of Messiah (Lom, Gerald Coke Handel Collection 1274), from which the revised versions were conveyed to secondary copies and the printed score: see the article cited at n. 66. Handel’s correction to his autograph score at bars 64–5 is illustrated in Shaw, A Textual and Historical Companion, Plate III (b).
would have given the right messages about the oratorio’s subject matter to a theatre audience, and was especially appropriate for the first London performances in view of the newspaper controversy about the suitability (or otherwise) of the oratorio’s subject matter for the theatre. Furthermore, the Sinfonia sets up effectively the transition to the tonic major for ‘Comfort ye, my people’. Perhaps Jennens expected something heavier, even rather melodramatic, to represent the condition of conflict that is addressed in ‘Comfort ye’; Handel chose instead to provide a more objective introduction to the topic of the Messiah. There are a couple of minor technical points to the music in the Sinfonia, hardly noticeable in performance: a set of consecutives between viola and Bassi in bar 89 (duly marked with an ‘x’ by Jennens) and a couple of (possible) wrong notes in viola at bar 64. In the performing score a piece of paper was formerly attached to cover bars 65–7, and their omission could arguably tighten up a passage involving a long stretch of quavers in violin I. But there is no evidence from other sources that this excision was adopted, and it would have removed the attractive prolongation of the B major chord, enlivened by a chromatic bass part. If Jennens simply wanted something grander by way of an opening, Handel’s response is found in the ouverture in the same key that opened Belshazzar, their next collaboration, a couple of years later. That was in a different style, and for a very different oratorio. In Messiah, the Sinfonia is matched to the work and ‘passages far unworthy of Handel’ are not easily identifiable. There is a subtle phrase structure to the Grave and a lively interplay between contrapuntal and episodic elements in the Allegro moderato, building towards a climax in the closing bars. Perhaps Handel was making a gesture of dismissal in reply to Jennens’s criticisms when he ended the Ouverture to Belshazzar with the same melodic and harmonic outline as in the Sinfonia to Messiah.

ABSTRACT

The correspondence between Charles Jennens and Edward Holdsworth includes criticisms by Jennens, sometimes trenchant, of Handel’s setting of the text in Messiah. A fresh detailed examination of the musical sources, building on work previously presented in Music & Letters, has revealed more specific evidence for the substance of Jennens’s criticisms. Handel’s performing score of Messiah has a large number of alterations to the verbal text by Jennens, and further alterations are found in a manuscript score of the oratorio from his library. By putting together the musical and documentary evidence it is possible to assess when Jennens made these alterations, the effect that they may have had on Handel’s performances, and the extent to which Handel accepted or rejected his librettist’s suggestions or demands. These matters are particularly relevant to Handel’s first London performances of Messiah, in 1743 and 1745. Although most

84 Current research by Fred Fehleisen (Juilliard School), investigating thematic and motivic links between movements in Messiah, has also presented the possibility that the Sinfonia includes references to subsequent music in the oratorio.

85 The two-bar cut could be implemented if b’ is substituted for the first note in Violin I at b. 68, but the performing score has no alteration there.

86 Pages are missing from the Sinfonia in both the autograph and the performing score, but secondary sources are unanimous in their musical texts to an extent that seems to preclude the possibility that Handel recomposed it following criticism from Jennens.

87 The last two and a half bars of the Belshazzar Ouverture are directly comparable to the last five bars of the Messiah Sinfonia.
of the accessible evidence concerns the verbal text and its setting, the musical sources also provide a few clues to Jennens’s criticisms of the musical composition. The article presents comparative transcriptions of passages in ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth’ as found in Handel’s autograph, Jennens’s score, and Walsh’s editions, with interpretation of the differences in the light of Jennens’s comments. It also suggests that the ‘Aylesford’ copies of Messiah, taken together, reveal Jennens’s preferred scheme for the movements of the oratorio.

APPENDIX

Messiah: Alterations in the Performing Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folio Movement</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MS Tenbury 346</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6r Ev’ry valley</td>
<td>35 T</td>
<td>straight &amp; the rough places plain (i.e. ‘the’ added)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16r And the glory of the Lord</td>
<td>121–3</td>
<td>togethether → together (× 6, but not on fos. 11–15r)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30v And he shall purify</td>
<td>27 A</td>
<td>note 2 altered from ′ to ab′</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35r Behold, a virgin</td>
<td>5 A</td>
<td>Emmanuel (possibly later than other emendations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37r O thou that tellest</td>
<td>71–2 A</td>
<td>say, thou (‘O’ originally omitted by Smith, before ‘thou’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43r For behold</td>
<td>17 B</td>
<td>and the → His glory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45r The people that walked</td>
<td>44 B</td>
<td>deth → death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75r, 75v He shall feed his flock</td>
<td>28, 34 S</td>
<td>Come unto him all ye that are heavy laden (‘all ye’ added)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77r–82v His yoke is easy</td>
<td>3–47</td>
<td>case → casic × 23 (missed one on fo. 82r, bb. 42–3 T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77r His yoke is easy</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>Burthen → Burden (first two only)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **MS Tenbury 347** | | |
| 1v–3r Behold the Lamb of God | 7 and later | takest → taketh × 9 (missed one on fo. 4r, b. 23) |
| 5r, 5v He was despised | 9, 11 A | dispised → despised |
| 11r Surely he hath borne | 14 S | wounded → wounded |
| 17r And with his stripes | 63 B | heald → healed |
| 17r–18r And with his stripes | 74–6 T | are we → we are (not altered elsewhere) |
| 28v All we, like sheep | 85 T | He → Hath |
| 30v, 31v He trusted in God | 7 T, 11 A | might → would × 2 |

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folio</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36(^v)</td>
<td>He trusted in God</td>
<td>48 B</td>
<td>de-liver Him (syllables omitted by Smith)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44(^r)</td>
<td>Lift up your heads</td>
<td>11 B</td>
<td>the King → this King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50(^r)</td>
<td>Let all the angels of God</td>
<td>4 T</td>
<td>worship Him (written over ?thee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66(^r)</td>
<td>How beautiful are the feet</td>
<td>13, 16 S</td>
<td>good tidings → glad tidings (in aria version)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73(^v)</td>
<td>Why do the nations?</td>
<td>18 B</td>
<td>togethether → together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85(^v)</td>
<td>Thou shalt break them</td>
<td>10 T</td>
<td>shall → shalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91(^v)</td>
<td>Hallelujah</td>
<td>36 S, B</td>
<td>? → is become</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92(^r)</td>
<td>Hallelujah</td>
<td>39, 40 S, B</td>
<td>and of the → His Christ (\times 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100(^v)</td>
<td>I know that my redeemer liveth</td>
<td>123 S</td>
<td>from the Death → Dead (\times 4) (and possibly fo. 101(^v), b. 147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102(^r), 102(^v)</td>
<td>Since by man came death</td>
<td>10, 13, 16</td>
<td>Dead (\times 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105(^r)</td>
<td>Behold, I tell you a mystery</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>be all changed → all be changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106(^r), 108(^r)</td>
<td>The trumpet shall sound</td>
<td>33, 37, 49, 87</td>
<td>and the Death → Dead (\times 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116(^r)</td>
<td>But thanks be to God</td>
<td>26 A</td>
<td>? → victory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118(^r)</td>
<td>But thanks be to God</td>
<td>40 A, T</td>
<td>be thanks → but thanks (\times 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120(^r)</td>
<td>If God be for us</td>
<td>25–7, 37–9</td>
<td>be → is (\times 2) (and rhythm change)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other amendments, possibly by Jennens**

**MS Tenbury 346**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folio</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30(^v)</td>
<td>And he shall purify</td>
<td>47 A</td>
<td>second note altered from (c') to (\textit{a}^\flat)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MS Tenbury 347**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folio</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28(^v)</td>
<td>All we, like sheep</td>
<td>90–1 S</td>
<td>as under second note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32–37</td>
<td>He trusted in God</td>
<td></td>
<td>several revisions to text, substituting 'let Him deliver Him'/ 'if He delight in Him', and involving erasures of the original texts; all probably in Smith’s hand, but some may have been instigated by Jennens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(^v)</td>
<td>The Lord gave the word</td>
<td>6 S</td>
<td>company and rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64(^r)</td>
<td>The Lord gave the word</td>
<td>15 S</td>
<td>great is → great was (\times 2) (probably by Smith)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89(^r)</td>
<td>Hallelujah</td>
<td>14 B</td>
<td>?riegneth → reigneth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
### NOT AMENDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folio</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Alteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MS Tenbury 346</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36v</td>
<td>O thou that tellest</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>strenght</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MS Tenbury 347</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10r–v</td>
<td>Surely he hath borne</td>
<td>7, 10 S, B</td>
<td>born (18th-c. usage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77r–v</td>
<td>Why do the nations?</td>
<td>77, 82, 83</td>
<td>Counsels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86r</td>
<td>Thou shalt break them</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>dash them to pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96r</td>
<td>Hallelujah</td>
<td>76–7 A, T, B</td>
<td>and he shall reign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98+</td>
<td>I know that my Redeemer</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>no changes to word-setting, except fo. 100r Death → <strong>Dead</strong> (see above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106v+</td>
<td>The trumpet shall sound</td>
<td>51–6, 91–6 B</td>
<td>‘incorruptible’; no changes to word-setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112v–113r</td>
<td>O Death, where is thy sting</td>
<td>36, 40 A, T</td>
<td>strenght</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>