

THE SPIRITUALITY
OF MOZART'S MASS IN C MINOR,
BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR,
AND MESSIAEN'S *QUARTET FOR THE END OF TIME*



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BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR,
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When Hearing Sacred Music is Relating to God

David B. Greene

With a Preface by
Jonathan N. Badger

The Edwin Mellen Press
Lewiston•Queenston•Lampeter

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Greene, David B.

The spirituality of Mozart's Mass in C minor, Bach's Mass in B minor, and Messiaen's "Quartet for the end of time" : when hearing sacred music is relating to God / by David B. Greene, with a preface by Jonathan N. Badger.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7734-2591-0 (hardcover)

ISBN-10: 0-7734-2591-8 (hardcover)

1. Music--Religious aspects. 2. Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, 1756-1791. Masses, K. 139, C minor. 3. Bach, Johann Sebastian, 1685-1750. Masses, BWV 232, B minor. 4. Messiaen, Olivier, 1908-1992. Quatuor pour la fin du temps. I. Title.

ML3921.G74 2012

782.32'3112--dc23

2011051935

hors série.

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Front cover: Three singing bronze angels, main portal of the Florence Cathedral, Italy. The sculptor's name is unknown. Photograph by Jebulon; used with permission.

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The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 450
Lewiston, New York
USA 14092-0450

The Edwin Mellen Press
Box 67
Queenston, Ontario
CANADA L0S 1L0

The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd.
Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM SA48 8LT

Printed in the United States of America

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Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time."**

When Hearing Sacred Music Is Relating to God

by

David B. Greene

North Carolina State University

From the Edwin Mellen Press:

Books on CHRISTIAN SACRED MUSIC by David B. Greene

** The Theology of Handel's "Messiah,"
Beethoven's "Credo," and Verdi's "Dies Irae."
How Listening to Sung Theology Leads to the Contemplation of God*

*** The Spirituality of Mozart's Mass in C Minor,
Bach's Mass in B Minor, and Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time."
When Hearing Sacred Music Is Relating to God*

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Preface

It is clear that music plays a role in the communion of the human with the divine. The chthonic rhythms of the Greek chorus in the Theatre of Dionysus, the hypnotic drumming of the tribal music of Uganda, and the trance inducing medieval chants of European Christianity all suggest the transhistorical status of music as an intersection of humanity and divinity. In *The Spirituality of Mozart's Mass in C Minor, Bach's Mass in B Minor, and Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time": When Hearing Sacred Music Is Relating to God*, David Greene offers a beautiful and highly original account of this intersection in Christian terms, directing his inquiry through monumental works of Mozart, Bach, and Messiaen.

In this book and in its companion (*The Theology of Handel's "Messiah," Beethoven's Credo," and Verdi's "Dies Irae": How Listening to Sung Theology Leads to the Contemplation of God*) Greene approaches sacred music devotionally and theologically, respectively. Both theses are as astonishing as they are compelling. In the companion book, Greene's claim is that masterpieces such as Handel's *Messiah* and Beethoven's *Mass in D* contain "heard theology." The music does not simply embody or reflect a theological context. Rather it actually makes theological predications. Dynamic, harmonic and melodic events within the music carry and manipulate ideas and images of the sacred text the composer has set. These ideas and images are lifted out their discursive setting and placed into a musical grammar that articulates theological meaning. As with the meanings in spoken poetry, a prosaic translation of this musical theology may be impossible and is at least problematic. These musical sentences can be heard clearly and directly only in the music.

In the book at hand, Greene's claim—particularly thrilling to those of us who like to believe we are having authentic spiritual experiences as we listen to certain

pieces of music—is that there is a way of hearing sacred music that is in itself a communion with the divine. This idea is distinct from the familiar notion that the music “transports” us to a higher realm, or that the music is merely instrumental, placing us in a state where we might become more reverent or vulnerable to “edification.” Instead, says Greene, sacred music of a certain type, heard in a certain way, has the capacity to be the relation to God (as opposed to facilitating the relation). The music contains dynamic structures that image the psychic relations of temporal to eternal, of particular to universal, of part to whole, as well as the relations between the plurality of parts. These imaginings are animated in human hearing and thereby reconcile us to each other even as we are reconciled to God.

Greene’s analyses of these works are superb and should be of interest in their own right to students and scholars of any of the composers examined here. The spiritual depth of Greene’s insight into these pieces, however, takes the reader far beyond conventional music analysis, and sets this book in a class with very few peers.

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September 2010

CHAPTER ONE

Sacred Music, Spirituality, and Theology

Sacred music and spirituality:

There is a hearing of sacred music that is a relating to God.

Sacred music and heard theology:

There is a hearing of sacred music that is a hearing of theology.

These assertions are intended in the strongest sense of their most literal meaning.

This book and its companion, *The Theology of Handel's "Messiah," Beethoven's Credo," and Verdi's "Dies Irae": How Listening to Sung Theology Leads to the Contemplation of God*, take up two ways in which sacred music—music setting a biblical or liturgical text—can be importantly religious. These are not the only ways, but they are ways that have not yet been held up for special attention.

The present book focuses on hearing and spirituality. It takes up three pieces of sacred music—Mozart's C Minor Mass, the "Et resurrexit" movement of Bach's B Minor Mass, and Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* and elaborates a way of hearing them such that the listening may be called an event in spiritual life. In the chapter on Mozart's Mass, the decisive clue to this way of hearing is

the statement, made by a particular listener, “Hearing Mozart’s C Minor Mass is my relation to God.” The chapter’s project is to show what happens if one embraces this statement, makes it one’s own, and then elaborates it. The statement is especially interesting because it resists being smoothed out to mean, “Hearing the Mass is a means of coming into a relation with God,” or “The music is a vehicle for coming into God’s presence.” Two strategies are useful for uncovering what the oddly turned phrase is partly showing and partly hiding: pointing to features of the music itself that may be salient in this kind of hearing, and bringing to the surface some correspondences between this style of hearing and the style of writing found in two theologians, Martin Buber and Karl Barth.

The method followed in Chapter Three and the goal it pursues are similar. It also works from a single comment. Some years ago I surprised myself by saying after hearing the “Et resurrexit” movement from Bach’s B Minor Mass that now I knew that Christ was indeed risen. I have wondered ever since what I might have meant by that remark. Chapter Three treats it the same way that Chapter Two deals with the comment, “hearing the music *is* my relation to God,” namely as a starting point for wondering just what is being heard when the listening leads to this strange comment and meditating on what else is true and valid if this statement is true to encountering God.

1. When Listening to Sacred Music Is Hearing Theology

The focus on hearing as a moment in spiritual life differentiates this book from the companion book’s focus on listening to sacred music as “hearing theology.” Spelling out the difference may clarify why the present book insists on the odd phrase, “hearing *is* relating.” Whether heard or discursive, theology is among other things the organization and interrelation of Christian images and ideas. In the case of heard theology, the interrelations of images and ideas are accomplished by the heard relations that connect musical passages. For when two pas-

sages of music are aurally bonded and each one sets part of a biblical or liturgical text, the aural relationship interconnects the images and ideas denoted by the words. In the case of read theology, interrelations are made by grammar and syntax, and the outcomes are comparisons, implications and conceptual refinements. When the images and ideas are interrelated by the music, the outcome is that they amplify and limit each other and infuse a particular force and weight into one another's words. This outcome is theology in as strict a sense of the word as are the texts of St. Augustine, St. Catherine of Siena, and Friedrich Schleiermacher. This book takes up three pieces of sacred music that exemplify this sense of heard theology—the Christmas portion of Handel's *Messiah*, the *Credo* from Beethoven's Mass in D, and the *Dies irae* from Verdi's Requiem.

Usually sacred music involves verbally as well as aurally related images, for the words of its biblical or liturgical text are, of course, interrelated syntactically. Sometimes the musical relations correspond to and run parallel to the verbal ones, but in the cases of much sacred music, the grammatical connections among the words are obscured or even obliterated. Repeating a word or phrase, setting many notes of music for a single syllable of text, and overlapping entries of voice parts in choral music are common events in sacred music, and they all work against the efficacy of the syntax. The words themselves can still be heard clearly, but the syntactical relations among the words are often lost, and only the music relations connect the referents of the words to one another. Even when the grammatical relations are intact, the musical relations may not merely correspond to them, but relate them differently, adding to the force and point of certain words and images, sometimes supplementing, but frequently supplanting the verbal connections.

It is commonly said that a phrase of sacred music “paints” one of the words its sets, or “illustrates” the text's meaning in an aural form, or “symbolizes” an idea in the text. It is true that choral and vocal music does do these things, but they are not all that music does, and in fact they are fairly superficial in comparison to the musical organization's impact on the words. If all that music does is to illustrate meanings that are already well known, the music is unnecessary—

pleasant, perhaps, but not essential. Indeed, if its only role is to prettify the text, it may actually be suspected of undermining the seriousness of the words. It would be unfortunate if focusing on these obvious instances of musical-verbal cooperation were to pull attention away from more complex musical relations and their impact on the meaning of words.

It is also commonly said of certain sacred pieces that they are programmatic because their “structure is governed by the words and what they stand for.”¹ This statement is also valid. Inquiring into the theology heard in a piece of sacred music, however, works in a direction opposite to that of inquiring whether a piece is programmatic. To ask about heard theology is to ask how the musical structure governs what the words stand for, not the other way around.

An example of music controlling the precise meaning and force of the words may help to distinguish this effect from word painting or programmatic music. A very familiar case occurs when music works toward a climax, and one image is carried by the lead-up to the climax, and another by the music of the climax itself. The musical relation of building to and arriving at a climax connects the two images, and the musically related images have strikingly new significances. This new meaning can arise within a scope as small as a single phrase, such as the first phrase in the hymn, “Fairest Lord Jesus.” The third subphrase (“O Thou of God and man the Son”) climaxes the building done by the music in the first two subphrases. The climax makes the Sonship of Jesus to be the inner meaning of his beauty (first subphrase) and dominion over nature (second subphrase). In this case, the syntax linking the words is not very clear even when the poem is spoken, not sung, but the musical relations are clear and strong. They urge that one hasn’t really grasped the beauty and the Lordship of Jesus if one does not feel their relation to the Sonship. On a much larger scale, a similar phenomenon takes place in the works described in *The Theology of Handel’s “Messiah,” Beethoven’s Credo,” and Verdi’s “Dies Irae.”*

¹ So William Drabkin, *Beethoven: Missa Solemnis* (Cambridge, UK, 1991), p. 107.

2. When Listening to Sacred Music Is Encountering God

Because spirituality and theology are interrelated in a complicated variety of ways, the difference between this book and its companion is more a matter of emphasis than of genre. Just the same, a change in approach corresponds to the change of focus. Neither the chapter on hearing Mozart's Mass nor the one on Bach's resurrection music offers a theory of what generally happens when hearing sacred music affects a person's spirituality. They report on particular encounters with God that take place with particular persons on hearing specific pieces in a certain way. The analyses are not prescriptive or normative. In an important sense, the trajectory is the reverse of the approach exemplified in *The Theology of Handel's "Messiah," Beethoven's Credo,* and *Verdi's "Dies Irae."* The goal of the latter is that readers arrive at a way of hearing that is theologically challenging and informative. It does not claim to have reached that goal, but heads in that direction. By contrast, the present book's approach to the possibility that hearing may in and of itself constitute a spiritual event does not yield a way of hearing or an outcome of hearing that should apply to any and all sensitive listeners.

This approach addresses, in a modest way, a concern that hounds music analysts. People who love and listen repeatedly and appreciatively to a particular piece of music often read an analysis of it because they want to understand it better, or they want to improve their self-understanding by coming to grips with why they love the piece. It is not unusual for them to find that the analysis does not illumine or deepen their listening or help them understand what it is they are loving. It is not unusual for the analysis to hinge on certain details that these listeners do not hear, even when they try. What they care about seems not to matter to the analyst, and vice versa. Perhaps they hear what the analyst hears at some subliminal level; perhaps they are aware of what the analyst is aware of, but do not recognize it in the language that the analyst is using. Perhaps they really are mishearing the music in the sense that they are listening carelessly but do not know it because they are supplying meanings from their own imaginings that run in a di-

rection different from those embedded in the music itself. Perhaps **analysis** would be different and more useful if it began with reports from listeners about what they actually hear, but it is not always easy to report on what one hears until one has control of a vocabulary and conceptuality for doing so. Chapters Two and Three begin with a comment about the impact of the music on spirituality, and brings forward salient aspects of the music and styles of doing theology with which the comment comports.

The list of pieces whose hearing may be a relation to God or some other spiritual moment would include many other pieces besides those taken up in Chapters Two and Three. It seems obvious that the works described in *The Theology of Handel's "Messiah," Beethoven's Credo," and Verdi's "Dies Irae"* should be on the list, along with other towering works like Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Mozart's Requiem, Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, Britten's War Requiem, and Penderecki's *Utrenja*. While everyone seeking to deepen his or her spirituality may and must choose which particular musical works to hear, Chapters Two and Three suggest the importance of selecting them in the context of a discussion on the criteria of authentic spirituality. Contributing to this discussion, however, lies outside the ambitions of this book.

Nevertheless, the spiritualities uncovered in Chapters Two and Three put one in mind to say that pieces that are more daring musically are more likely to challenge conventional spirituality than pieces that are immediately accessible and of which one tires sooner rather than later. If a discussion of the criteria of authentic spirituality came to an affirmative consensus on that suggestion, it might then proceed to ask whether the preference for more challenging music implies that the spiritualities that take place on hearing Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* or John Harbison's *Four Psalms* are likely to be deeper than those that occur on hearing less challenging and less complex psalm settings, such as John Rutter's Psalm 150. That would not at all be to say that Rutter's music does not have an important place in Christian life and worship, but only that its place would be different from that which is uncovered in Chapters Two and Three.

The mention of the Stravinsky and Harbison works brings to mind a large set of works that overlap with sacred music, though not everyone cites them as examples of that category. These are works that allude in varying degrees of specificity to presentiments of the sacred understood more broadly than it is within any one religious tradition. The Christian sacred music treated in Chapters Two and Three as well as in the companion book in fact sometimes, perhaps often, work in this way—that is, not as specifically Christian but as pointers to some religiously vague spirituality. It could even be said that magnificent Christian sacred pieces like the Handel and Mozart have had such a great appeal outside specifically Christian thought and worship that they contributed mightily to bring into being a category of music that is in some sense sacred without being religious, or spiritual without being theological. Like the Stravinsky and Harbison psalm settings, which were commissioned for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and of the founding of the state of Israel, respectively, music in this category is directed toward performance in concert halls and for audiences many of whose members do not consider themselves religious in any traditional sense, but who listen to these works with something akin to a spiritual interest. And like the Stravinsky and Harbison pieces, this music may allude to the texts or images of a specific religious tradition, but does not project a heard theology belonging to that tradition or align with a spirituality unique to it.

As an example of thinking about sacred music in this sense, thoughts on hearing Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* are offered in the final chapter. Although Messiaen intended that the piece lead its listeners into an encounter with the divine, the *Quartet* is not sacred music in the same sense that pieces setting biblical and liturgical texts are. It does not have a text, though its point of departure is a verse from the last book in the Christian Bible, and the titles for seven of its eight movements indicate a relation with the end of time mentioned in that verse. There are indirect allusions to the doctrines of creation, liturgical efficacy, and Christ's resurrection, but no lines, indirect or otherwise, are drawn to other biblical ideas or images, such as sin, punishment, redemption,

forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, or community. There are not connections to theological concepts such as the Trinity, the incarnation or revelation. A listener wanting to hear the *Quartet for the End of Time* as heard theology by understanding the end of time in connection with any of these images or concepts would probably have to resort to a good deal of speculation.

The *Quartet* can, of course, be heard simply as a series of musical relationships. Messiaen's compositional techniques are very much his own, and the aural relationships they generate are unique and striking. The music warrants careful hearing just as music. The musical metaphors for the various aspects of the end of time are fascinating and warrant careful attention as well. These metaphors enable listeners to hear new kinds of temporality, somewhat different in each movement, which may hint at the temporality in which the Ultimate relates to itself and in which humans relate to the Ultimate. These hints are, of course, spiritually remarkable, but what is even more remarkable is that each movement in its own way juxtaposes its new kind of temporality to conventional, mundane temporality. Thus the music leads its listeners not only into new temporalities that are radically different from that of the physical world and ordinary historical events, but also into new interrelations of a new temporality with mundane temporal processes.

While each movement envisions the end of time and the interaction of a new with a mundane temporality in its own way, as though the other movements did not exist, there is also a unfamiliar kind of completeness to the group of eight that strangely interrelates the eight visions. While this wholeness is real and palpable, it does not override the differences among the movements. On the contrary, it sharpens the differences which are allowed simply to sit side by side. Oddly, listeners do not feel or hear a summons to reconcile the contrasts.

Consequently, if one tries to listen to the individual movements' events and relationships and to the *Quartet's* unique completeness from within a rectilinear, goal-directed temporality, they can only be heard as non-events, and the sounds are intolerably irritating and unmusical. The *Quartet* is not even music unless listeners follow it into its new temporalities.

If one takes a religious as well as an aesthetic interest in these temporalities, there are fascinating outcomes. One of the most surprising is discovering that the highest structural levels of the pieces described in the companion book on sung theology project temporalities that contradict conventional, quotidian temporality in ways that closely resemble Messiaen's. His musical idiom enables him to focus explicitly on these temporalities and bring them to bear on foreground and mid-ground structures, which forces listeners to confront them if they are going to understand his music at all. By contrast, listeners can understand a great deal of the companion book's pieces without noticing the aspects that contradict or transcend forward-directed temporality. Some of the similarities, which are unexpected for most listeners, between Messiaen and his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors are developed in Chapter Four; others are noted briefly and cross-listed in footnotes.

To hear Messiaen's new temporalities and juxtapositions to mundane temporality would be to be living in them, and so to relate to the new temporality by hearing his novel musical relations would be a particular way of joining spiritual with everyday temporal processes. If this hearing is a passing aspect of a passing aesthetic event, the listener would probably not think of it as a moment of spirituality. But the hearing and living may involve awe and amazement and become the occasion for reinterpreting any number of previous events and previously held ideas. In such cases, the spirituality would be quite thick. Whether one wants to call it a Christian spirituality would depend on the particular prior events and ideas that the spirituality of the new temporal process embraces.

CHAPTER TWO

Hearing Mozart's Mass in C Minor: When Relating to Music Is Relating to God

After listening to sacred music, Christians often say things like, “Hearing it, I felt I was in the presence of God, “ or “I want always to be the person I am when I hear this music,” or “Hearing this music, my relating to it becomes my relation to God.”

This chapter works with the last of these statements and its way of describing the impact on the spirituality of hearing music with a biblical or liturgical text. The first section tries to make sense of saying that the hearing somehow defines and constitutes spirituality, and the second section tries to work out the joining of hearing with relating to God in connection with a particular piece of music—Mozart's Mass in C Minor² or, more precisely, three of its movements. The choice of this piece is somewhat arbitrary. Many other sacred pieces would serve as well, including pieces from other religious traditions. What is important is to deal with a particular piece in some depth and not just with sacred music in general. There is probably a good deal of overlap between this encounter with the divine and what the other comments that connect hearing with spirituality are trying to say; those who make those comments may judge the exact extent of that overlap.

² Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote his Mass in C Minor in 1783 as a wedding gift for his wife, Constanze, or as a thanksgiving offering for her recovery from an illness, or both. He did not finish the project: he did not complete the “Credo,” or begin the “Sanctus” and “Agnus Dei.”

1. Relations with Sounds, with Music, and with God

The event of relating to a piece of music in such a way that the hearing is a relating to God involves two other events of relatedness. These are, first, the relation of the sounds to one another and, second, a listener's relation to these aural relations. These two relations are fairly familiar, and they provide some light with which to look at the less familiar relatedness that comes about when my relation to Mozart's music is my relation to God. (For convenience, as well as honesty, the first person singular is used, but "my relation" is intended to mean "anyone's relation," without prescribing that it ought to be "everyone's relation.") Though this section takes up the three levels of relatedness successively, they occur simultaneously; listeners do not progress from one to another. Describing the three events includes some peculiar claims that need to be clarified:

- * Though there cannot be music without sounds, when there is music, the sounds as such, by relating to one another, disappear into the music.
- * Though I am distinct from the music, I relate to it internally, and as I do my core identity changes and grows.
- * Though the music is distinct from me and from the divine, hearing the music *is (tout court, without qualification)* my relation to God. The music as such becomes inaudible, though it does so only by being audible.

(1) Music is “Sounded Relations”

There cannot be music without sounds, but when there is music, the sounds, by relating to one another, disappear into the music.

Sounds as such are not music. What *is* music are sounds-in-relation to one another. It is not either sounds abstracted from relationships or imagined relationships that are not actually sounded. Examples of sounded relationships are: making melodic and harmonic combinations, projecting contrasts, generating and resolving tensions, moving toward and away from climaxes, moving into and out of ambiguities, and referring to sounds-in-relation heard previously in the same or another piece or to feelings, ideas or memories about non-musical events.

The sounds and the relationships are co-temporal, not consecutive. Otherwise, music does not happen. Listeners do not first hear sounds and afterwards apply some sort of intellectual operation to relate them to one another. When a melody unfolds, one does not first hear discrete sounds and afterwards construct a melody out of them; the melody is more immediate than are its individual tones. Sensing that a climax is coming is more basic than hearing and comparing increasingly louder sounds.³

The relations among sounds that make them music are inaccessible to machines that digitalize or graph successive sound waves. In order to hear relations instead of a series of discrete sounds, I have to be able to recollect and anticipate, bringing the remembered past and the expected future to bear on the present, continuously revising my view of what was significant in the past and what is likely in the future. Only advanced animals can synthesize remembering and expecting. While every human does it somewhat differently with respect to a given piece of music, people’s hearings overlap significantly. Sounded relations—music—occur

³ The point parallels Martin Heidegger’s comment that when one hears the honk of a car’s horn, one hears a car honking its horn; one does not first hear a particular sound and then infer the presence of a nearby car. *Being and Time*, tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, 1962) sections 13 and 31.

in every culture and invariably involve these aspects of temporality, although the kind of thing that is remembered or expected varies hugely from time to time and place to place.⁴

(2) Relating to Music, I Become a New I

Though I am distinct from the music, I relate to it internally, and as I do my core identity changes and grows.

If I say, “All of me is related to the ‘Kyrie,’” my comment brings up a second level of relatedness. The totality of my self turns into something different in this relation. This way of talking has some affinities with modes of thought and turns of phrase that are found in Martin Buber’s classic book, *I and Thou*.⁵ Going back and forth between *I and Thou* and my hearing of Mozart’s Mass allows parallels between the two to clarify and deepen each other. Maintaining a higher level of generality than my hearing of music, Buber provides a wider context in which to understand my concerns, while my hearing of the Mozart offers that enhancement of Buber that can come with a concrete example of his thinking. Specifically, the thorny statement, “Relating to the music, I become a new I,” is a concrete example of Buber’s equally thorny “relation.”

Buber begins with his famous statement that there are two primary words: *I-Thou* and *I-It*. In one respect, the two words are alike: they both necessarily involve an *I*. Neither the *Thou* nor the *It* exists apart from an *I*; conversely, “[t]here is no *I* taken in itself,”⁶ for directly or implicitly, *Thou* or *It* is always present to an

⁴ The invariability holds even when the succession of sounds is deliberately constructed to frustrate recollection and anticipation. For here the sounds stand in explicit and intended contrast to a recollection of a succession of sounds that were heard as sounding relationships. See Leonard B. Meyer, *Music, Arts and Ideas* (Chicago, 1967), ch. 5.

⁵ Buber’s commentary on I-Thou is seldom applied to music. A rare example is Jon Michael Spencer, who applies the I-Thou terminology, as well as the anthropological concepts of Victor Turner and the theology of Bruce Reed, to Holiness-Pentecostal music in the chapter, “Isochronisms of Antistructure” in his book, *Praise and Protest* (Minneapolis, 1995).

⁶ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, tr. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York, 1958), p. 4.

I. But the *I* of I-Thou is abysmally unlike the *I* of I-It. Buber uses several tactics for developing this difference. Probably the most famous and perhaps the most helpful of these is the contrast he draws between “relation” and “experience.” I-It is always a matter of experience, and it is always a thing that is experienced, in some mode or another (perceiving, willing, thinking, imagining, remembering). When I-Thou is spoken, there is no experience, and neither the *I* nor the *Thou* is a thing. There is only relation. The speaker “takes his stand in relation.”

Quotidian language often describes every experience as a relationship and every relationship as an experience. Regardless of terminology, there is a deep difference between the connection of two entities both of which are internally and essentially modified by the connection and the connection of two entities in which neither entity is affected more than superficially, and one of them may not be affected at all. When I enter into what Buber calls a “relation,” what it is to be me changes by the very fact of encountering a *Thou* (once again: neither the *I* nor the *Thou* exists outside the relation). When I have an “experience,” I own more for having had the experience, but am essentially the same person before and after the event. That relating to Mozart’s “Kyrie” means becoming something new corresponds importantly to Buber’s sense of “relation.”

I-Thou is not “based on” I-It. It is not as though a child (for example) first sees a flower thing, and then tries to put him- or herself “in relation with it. ... [T]he effort to establish relation comes first.”⁷ The primacy, in hearing music, of sounded relations over the sounds as such, the primacy of my relation to the sounded relations over the sounded relations as such, and, in my hearing of Mozart’s “Kyrie,” the primacy of relating to God over relating to the sounded relations are specific examples of what Buber envisions.

The I-It experience is secondary. It happens when *I* loses *Thou*. Both terms become things.⁸ When that happens, “individuality makes its appearance.”⁹ For

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Buber, individuality is a matter of being similar to and different from other individual entities. Comparison and contrast are fundamentally other than relation, and individuals are fundamentally other than persons: “A person makes his appearance by entering into relation with other persons.” The *I* of I-Thou is only itself; its similarity to other persons is only secondarily relevant to the relation.

The relation of *I* to *Thou* is easiest to discern in mutual relations among humans, in which neither person is a bundle of qualities, a thing. Nature or a work of art, however, can also be a *Thou* who addresses and is addressed by a person. A person can relate to works of art instead of experiencing them. Obviously, this addressing is not a matter of conventional words. One’s “words” to art do not cross “the threshold of speech.”¹⁰ The statement, “All of me is related to the music,” does not address Mozart’s music; instead it reports on the music addressing me. Likewise, many of us say “Thou” to spiritual beings, and “Thou” speaks to us, but here too “Thou” is not spoken to and does not speak with lips nor is heard with physical ears.

Relation does not take place in pre-existing time or space, where experiences take place. The I-Thou relation creates its own time and place, which are not amenable to observing or perceiving. Creating time and space requires that “Thou” be spoken with the whole being. “It” can never be spoken with the whole being. Works of art spring up when one creates a form out of one’s whole being so that one is addressing the form as *Thou*, and the form can then address hearers as *Thou*. The process, however, is always chancy. Not everyone who sees a work of art hears a *Thou* spoken to her or him; some will treat it as a thing with which they have an aesthetic (or illustrative or edifying or entertaining) experience. One who has heard *Thou* cannot expect always to encounter *Thou* when the work is present. The risk of lapsing into I-It never goes away.¹¹

A person in relation to “Kyrie,” thereby becoming a new person, is analogous to sounds in relation to each other. Just as sounds become music in being related

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

to one another, so I become the particular person I am, somewhat different from who I was, in being related to (and not “experiencing”) the sounded relations. Just as one does not hear sounds and then construct relations out of the sounds, so also I do not first hear the sounded relationships that constitute the “Kyrie,” and then intellectually relate them to myself. Most importantly, being in relation to “Kyrie,” I do not hear sounded relationships as such, for I hear them already in relation to myself, which makes me a new self. Just as isolated sounds disappear in favor of sounded relations, so I as an entity outside the music disappear, and a new I comes into being.

The former subject literally ceases to exist, though it can be remembered and conceptualized. Unlike an unchanging Platonic soul that undergoes various experiences, which may alter superficial characteristics, while what is basic to it does not change, a new new I comes into being each time I listen again. Neither I nor the hearing is static, for each successive hearing is a fresh event, modified both by the previous hearing and by what has happened to me between hearings. The change is utterly unlike the observable change undergone by a steel rod (or my own body, for that matter) when it is warmed a few degrees. Even if the change is, by external standards, negligible, the relation is as crisp as if it had never happened before.

The heard music is not any more static than I am. That to which I am related is what it turns into as it relates to me.¹² The “music” that I become is not the sounded relations in isolation from me, but what they are in addressing me as one who has particular listening skills developed in previous hearing relations. I change as I relate to that which likewise changes on relating to me.

¹² The relation can be fresh and new even if every musical relation is unchanged. However, it also makes sense to say that the music changes as I change. For example, in the first hearing of “Christe,” the climax was stronger than in the climax to the first “Kyrie.” In the next hearing, knowing the full strength of the coming “Christe” climax freed me to appreciate the strength of the first “Kyrie” climax. While one could say that that this difference was owed to the fact my attention was working differently the second time, my attention would not make a difference if the new possibility were not also in the music.

(3) Hearing the Mass Is My Relation to God

Though the music is distinct from me and from the divine, hearing the music is (tout court and without qualification) my relation to the divine. The music as such becomes inaudible, though it does so only by being audible.

Thinking about me in relation to the sounds-in-relation is preparatory to thinking about what I mean by “hearing Mozart’s Mass is my relation to God.”

This turn of phrase does not occur in the literature of listening to sacred music. While permutations of the ideas that music is sounded relationships and that hearing is a transaction between listener and sounds in relation are fairly commonplace in musical aesthetics,¹³ the statement, “to relate to Mozart’s ‘Kyrie’ is to relate to God,” does not have a precedent.

That it is radical as well it is can be felt by contrasting it to some familiar, standard approaches to sacred music or to hearing music (whether sacred or not) as a moment in spiritual life. These fall into two categories. They are not mutually exclusive; listeners can approach the same piece in different ways. One approach is to see a piece of sacred music as a means of deepening theological understanding either by presupposing and thus reinforcing a presupposition that listeners had before hearing the music or by presenting what the heard theology” that is uniquely projected by the effect that the musical relations have on the text’s images.

The other approach has more to do with the devotional aspect of sacred music. It focuses on the power of music to link worshipers with God by arousing holy feelings, evoking God’s presence, praising God, confessing sin, reconfirming trust in the Almighty, or linking worshipers with one another by expressing solidarity with other Christians or oppressed people. It is often said of this approach

¹³ See Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago, 1956) and “Some Comments on Value and Greatness in Music” in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. xvii (June, 1959). Also, Monroe Beardsley, “Understanding Music,” in Kingsley Price, ed., *On Criticizing Music: Five Philosophical Perspectives* (Baltimore, 1981) and Theodor Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley, 2002), p. 113.

that sacred music is to the affective component of religious experience what theology is to the cognitive component.¹⁴

Supposing that music is like a boat that carries one into the presence of God may aptly describe some listenings to sacred music, but it differs in some important ways from “hearing the Mass is relating to God.” The idea that sacred music “expresses” or “mediates” God’s presence or is a “vehicle” for presenting, for example, God’s holiness generally assumes that listeners have a knowledge of holiness before hearing the music, and that after hearing it they make a connection between the music and their prior knowledge, and their knowledge deepens. The phases are consecutive, not co-temporal; in the hearing that is a relating to God, the hearing and the relating are co-temporal.

In addition, talk using “vehicle” language usually supposes that listening involves a static subject responding to an unchanging external reality, being, for example, emotionally or spiritually moved by a presentation of an awesome, wrathful, or forgiving deity. Listening is, then, a “spiritual experience” in which emotional changes may occur, but the subject of the experience is not essentially modified. “Experiencing Mozart’s Mass” does not adequately convey that in relating to the sounded relations, which is my relation to God, I change at the deepest level and that this change is essential and not incidental to the relation.

That “relation,” unlike “experience,” involves mutuality and that both members of the relation are changed by being related is relevant at this point. Most astonishing from the point of view of I-It, this mutuality means that both humans and the divine “need” each other. In I-It religious “experience,” the divine needs humans to shore itself up in face of its own limits and insecurities, and humans

¹⁴ Protestant writers typically assume rather than argue that sacred music serves either as theological deepening or as a response to God or both. Other approaches are not considered. See, for example: Frank Burch Brown, ed., *Handbook of Religion and the Arts* (Oxford, 2012), Harold Best, *Music through the Eyes of Faith* (New York, 1993); Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge, 2000); Don E. Saliers, *Music and Theology* (Nashville, TN, 2007); Brian D. Walrath, Robert H. Woods, eds., *The Message in the Music. Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship* (Nashville, TN, 2007). Catholic theologians link sacred music to the liturgy, to which it is subservient and whose objectives are its objectives. Just the same, the nature and purpose of sacred music comes down to theological deepening and response to God. See Pope Pius X, *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903), Section I: General Principles.

need divine help against the vicissitudes of gods, nature, and other humans. But with the I-Thou, God “needs” the human even though the divine being is not incomplete or insecure. God longs to be with each particular human in somewhat the same way a person longs for—needs—the presence, not of a friend-in-general, but of a particular person who created the longing and therefore the need. If it were not for the particular person, the need would not exist. It is precisely because God needs each human person in this sense that human life is “meaningful in the face of every occasion for despair.”¹⁵ Buber’s sensitivity to the mutuality of needing fits with the mutuality of delight that occurs when hearing Mozart’s “Laudamus te” is my relation to God.¹⁶

Ruling out “experience” of the divine or any connection with God that does not involve mutuality, I am left with the statement that I am relating to God and not, after all, to the sounded relations. My relation to God is direct, not “through” or “mediated by” the music. Just as music listeners hear sounds, yet do not, for they are in fact related to the sounds-in-relation, so I do not first hear related sounds and then construct a relation to God out of them or through them. Still, the sounding relations need to be present in order that I relate to God without mediation. Just as sounds need to be present for there to be sounded relations, so “Kyrie” has to be audible in order to be inaudible—that is, to be my relation to God. The relation does not happen without the sounds in relation, but if the divine-human relationship is taking place, it, and not the music, is the content of the event. By contrast, when music expresses the divine or a human-divine relation or serves as a means of conveying divine presence, the music maintains its presence as music; it does not become inaudible. Oddly, the music itself is more important when it becomes inaudible as such, precisely because the sounds-in-relation pass completely into the relating to God.

¹⁵ “We take part in creation, meet the Creator, reach out to Him, helpers and companions,” *op. cit.*, p. 82.

¹⁶ See pp. 31-32 below.

A slightly different way to elaborate “My hearing is my relating to God” is to notice that I am hearing the divine itself, not in the sense of hearing audible words spoken by God but in the sense that God is addressing me at least as directly and non-mediatedly as would be the case if the divine spoke physically audible words. The event of hearing is the event of the (physically inaudible) Word of God addressing me. Only by an act of abstraction can I pull myself out of that relationship to hear the sounding relations as such, and by a further act of abstraction to hear the isolated sounds or to see myself in isolation—out of relation with the sounded relations or with the deity. Only by an act of abstraction working in the opposite direction would I say that the divine presence supplants my self-relation, for then too there would be no relation and no mutuality between God and me.

From the I-It standpoint, relationship in this heavy sense is impossible. When I think I am related to a *Thou*, but resist saying that something exterior is acting on me, then, from the I-It viewpoint, the I-Thou can only be the *I* projecting a *Thou* from within the self—a *Thou* that has no reality independent of the *I*. For some Jewish theologians, Buber’s insistence that the divine *Thou* is what it is in relation to a human *I* is just such a projection—a “dangerous glorification of subjective feeling at the expense of the objective content of actions.”¹⁷ In spite of this criticism, it is clear that, although he is working at the edges of what words can do, he is trying to affirm that subjective feeling and objective reality are equally primary in the human-divine relation:

He who takes his stand in relation shares in a ... being that neither merely belongs to him nor merely lies outside him.¹⁸

God is other than the listener, but not other in the way that objects are. The divine is within the listener, but not in the way that a subject’s feelings and

¹⁷ Maurice S. Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (Chicago, 1955), ch. 26, argues that this criticism “reveals a total misunderstanding of Buber’s philosophy of dialogue which is ... a narrow ridge between the abysses of objectivism on the one side and subjectivism on the other.”

¹⁸ Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

thoughts are. Buber and I are misunderstood if the language of experiencing things as external and feelings as internal explains us. Likewise, language that illumines relation cannot possibly be acceptable from the point of view of experience, knowledge, individuality, and I-It. To those who say that sacred music “expresses” God or divine holiness or mercy, Buber challenges, “God is the Being that is directly, most nearly, and lastingly, over against us, that may properly only be addressed, not expressed.”¹⁹

In spite of Buber’s challenge, the choice of “expression” or “mediator” language in reports on listening to the Mozart C Minor Mass may not necessarily signal the absence of an I-Thou relation, though it may signal a spirituality that is different from the I-Thou event that takes place in my hearing the Mass. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to compare the two spiritualities exhaustively, and it lies to one side of its purpose to attempt criteria of authentic spirituality, a preliminary comment might be that while in my case the hearing itself is the relation to God, in the other cases the relation comes before and is confirmed by hearing the music. Neither spirituality is necessarily more intense or spontaneous than the other.

An alternative preliminary comment is that the difference in language is only that and does not signal a difference in the event. People using “vehicle” language may find that a “vehicle” or “medium” is necessary for a divine-human I-Thou, and while the music does not become inaudible, its importance is secondary to what it expresses. These people may say that “vehicle” and “medium” metaphors intend more or less the same as what relational language intends.

They may prefer their metaphors over my way of talking because theirs seem less irrational. Perhaps, however, the difference is not the degree of irrationality, but the choice of where to locate it. Their metaphors are based on human-human relations, and using them suggests that a finite entity might “carry” another finite entity into the presence of the infinite, as though something other than God could carry God into the life of a finite creature. It may be that the difference between

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

talking of a “mediator” (a finite object impossibly serving as a divine-human interface) and my way of talking is not a difference in the event itself, but a difference in strategy—a difference in where to locate the problems one invariably encounters in trying to characterize it.

Or it may be that the difference has to do with deciding where to take one’s risks and judging which risks may pay off. Confirming that the music becomes inaudible when it is audible in my way of hearing it confirms that my surrender, as Paul Tillich would say, is total because it is direct and the divine self-giving is likewise direct and thus complete.²⁰ This directness and completeness is characterized by the simultaneity of presence and disappearance, of the audible and inaudible. By avoiding words that might compromise the directness of the relation, in which nothing is between God and me, such language does justice to the divine self-giving as well as my commitment.

At the same time, my turns of phrase risk sliding into idolatry and subjectivism because they can be pushed in a way that might lose the distinctiveness of the two entities so related. Language about music as an “expression” of divine reality or an expression of the listener as well as language of a “vehicle” maintains the distinctiveness and lowers the chance of idolatry, but risks losing the directness. This risk is real whether the relational event is in fact quite different from mine or if the events are quite similar, and the difference is only that different language is preferred for pointing toward them.

The New Testament provides additional possible examples of this directness. The Fourth Gospel (20:8) reports that the Beloved Disciple, on entering the empty tomb on Easter morning, “saw and believed.” For a Buber, the writer is not suggesting that the disciple experienced the empty tomb and from that experience inferred that Jesus had been resurrected. Seeing was already believing; it was seeing of a certain kind, quite different from observing with whatever degree of scientific scruple. The seeing was itself a relating to the Risen Lord; it was seeing

²⁰ Rejecting the words “object” and “experience” for getting at matters of religious faith, Tillich says that what is Ultimate “can be found only in acts of surrender and participation,” *Systematic Theology*, vol. I (Chicago, 1951), pp. 12, 44.

what was invisible, though it did not happen without seeing what was visible, and it did not happen without what was visible falling out of sight. The parallel to my hearing is obvious and powerful.

In Karl Barth's writings too one finds correspondences to what happens when a listener's hearing becomes a relation to God. For example, Barth stresses that when the Word of God addresses a person, what happens is inward, as in a relation, not epiphenomenal, as in an experience: "The Word of God ... binds itself to man who hears it in a way which is not just incidental, external or partial, but essential, internal and absolute."²¹

Another example is found in his writings on the Holy Spirit, where Barth coins the term "revealedness" to refer to the effect of God's self-revelation, which is that "God reveals *Himself*."²² Revealedness has to do with the communion of one's spirit with the Spirit of Jesus and of God. Revealedness is not real, he says, unless it takes on concrete form, such as one of the Spiritual gifts, but the form itself is not the revealedness. The revealedness, however, cannot be real without the form any more than the music can become inaudible without being audible. The form of revealedness is subject to all the human and natural forces that the various sciences describe, but, like the beauty of God's creation, the revealedness—the human spirit-divine Spirit relation—slips through the net of these descriptions.²³

The gifts of the Spirit do not "express" the presence of the Spirit; they are not signs of the presence of the Spirit; they *are* the presence of the Spirit, though the Spirit is also independent of them and though they, as humanly visible characteristics, are subject to psychological and sociological analysis and are to that extent intelligible independently of the Spirit. In order to sustain the priority of grace in the human-God encounter, Barth would insist that the human act of creating is not a reaching toward God or "expressing" God, but is a gift of the Spirit. For, in

²¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, tr. G.W. Bromiley, vol. IV/3 (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 154.

²² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, tr. G.T. Thomson, vol. I/1 (Edinburgh, 1936, 1963), p. 340.

²³ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, 361, 416. See also Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basics* (Hoboken, NJ, second edition, 2007), p. 103.

Barthian terms, the effects of God's revelation *are* the presence of God, though the forms of the effects are not themselves divine.

That my relationship with the related sounds is an encounter with God, and thus an event of God's revealedness, fits with the fact that, in the end, the relation is more "our" than "my," for it is a chorus that is singing "Kyrie eleison" ("Lord, have mercy)." It is the plea of a group, and I am in the group. It is "we" who are the music, and the "we" is important because the "we" can also include Mozart, a person working out a Spiritual gift, hence himself being the presence of the Spirit at the same time that he is also a horny guy with a rude laugh. The soprano's virtuoso skills displayed in the "Christe eleison" are likewise a Spiritual gift. From the point of view of non-religious hearing, as well as hearings in which Mozart's music "expresses" the divine, this further association is unwarranted. But it fits with my spirituality and the sense that we—Mozart and I and all other believers—are related to God when we are relating to the music.

What I have received from Mozart and the soprano I have in fact received from God, but only as I have received it from them. What they have done for me they have done for God. Corresponding to Jesus's parable of the sheep and goats, what the musicians have done for even the least of Jesus's brothers, such as me, they have done for Jesus. But they really did do it for me, and not just for Jesus, and they really did do it for Jesus, not just for me. The sounding relations (like doing something for me) really do matter, but they do so by turning into the relationship with God (like doing something for Jesus) and becoming inaudible.²⁴

²⁴ There are ways of reading the parable that render this analogy inoperative. For example, Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, tr. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York, 1960), p. 150. See also p. 90 as well as pp. 5-7n, 25-26, 78.

2. Being Related to Mozart's Mass: Three Modes of Being with God

The particular relation to God changes as the Mass goes along, for hearing each movement is a somewhat different relation to God. This section takes up three of these movements and details the specific relation with God that relating to each movement becomes.

Here is an synoptic overview: Hearing the first section, "Kyrie," is my "being-forgiven relation with God." In this relation, I am, oddly, simultaneously separated from and reconciled to God. Hearing the "Laudamus te" section is a "praising relation to God." Salient to this relation is that in it spending energy in praise of God, oddly, generates still more energy because delighting in God delights God, which in turn heightens human delight. Hearing the "Qui tollis" section is a relation to Christ in which, oddly, my addressing Christ is identical with Christ's addressing me; the overlapping makes it possible for the seriousness of sin to be central to the relation without undermining the reality of forgiveness, and for the reality of Christ's mercy to be likewise constitutive without undermining the gravity of sin.

(1) Being Related to the "Kyrie": Knowing Forgiveness

On moving into the specifics of my relation with the interrelated sounds of "Kyrie," I notice a dark side. I hear the impending judgment of God, and my relation to the deity is that of separation. But also and at the same time my hearing is a healing, so the relation is both positive and negative. When our hearing is our relation to God, the hearing becomes simultaneously our separation from God and the healing of that separation. The offense to rationality is compounded.

Buber elaborates the phenomenon of simultaneous separation and healing. For him, the primary meaning of "sin" is that I-Thou has lapsed into I-It: the deity has become an entity that must be appeased or manipulated or outguessed or sidestepped with the help of experts in divine control (such as priests, shamans,

wizards²⁵), and the human has also been objectified, reduced to a slave or plaything of the gods. In every case, he says, the lapse into sin means that combination (relation) has been displaced by separation (experience), and this separation is precisely the shadow on the relation that is my hearing of “Kyrie.” But one cannot know the separation as such if the primary word being spoken is I-It. Only an *I* who is already hearing the divine *Thou* addressing an *I* can know of the separation. Knowing separation without reconciliation comes from experiencing an *It*. No way out of the separation is possible from the side of I-It. The miracle of I-Thou may, of course, break in at any time.

Insofar as the music leads or embodies a person’s response to the sacred, it may actually occasion separation. Instead of being addressed as a *Thou* first of all by God and secondarily by the relationships inhering in the music, the one who experiences and responds may be affected by something exterior, and the “stronger the response the more strongly does it bind up the *Thou* and banish it to be an object.”²⁶ One for whom hearing the music is relating to God would never talk about having a “musical experience” or a “religious experience.”

In *Church Dogmatics*, Barth takes on the same paradox that is entailed in reporting that hearing “Kyrie” is simultaneously a negative and a positive relation. For him, the nature of reconciliation is such that a paradox necessarily appears and is necessarily only apparent. Healing is possible only if one is aware of the separation, and in a real sense the awareness of the need for healing is already a reconciliation, yet the sense of need for healing is still real, and has to be if reconciliation is to be real. “We can cry for God’s mercy and ... forgiveness only when we know that although we are lost God has accepted us and redeemed us. ... Only from the deep quiet of the knowledge that grace is given does there follow the genuine disquiet of the knowledge that we need it, and not *vice versa*.”²⁷

²⁵ “Magic desires to obtain its effects without entering into relation,” Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. ed. G.W. Bromily and T.F. Torrance, tr. T.H.L. Parker, vol. II/2 (Edinburgh, 1957), p. 769.

For Barth, denying the gravity of separation, even though it has been overcome, can be as disastrous as suppressing reconciliation. Just the same, if hearing “Kyrie” is a relating to God, if hearing it is addressing and being addressed by an *I*, then reconciliation is more fundamental than separation. Appropriately, the “Christe” section sets aside both the memory of past separation and the menace of future separation. Without ending, the march toward judgment goes underground. The negative—separation from God—disappears; only the positive, affirming relation with the Lord is left. Awareness of the rift and the malaise is so completely absent that I am not even aware of having been healed. I am simply related to Christ, who is named as the specific form of relation with God.

The roots of the co-presence of separation and healing in the God-human relation go deep into the Judeo-Christian past. There are moments when the psalmist (Psalm 119:141-44, 153-54) is at once of no account, yet elevated in knowing the truth of divine law; he is oppressed, but also continually delighted. Psalm 102 cries from the heart, “I am stricken, withered like grass; ...In thy wrath and fury thou has taken me up and flung me aside.” Yet the same psalmist can immediately say with equal strength, “The Lord ... surveys the earth to ... set free men who are under sentence of death; so shall the Lord’s name be on men’s lips in Zion.” Psalms 55 and 61 offer further examples. At times, the psalmists know separation from God and the presence of God as moments of a narrative, but at other times these are known not in succession, but simultaneously, each making sense only in the presence of the other. Like Barth, such psalmists are simultaneously on both sides of the line between separation and healing without attenuating the reality of the line.

Some features of the music that would be salient in almost any hearing of the “Kyrie” bear out the co-presence of separation and healing. The form is ABA’ (“Kyrie”—“Christe”—“Kyrie”). The contrast of A to B is the contrast between a marchlike, goal-directed section and a stable, static section. The “Kyrie” march carries its goal within itself and is therefore (and oddly!) already where it is heading. The whence and whither of the march are not distinct from the march itself;

the rift and the healing of the rift are both within the march itself. The seriousness of impending judgment is joined to certainty that the prayer for mercy is answered. The “Christe,” in which the goal has fully arrived and forward motion is minimal, seals the certainty.

Then something extraordinary happens, and it may be this striking event more than any other single musical gesture in “Kyrie” that prompts me to hear the simultaneity of a rift and the healing of the rift. The “Kyrie” returns. The “Kyrie” text comes back, and with it the same goal-directed musical motifs of the first “Kyrie.” The reappearance of the A section begins, however, using the tonal center of the “Christe,” and heads toward a goal, namely, the re-establishment of the tonal center of the first “Kyrie.” This goal is not achieved until fifteen bars later, and in that decisively important way A' differs from its prototype. Moving the tonal center from that of “Christe” to that of “Kyrie,” these fifteen bars are transitional; but, having the motifs of the opening, they carry in themselves that to which they are transitioning. The passage moves toward where it already is, an event that also occurred in the opening “Kyrie,” but very differently.

(2) Being Related to “Laudamus Te”: Praising God

On hearing the virtuoso soprano solo, “Laudamus te,” my relation to God is that of highly energetic praise, and miraculously discovering that the spending itself generates more energy than is spent. Evidently spending “spiritual energy” is different from spending physical energy at exactly this point; the opposite of entropy happens with the transfer of spiritual energy.

In musical terms, the phenomenon has to do with events on various structural levels. On the lowest level, it has to do with the power of the leap. The singer’s upward skips of a wide interval (for “Lau-” and “-da-”) generate a strong sense of forward mobility. Forward-pressing energy builds as the soprano sustains “-da-” while the orchestra presses forward with the mounting pressure of repeated eighth

notes. Then energy is spent by leaping upward again (still on “-da-”), and this leap in turn generates even more energy.

On the next higher level, the phrase structure confirms this phenomenon. The soprano’s first phrase is eleven bars. Its ending is mobile: it presses forward, and its energy summons an answering phrase. The answering phrase overbalances its summons. It spends all the energy given it by the opening phrase, but keeps extending and re-energizing itself and does not stop doing so for twenty-nine bars. These two phrases recur after a middle section, and in the reprise the answering phrase is even longer. While it is not unusual for an answering phrase to overbalance its summoning phrase in classic-period music, the extent of the apparently unstoppable exuberance in Mozart’s answering phrases is out of the ordinary.

On the highest level (an ABA' structure), three features stand out. First, there is no difference between the texts and only a minimal difference in musical motif between the A sections and the B section that comes between them. Second, while the B section has a different tonal center (C instead of F), four of its fifteen measures dwell on the subdominant of C (which is F). Consequently, the harmonic contrast is also minimal. Third is Mozart’s handling of the return, which in ABA' movements is usually, though not always, a release of the tension that has been building and a moment when accumulated energy is spent. Mozart avoids that moment: the soprano begins the A' section begins two bars before the orchestra begins its reprise.

The outcome of these three features is to minimize the alternation of tension and resolution. Moments when previously built energy would have been spent are continuously covered over, and there are neither climaxes nor moments of rest. Instead, both building and expending energy are continuous. One could equally accurately say that every moment is a moment of climax and the climaxes serve not to release energy but to empower spirals to new heights.

So if my relation to the music’s internal relations is my relation with God, then a most salient characteristic of that relationship is the power inhering in it to spend energy without depleting it, but rather in fact to increase it. According to

the text, the energy is spent in praising God. According to the nature of the music, praising God is delightful, and delighting in God is praising God. That is, when hearing this music is my praise relation to God, the hearing *is* the taking of delight in God, and conversely delighting in God praises God. Praising God and delighting in God coincide.²⁸ As the hearing continues, and musical climaxes spiral to new heights and relating to these spirals is my relation to God, my delight and my praise more and more clearly surpass the previous praise and delight.

It is important that the source of this continuous expansion of energy is not me—at least not the person I was before the music began. Instead, the source is the very act of praising God. That is, the new energy comes from this particular relation, from who I become in this relation, being in the presence of God, and from who God becomes, being in my presence, hearing the praise and this hearing being the deity's relating to me. God's relation to me then further increases my delight. In sum, the spiral of musical relations in which spending energy increases it becomes my relation to God, which likewise spirals upward as taking delight in God intertwines God's taking delight in me.

That the deity must also be receiving delight and joy is implicit in Barth's insistence that central to the loving of the divine freedom is God's choice "not just to exist, but to co-exist."²⁹ The co-existing human has rights, honor and dignity.³⁰ Though they may well be different in degree and kind from those pertaining to divine glory, they must be real for there to be a mutual divine-human relationship, and not appeasement, manipulation and humiliation on the human side and either indifference (as with Aristotle's concept of the Unmoved Mover) or hunger (as with some Maya deities whose satisfaction requires human blood) on the divine side.

²⁸ Similarly, Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV/3, p. 248, stresses that the deep seriousness of thanksgiving and obedience to God the Reconciler are demonstrated in the fact that they are done "with gaiety."

²⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G.W. Bromily and T.F. Torrance, tr. T.H.L. Parker *et al.*, vol. II/2 (Edinburgh, 1957), pp. 666-67.

³⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. ed. G.W. Bromily and T. F. Torrance, tr. A.T. MacKay *et. al.*, vol III/4 (Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 648-49.

Barth is famous for emphasizing the primacy of grace in every phase of the divine-human relation. According to some of his critics, the heavily stressed divine Yes overwhelms and undermines the human subject and reduces the person to a thing. If valid, this critique would mean that instead of an I-Thou relation the event of grace that Barth describes is actually an I-It experience. While Buber is accused of losing the pole of God's otherness, and therewith the reality of I-Thou, Barth is accused of losing the other pole, namely human subjectness. This critique, like the one of Buber, comes from a misunderstanding. Barth's repeated stress on divine-human co-existence and mutuality suggest that he, like Buber, intends to walk the razor's edge between objectivism and subjectivism. These passages correspond to the upward spiraling delight in the divine-human relation that comes with and supplants my musical relation to "Laudamus te." As a specific instance of that divine-human reciprocity which Buber and Barth variously attempt to grasp, my hearing makes more believable that the simultaneity of over-againstness and internalization, salient to Buber's and Barth's descriptions, really does happen.³¹

**(3) Being Related to "Qui Tollis":
Addressing Christ / Christ Addressing Me**

When hearing Mozart's "Qui tollis peccata mundi" becomes my relation to God, Christ and I are addressing one another. I acknowledge to Christ that my sin is deadly serious and plead that it be taken away. Christ offers me forgiveness and the certainty that the forgiveness is being given. My prayer for and his bestowal of mercy do not constitute a transaction or negotiation, but a relation. Christ is not accusing me (there is no effort to create a sense of sinfulness that is not already present), and I am not trying to change Christ's attitude toward me through the

³¹ See also Nicolas Berdyaev (*The Destiny of Man* [London, 1937], pp. 33-40) and Charles Hartshorne (*The Logic of Perfection*. [Lasalle, IL, 1962], p. 269.

sincerity of my praying (the prayers do not evoke a response from Christ that is not already happening).

Thus the content of the relation that the hearing becomes is the awareness, shared by Christ and me, of the magnitude of sinfulness and of the certainty of forgiveness. Facing the seriousness of sin does not create a sense that it cannot be cured, and the certainty that it can be cured does not amount to a *de facto* slackening in the gravity of sin.

An important component of this sharing is another simultaneity. On the one hand, in this relation sin is something that is done by the person who I most basically am; it is not something superficial like a casual mistake or misunderstanding or temporary lapse of attention; adverse circumstances do not excuse it. I own my sin. On the other hand, owning the sin does not mean that it modifies who I am in the way my relation to God does. Being sinful is being false to myself, though it is I myself who bring about this falseness. The falseness is a self-alienation as well as a divine-human alienation. Owning my sin, I know that I need Christ's loving mercy; knowing that the sin is false to myself in my relation to Christ, I know my entreaty is successful.

Certain aspects of the hearing are obvious aspects of this relation with Christ. The sustained sounds in the chorus as well as the slow tread of the bass line with its jagged rhythm, relentlessly marching from beginning to end, would put almost any listener in touch with something that is uncommonly solemn. Motion by half-steps, ubiquitous in the bass line and in the choral parts setting "miserere" and "dona nobis pacem," add to the intense seriousness of the music.

Important as are these features in hearing solemnity in "Qui tollis," the intertwining of five aspects of the movement's structure are more vital to my relation to Christ. These aspects are: (1) the double chorus and the particular use Mozart makes of it; (2) the division of the movement into three sections and the nature of their differences; (3) the absence of harmonic closure at the points of articulation between sections; (4) the contrast between the choral and the orchestral parts; and (5) the division of each section into two subsections.

These five components intertwine one another in subtle, complex ways and articulate a fairly straightforward organization, and at the same time strangely overwhelm it. Any sense that the movement might be a composite process of moving section by section from a beginning through tensions and resolutions to an ending is overwhelmed by the sense that there is a single gesture, comprising a single juxtaposition, which is equally present from beginning to end and which is generated and shaped by the interrelations of these five aspects.

This all-important juxtaposition is the layering of two temporalities. One is put forward by the instrumental parts. It is powerfully future-directed. The clarity of the motion's goal brightens and dims during the movement, but the pressure of simply moving forward is always strong. The other temporality, put forward by the upper choral parts, is one in which coming events are expected, but are not expected to alter the meaning of the present; consequently the fact that there is a future does not bear on the fullness of the present. There are dissonances and tensions, but they are resolved more or less immediately, and the resolutions are so fully implicit within the tensions that they involve very little forward-directedness. The next paragraphs describe the layering of temporalities in terms of the five organizational aspects that give rise to it.

The movement has three sections (overriding the text's suggestion of a two-section movement³²), all of which begin identically and use exactly the same motivic material. The points of division between the sections are marked partly by the divisions between phrases in the text, partly by the musical cadences, and partly by the articulation in each section of a sequence of tonal centers that is distinctive to that section. Each section is equally similar to and equally different from each of the other two sections. The two outside sections are not set against the middle section.

³² The text consists of two lines that balance each other nicely: "Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis, suscipe deprecationem nostram" ("you who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us and accept our entreaty") and "Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis" ("you who sit at the right hand of the Father, have compassion on us"). Mozart achieves the three-part structure by repeating "Qui tollis peccata mundi" before "suscipe ..." thereby making two sections out of the first line.

The articulations at the cadences are obscured. At both joints between sections (mm. 18-19 and 32-33), the first chorus begins the next section before the cadence is complete, and the doubly dotted rhythm of the perpetually moving bass line keeps going across the cadence. The weakening of articulation attenuates the distinctiveness of each section. Because the three sections are equally alike, there is neither progression from nor contrast of the first to the second sections; the sense of a return at the beginning of the third section is no stronger than at the beginning of the second section.

Consequently, the three sections are like three variations on an unstated theme (A-A'-A", and not, as might have been expected, ABA'). The demarcation and separation between two layers of sound—namely, between the orchestra and the upper vocal parts—the one marked by the inexorable tread of a jagged rhythm, the other by sustained, slowly changing sounds, stands out more than the demarcation into three sections. This fact is decisive for the musical meaning of the movement and for the human-God relation that hearing it becomes, as will become apparent shortly.

Cadential motion articulates each of the three sections into two subsections. However, the inexorable tread of the perpetually moving bass line again covers over the articulation, and there is no harmonic closure at divisions (mm. 15, 28, and 44) between the subsections of each section.

More important than the harmony and cadences for articulating the two subsections is an exchange between diatonic and chromatic motion at the points of articulation. During the first subsection of each section, the upper three choral parts move diatonically. Pitted against them is the predominantly half-step motion of the instrumental and choral basses. In each second subsection (“miserere,” “suscipe,” and “miserere,” respectively), it is the upper choral parts that move by half steps, while the basses linger on a single pitch for several beats.

The text alternates between addressing Christ (“You who take away the sins of the world;” “You who sit at the right hand of the Father”) and directing a prayer to Him (“have mercy on us”; “accept our plea”). These alternations corre-

spond to the divisions into subsections. To some extent they also correspond to the changes from diatonic to chromatic writing in the choruses. Since the half-step motion produces an overall sound that is dark and serious, one result of the alternation is that the prayers are darker, more freighted with uncertainty than is the aural image of the one to whom they are addressed. This alternation partly constitutes the relation to Christ in which the seriousness of the sin (which seems to be more acutely felt in the second subsection of all three sections) never undermines the certainty of forgiveness (which is more reassuringly felt in the first subsections), and the certainty of forgiveness never undermines the seriousness of sin.

The chromatic motion both in the basses and in the upper choral voices during each second subsection has the characteristic of moving forward, apparently toward a goal. Because all the steps are equal, however, one does not know where to expect the forward movement to stop. The diatonic motion (upper choral parts in the first subsection of each section) that is juxtaposed to the basses' half-step motion implies an ending point, but does so very gently and without any pressure to reach it. At the times when chromatic motion infects the choral parts, the uncertainty is soon removed; meanwhile, the orchestra lingers on a single pitch, gradually building pressure for a resolution. Consequently, there is continually, one way or another, a contrast between being driven to a particular or an undefined somewhere, and being still—moving, but not to a goal.

The treatment of the double chorus in juxtaposition to the basses' future-directed tread supports the joining of calm with pushing forward. There are several times when one chorus repeats what the other chorus has just done, the beginning of the second overlying the ending of the first. The effect is that each move forward is held back by a repetition of what has just happened. The changes of harmonies in the choral parts bring about the same effect, for they do not build tension nor create an expectation for a future culmination. I expect cadences, but I do not know what exactly to expect, for the endings could be either on the first or the fifth degree of the scale.

Over against this change without forward movement is the orchestral part. Thanks to the dotted rhythms, but also to its chromatic lines and the places where the orchestra harps on a single note again and again, the instrumental layer of sound is slowly, but continuously pushing forward. Its forward drive becomes so forceful that it overrides the cadences and problematizes the relevance of the cadences' division into sections.

The times when chromatic voice leading leaves the orchestra and infects the chorus provide a decisive clue to the meaning of the juxtaposed temporalities. Hearing these exchanges, one cannot make a simple correlation between the style of voice-leading and the kind of temporality involved in each of the two joined temporalities. Chromaticism is an important element, and the ease with which it can go back and forth between the two layers makes it hard to hear an antagonism between them. The continuous distinctiveness of the two layers is not a tension.

This characterization is confirmed when the movement ends with the layering unchanged. The movement does not end with a resolution. But it does not move toward one either. What is present at the beginning—the unproblematic joining of the two layers and the two temporalities—is unfolded in various ways, but not with increasing or decreasing intensity. It simply is. The movement has wholeness, but it is not that of a process in which a contrast leads to a resolution. Rather it is simply the ongoing joining of contrasting temporalities. The joining continuously overrides the structural elements that divide the movement into sections and subsections, and constitutes the wholeness. It is a sustained, as opposed to an achieved, wholeness.

To relate to this movement and for this relation to be one's relation to Christ is to be in a relation in which two temporalities prevail equally. While they may in other contexts be contradictory and incompatible, here the juxtaposition is unproblematic. From my side, the double temporality of the relation with Christ is the simultaneity of the future-directed plea for forgiveness for sins with the present fullness of having already received mercy, for I am related to Christ and this relation goes deeper into who I am than does the relation to my sins. From

Christ's side, the double temporality of the relation unfolds into the identity of the future-directed summons to accept mercy (in order to overcome the alienation brought on by my falseness to myself) and the present-fullness of the restored relationship. As Tillich might say, the total surrender on my part corresponds to the complete self-giving on Christ's part.

The movement's various threads come together in the juxtaposition of these temporalities. In terms of the future-directed temporality, sin is being taken with utmost seriousness by both Christ and me. In terms of the present-full temporality, the cure for sin is taken just as seriously. Being simultaneously but unproblematically related to Christ in both of these temporalities means that neither seriousness weakens the other. The full presence of mercy taking place along with the full presence of a cry for forgiveness, Christ and I are fully addressing one another. The relation that is this hearing is a prototypical instance of Buber's I-Thou.

This relation is, however, not the only one that can be constituted by hearing and becoming defined by a double temporality. The last chapter describes a similar interweaving of forward movement and motionlessness in the fifth movement of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*.³³ Relating to it is relating to and praising Jesus, whose eternity is an infinite fullness that does not preclude growth toward fulfillment. Partly because Mozart and Messiaen use different techniques to bring about comparable juxtapositions of temporalities, the relations to God that relating to each of them constitutes are complementary, but not identical.

³³ Pp. 88-92, 99, 107 below.

CHAPTER THREE

“Et Resurrexit”

from Bach’s Mass in B Minor.

Meditations on Discontinuous Continuity

“Now I know that Christ really has been raised from the dead. I know that the resurrection actually took place.”

In 1972 I heard Helmut Rilling conduct Bach’s B Minor Mass. When the “Et resurrexit” movement ended, the remark quoted above crossed my mind. When I realized what I was thinking, I was somewhat appalled and genuinely amazed. What did I mean? What *could* I mean? Was I saying that a piece of music validated the story of Christ’s resurrection? Was I simply reporting what happened to me, or was I implying that a piece of music might convey the actuality of Christ’s resurrection to others?

Ever since, I have been moved to sentences like these when I hear Bach’s resurrection music. I want to understand what I mean by such words. I want to understand why I want to say anything at all. Am I simply reporting to myself on my spiritual encounter with Christ? What exactly is the resurrection I hear when I hear and join into this music? Do my words about Bach’s music and the resurrection have implications for theological understanding? What meaning might my private ruminations have for the various people I deal with everyday, which include open-minded skeptics who want to know what one who believes in the res-

urrection is believing? What can I say to someone who wonders how music can have anything to do with accepting the actuality of a real-world event? If hearing Bach's resurrection music is my relation to the risen Christ, what exactly is that relation?

In this chapter, three meditations address three aspects of these questions. The first one analyses Bach's music and what it does to its texts. The goal is clarity about just what the resurrection is that I am suddenly embracing. To that end, the meditation dwells on the most salient aspects of the crucifixion music, in which one hears the utter finality and irreversibility of death, as well as those of the resurrection music, which announces a life that is startlingly new. The difficulty in describing the connection between the two is severe, for the crucifixion is a human-world event, and the resurrection is a spiritual event, yet takes place in the human world and is somehow connected with the crucifixion. Certain aspects of the resurrection music play a central role in the Mass as a whole, and focusing on this role makes the problem of describing the connection between the crucifixion and resurrection music even more intractable. This problem is not owed to clumsiness or inadvertence on Bach's part; instead the problem itself is integral to and at the core of his vision of the nature and actuality of Christ's resurrection.

The second meditation adds to the description of Bach's resurrection music a recognition that this music is its composer's witness to the event. The meditation ruminates on the bearing of this witness on spiritual life and theological thinking. Guiding this meditation is the question, what is the exact nature of this witnessing? In what sense does the particular nature of Bach's witness determine the spiritual and theological meaning of the statement that his music conveys the actuality of Christ's resurrection?

In answering this question, the second meditation comes upon several salient characteristics of Bach's witness. The witness is ambiguous in the sense that the act of writing this music seems to be a matter of saying what he believes, but also of learning for himself what he believes, and thus also of deepening what he believes. Because of the startling quality of the resurrection event, the witness to it

necessarily has an affective as well as cognitive component; emotions as well as thoughts are involved. Bach is witnessing in a situation in which conclusive material evidence is in principle impossible. Yet for that very reason it can serve as a material-world event whereby the resurrection can be seriously considered; without some such event it would be in principle impossible for either the possibility or the actuality of the resurrection to be conveyed. Unlike evidence, however, witnessing does not mean to compel belief.

The final and paramount aspect of Bach's witnessing to the actuality of Christ's resurrection is that the music is in fact witnessing to the power of ultimate reality, for that is what brings about the new life without contradicting the finality of death. Bach is therefore pointing to the possibility that the same spiritual power can enter my life at a place where newness is impossible and transform a literally hopeless situation. Actualizations of this possibility include events in which sacrificial love exercises redemptive power, events in which forgiveness is transformative, or in which unexpected, imaginative kindness drives out anger and suspicion.

Because the joining of the spiritual and the human in Christ's resurrection and in my life are both based on the power of God, the two joinings are reciprocally related. To know the joining to which the resurrection music witnesses is to know that corresponding joinings can take place in my life. And, the other way around: to know the authenticity of those joinings is to know that God's power, as per the witness of the resurrection music, is also efficacious to raise Christ to new life. In view of this mutuality, the meditation is obliged to try to elaborate how the meaning of each event is included in the meaning of the other.

This meditation deals only with those aspects of Christ's resurrection that the Mass brings forward. Consequently, it is not a complete theology of the resurrection, nor a complete treatment of the meaning of the resurrection for Christian spirituality. For example, it does not go into the relation of Christ's resurrection to the meaning of the crucifixion. To be sure, during the "Crucifixus," Bach sets the words, "for us," but the music does not focus on, emphasize, or clarify them.

Consequently, the significance of the resurrection for atonement is not developed. The place of the resurrection in the full sweep of salvation history and the providence of God is not touched on. The section brings forward a few theological concepts, such as “Spiritual body,” on which Bach does not specifically dwell, simply for purposes of comparison and the clarification that similarities and differences afford.

To the recognition that the resurrection music is Bach’s witness, the third meditation adds the idea that this music is also the Spirit’s witness to the actuality of Christ’s resurrection. For Bach’s witness manifests what St. Paul calls a “gift of the Spirit.” Following St. Paul further, the meditation recognizes that discerning the actuality of Christ’s resurrection upon hearing the music is likewise the work of the Spirit, as is the yen to understand my odd words about the music.

Seeing the music as the work of the Spirit as well as the work of Bach carries with it the insight that the music (not really the music, but rather the Spirit, but not the Spirit without the music) has the power to bring about belief and to change human attitudes and action. Talk about the work of the Spirit in the listener puts a label on the difference between what happens to me and what happens to the open-minded music lover who recognizes the music as Bach’s witness but does not follow the music to the actuality of the resurrection. For the latter group of people, Bach’s testimony is not likely to refer to anything outside Bach’s spiritual life.

To a large extent the distinction between the second and third meditations is written in water. The two are complementary; what is explicit in the third meditation is already implicit in the second. Each offers insights that are less readily available from the other’s starting point. They bring up somewhat different concerns and topics.

The one respect in which the third meditation opens up new ground has to do with events, already mentioned in the second meditation, in which something genuinely new breaks into a genuinely hopeless situation. The strange continuity between what is dead and stays dead and what is alive with a new kind of life

characterizes moments in my life as well as the moment of Christ's resurrection. The second meditation accounts for the similarity of the two continuities by the fact that both come from and depend on the actuality of the divine power to which Bach is witnessing and with which his witness puts me in touch.

What becomes clear in the third meditation is that more than a similarity and more than a common source is involved. In view of the Spirit's work, it is not enough to say that Bach's witness puts me in touch with the power of God. There has to be a literal continuity between the joining of the Spiritual and the human in the resurrection event and the counterpart joining in my life. The two joinings are not merely analogous; the second is not merely a response to the first. The joinings are themselves joined, and the actuality of the resurrection includes the actuality of this continuity.

The rest of this chapter aims to make clear that this assertion is good as a brief, one-sentence rewording of the strange sentence in the chapter heading. To that end, it is necessary to address the strangeness of the continuity between Christ's Spiritual-human joining and that in my life. It is strange because the joining of the Spiritual and the human in my life is co-temporal—simultaneous—with and not a subsequent response to apprehending the joining of the Spiritual and the human in Christ's resurrection, and also because the actuality of the joining in my life is essentially integral to the actuality of the joining in the resurrection. Precisely as actual the actuality of Christ's resurrection cannot *not* be joined with Spiritual-human joinings in my life as well.

A thread now becomes visible that ties the three meditations together. This thread is the strange, yet real joinings that occur on four levels. First, one hears the interpenetration of discontinuity and continuity in the joining of Bach's crucifixion music to the resurrection music. Second, one confronts discontinuity and continuity in the connection of the crucified to the risen Christ. Third, one meets the same strange yet real joining of the Spiritual and the human in my life. Fourth, ultimately and most importantly, one sees that the joining of the Spiritual and the human in Christ's resurrection is itself strangely continuous with the Spiritual-

human joining in my life. If to hear Bach's resurrection music is to be related to the risen Christ, then that relation is clarified by the three mediations and their elaboration of these four levels of joinings.

1. The Resurrection Story in Bach's Mass.

The Finality of Death.

The Newness of Resurrected Life

The resurrection of Christ takes place in two disconnected worlds—the world of human suffering, and the world of the glory of God.

Like the New Testament narratives, the resurrection story that Bach presents is part of a story that includes Christ's crucifixion, which is the subject of the immediately preceding movement in the *Credo* (composed 1748-49³⁴) of the B Minor Mass. The music for the "Crucifixus" text is quietly suffused with intense suffering. It seems understated, almost deliberately so, as though one could not possibly understand the depth of suffering and to try to do so would be to trivialize and cheapen it. A response to the aural picture of the crucifixion is built into the music itself. Two things about this response stand out. One is the absence of emotions that might be thought to be appropriate for one to feel on contemplating the event. There is no anger or horror or disbelief. There is no indication that the event is meaningful in any way whatsoever, but there is no scream against its meaninglessness either. Corresponding to the suffusion of suffering on Christ's part is a suffusion of resignation on the observer's part.

The most important aspect of Bach's depiction of the crucifixion is its finality. The sense of resignation becomes especially strong at the very end with the text, "died and was buried." The harmonies carrying these words are ghoulishly

³⁴ Both 1732 and 1742-45 have been proposed as the date for the composition of the *Credo*. George B. Stauffer (*Bach. The B Minor Mass* [New York, 1997], pp. 41-43) summarizes the evidence of watermarks and handwriting upon which is based the current consensus that it was written in 1748-49.

twisted. The disintegration of the body of Christ has already begun, carrying the finality of the death to the next level. The music is hushed. The singers are all in their lowest register where it is impossible to sing loudly and almost impossible to make a lovely sound. The orchestra disappears. A hushed pianissimo of sounds that can barely be made, and so barely be heard, depicts the peace of death, the only relief possible for the suffering and resignation that have gone before.³⁵

In this context a resurrection cannot be expected; it cannot even be imagined.

But then, the voices leap upwards by as much as an octave and fifth, *fortissimo*. The full orchestra with trumpets and drums blazing comes back into action. Everyone, the performers as well as the audience, is jolted.³⁶ The music presents the event as an event that could not have happened, one that is not only unimaginable but, without qualification, is impossible. It also presents it as an event that nevertheless did in fact happen. The certainty of finality is suddenly, without transition, without reason or justification, replaced by the certainty of new life.

Just as finality was the most salient aspect of the crucifixion movement, so new life is the most salient aspect of the resurrection. The newness is radical;³⁷ it

³⁵ While Wilfrid Mellers (*Bach and the Dance of God* [London, 1980], pp. 224-25) calls the “Crucifixus” a depiction of “cessation,” he also sees the tomb as a womb. For him, “the new birth germinates in the gloom of the cave,” and so the resurrection music is not the presentation of the radically new that is only discontinuously continuous with that of the crucifixion, but “a return to normality.” One can imagine a performance that would support this hearing, but it would be very different from Rilling’s. While Mellers hears the G major of the “Crucifixus” closing as the “key of bliss,” Stauffer (*op. cit.*, p. 123) hears the modulation away from the key of the ground bass (“ground basses should not modulate”) as a break with convention “to emphasize the unconvictionality of Christ’s resurrection.” Those who focus on the illustrative aspects of the passage (as opposed to focusing on structural aspects, such as its relation to “Et resurrexit”) see it as representing the lowering of Christ into a tomb, or the departure of Christ’s divinity. See John Butt, *Bach: Mass in B Minor* (Cambridge, UK, 1991), p. 54.

³⁶ Beginning with Tovey, analysts are aware of the importance of the ritornello form in constructing many movements of the Mass. The setting of “Gloria in excelsis Deo” is a clear example. “Et resurrexit” is also built as a ritornello (whose repeats are called “interludes” in the formal analysis given on p. 50 below) in which the opening statement of the ritornello is postponed for three measures, that is, until after the choral declamation of the resurrection (the first statement of the ritornello is similarly postponed in the “Osanna”). Opening the movement with a lengthy orchestral introduction would have considerably lessened the abruptness attendant upon declaiming the resurrection.

³⁷ Karl Barth’s emphasis comports with Bach’s: “The radically new thing in the [Easter] coming again of the man Jesus who obviously died on the cross was not a prolongation of His existence

is not that a body that had been dead is functioning again. There is no analogy to medical procedures in which a heart that has stopped beating is made to work again. The finality of the death, burial and corporeal decay of the previous movement is not contradicted. The disintegration of the body is not reversed. What was final is left as final, and in its place is a new reality. The characterization of the resurrection as the negation of a negativity, popular among late twentieth-century theologians, does not aptly fit Bach's procedure.³⁸

That is not necessarily to say there is no continuity with Bach, but that the continuity does not involve the physical body of Christ in spite of the fact that the event takes place in human space and time. The grammatical subject of crucifixion is the same as the subject of resurrection. Musically, in spite of the many ruptures (in texture, tessitura, meter, and melodic material), there are two elements of continuity: it is the chorus that is declaiming both texts (there is no shift from cho-

terminated by death ..., but the appearance of this terminated existence in its participation in the sovereign life of God" (*Church Dogmatics*, IV/3, p. 312).

³⁸ Bach's procedure may or may not strike the listener as the obviously "right" way to do the crucifixion—resurrection sequence. In any case, other composers do it quite differently, yielding very different, though not necessarily conflicting, theological emphases. Mozart, in his C Minor Mass, writes Crucifixion music that is suffused with sadness rather than suffering. It aptly portrays the inevitability of the death and burial that are mentioned at the end the text. The whole movement is unambiguously centered on C, using its minor scale. The resurrection music is also in C, shifting abruptly to the major scale. While there is a contrast of minor to major, of soft to loud, and of motivic content, the degree of discontinuity is much less than at the corresponding point in the Bach. There are no chromatic harmonies at the end of Mozart's "Crucifixus" to depict the disintegration of the body and stress the finality of death. And instead of stressing the newness of the resurrected life, Mozart illustrates the event itself by using a rising pattern that depicts "resurrection." Where Bach witnesses to an event that he does not try to understand and whose discontinuous continuity is its most salient aspect, Mozart minimizes discontinuity and presents an event that seems to be easily intelligible. Beethoven handles the corresponding place in his Mass in D quite differently from both Bach and Mozart. The crucifixion music brings sharp physical and emotional pain to the surface rather than creating a background of numb, resigned suffering or sadness. Like Mozart, he does not use chromatic harmonies at the end to depict decay and finality. The discontinuity from the end of "Crucifixus" to the beginning of "Et resurrexit" is even more abrupt than Bach's. The only element on continuity is the second inversion C-major chord at the end of "Crucifixus" that resolves to a G root-position chord in the third bar of "Et resurrexit" (which is, like the G to D movement in the Bach, a trochee). The rupture serves to make a decisive demarcation in the third section of the movement's harmonic structure (see *The Theology of Handel's "Messiah," Beethoven's Credo," and Verdi's "Dies Irae"*: Chapter Three, pp. 53, 56-58) and sets up the structural dissonance that in the end serves to give a particular meaning to Lordship and the relation of Christ to divine sovereignty. The word "resurrexit" is sung once by the tenors and is not repeated in the other choral parts. The resurrection is announced, the announcement resolves the dissonance at the end of "Crucifixus," but the connection between the two is not clarified. Beethoven's interest is in the everlasting life and its relation to Lordship.

rus to soloist, or vice versa), and the G major harmony into which the chorus sinks down for the final chord in “Crucifixus” has a connection with the D major harmony of “Et resurrexit.”³⁹

This particular harmonic connection is interesting because, while it is not rare or unusual in baroque music, it is used less often than three other links. When there is a link, it is more commonly one of the following: the tonal center in the second is a major or minor third above that of the preceding movement,⁴⁰ the tonal center in the second is a major or minor third below that of the preceding movement,⁴¹ and the tonal center of the second is a perfect fifth below that of the preceding movement.⁴² The shifts by a third, whether up or down, make the second movement a continuation or elaboration or amplification of the first. The harmonic motion is minimally dramatic. When the tonal center moves down a fifth at the beginning of the second movement, there is a greater sense of an event taking place. The first movement is heard as setting up, summoning, or in some other way bringing the second movement into being. One hears a dramatic progress in going from the one to the next.

³⁹ Butt’s description of the overall structure of the *Credo* (*op. cit.*, pp. 94-95) provides still another aspect of continuity despite the sudden and nearly absolute hiatus between the end of “Crucifixus” and the onset of “Et resurrexit.” Butt sees the *Credo* as a symmetrical structure whose axis is “Crucifixus.” On either side of the axis, the “Credo” — “Patrem omnipotentem” and the “Confiteor” — “Et exspecto” (opening and closing choruses, respectively) are paired, likewise “Et in unum dominum Jesum Christum” and “Et in Spiritum,” both for soloists, and the choruses “Et incarnatus” and “Et resurrexit” on either side of the central axis, “Crucifixus.” Just as the tonal center moves up by a perfect fourth from the end of “Et incarnatus” to the beginning of “Crucifixus,” so the tonal center from the end of “Crucifixus” (having modulated to G at the end) to the beginning of “Et resurrexit” goes down a perfect fourth. Its pairing with “Et incarnatus” as well as its place in the overall symmetry establishes continuity between the resurrection movement and other movements in the *Credo*, and its abrupt break in continuity from “Crucifixus” marks the irreversible movement away from the central axis back to the opening.

⁴⁰ For example, in the B Minor Mass, the tonal center of the “Christe Eleison” is a major third above that of the preceding movement (Kyrie I), and the tonal center of “Kyrie II” is a minor third above that of “Christe Eleison.”

⁴¹ In the Mass, the tonal center of “Confiteor” is a minor third below that of the preceding movement, “Et in Spiritum Sanctum.”

⁴² Examples from the Mass are the relation of “Laudamus te” to the next movement, “Gratias tibi,” and the latter to its next movement, “Domine Deus,” and of “Patrem omnipotentem” to the next movement, “Et in unum dominum.”

What Bach has constructed is the reverse of that drama. The shift in tonal center from “Crucifixus” to “Et resurrexit” is *upward* a fifth. The crucifixion music does not set up or summon the resurrection music. The G of the one is close to the D of the other, for the two scales are the same except for one pitch (G has C-natural where D has C-sharp). In most cases, when Bach and other baroque composers move the tonal center up by a fifth from one movement to the next, the following movement is in the tonal center of the first movement, so the motion upward by a fifth is temporary. The middle movement effectively emphasizes the dominant of the tonal center of the two outside movements,⁴³ a procedure that is precisely analogous, on a higher level, to that within a movement where the second section temporarily emphasizes the dominant.⁴⁴

With the “Crucifixus”—“Et resurrexit” sequence, there is no return, no hint of a return to the tonal center of “Crucifixus.” So there is continuity, but the continuity is awkward. Usually when baroque composers juxtapose two movements in this way (that is, the tonal center of the second is a fifth above that of the first and there is no return to the tonal center of the first), the effect is that the second is a rounding out of the first. The first is the more emphatic, and the second is the relaxation from that stress (somewhat analogous to the effect of a trochee at the end of a line of poetry, or the “Amen” at the end of a Protestant hymn). At the end of “Crucifixus” and the beginning of “Et resurrexit,” the powerful contrasts between soft and loud, between low and high register, between unaccompanied chorus and chorus with full orchestra rule out that kind of continuity. The musical continuity is real, but it is deeply afflicted with discontinuity.

Although it is extraordinarily difficult to characterize this continuity other than oxymoronically, what can be said is that it is related to two other acute difficulties. The first is that of characterizing the new reality that the “Resurrexit” is. The second is the concomitant difficulty of describing the relation of the crucified

⁴³ This is the procedure Bach is following for the procession of the first three movements in the *Gloria*, where the tonal centers in order are: D—A—D (“Gloria,” “Laudamus te,” “Gratias tibi”).

⁴⁴ This is the procedure Bach follows within the resurrection movement, whose first and last sections are in D while the second section is in A.

to the resurrected Christ. The music of the crucifixion and resurrection movements relates their texts to each other, but since the musical continuity is hard to describe, the musical connection does not ease the near-impossibility of describing the relation of the finality and resignation of the crucifixion to the newness and excitement of the resurrection. In other words, the relation of the dead to the risen Christ is hard to describe, and hard in the same way that the musical connection is.

Nevertheless, a few things can be said with certainty and clarity about the new life that Bach presents. It is more like physical life than it is like physical death, but it is not physical life *tout court*. Both the new life and knowledge of it are thrillingly exciting, but it is not the excitement of resolving a tension or fulfilling an expectation; it is a thrill that comes from nowhere and is not to be understood in terms of previously known categories, including the loss of physical life. It is entirely affirmative and positive, but not for that reason static.⁴⁵ The excitement and thrill that is felt at the onset of the resurrection music is sustained throughout all four sections⁴⁶ of the movement and the fairly long orchestral commentary between the first and second, between the second and third, and after the fourth choral section. In spite of the absence of tensions to be resolved the movement continuously exhibits the possibility of growth within the new life.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Pertinent to the movement's sustained energy is its use of characteristics of the Courante triple-meter dance form. See Butt, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁴⁶ Although the text comes in four sections, Stauffer points out that the overall form is like a modified *da capo* aria since the music for the fourth section of text repeats that of the first, and the two are introduced by D-major versions of the ritornello. See *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁴⁷ Most Bach scholars agree that probably "Et resurrexit" is a reworking of an instrumental movement that is no longer extant. This fact, if it is a fact, may seem to challenge these strong statements about the nature of the resurrection that this music carries. One might prefer that genuinely new life be presented by genuinely new music. There is, of course, no way of knowing how much reworking took place or its precise nature. In any case, it may be that the new life and its characteristic growth within fulfillment would not be conveyed by this music independently from the crucifixion music. In Bach's final arrangement, the entire movement is heard as a continuation of the explosion that takes place in its first moment. The strange connection that explosion bears to the warp and decay of the "Crucifixus" ending affects every note of the movement in its final form. For a summary of the possible sources of the "Et resurrexit" movement, see Stauffer, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

The harmonic and motivic trajectory carrying this continuously exhilarating newness follows a pattern that is familiar to Bach listeners. The first section begins with D as its tonal center and ends with A as the temporary tonal center. The second section (on the text, “et ascendit ...”) restates the music from the beginning of the movement in the new tonal area, and then shifts to and ends on a B minor cadence. The third section, after the interlude, begins in B minor and promptly moves to F-sharp minor, on which it cadences. At this point, the tonal center shifts, without any transition, downward a major third to D for the rest of the movement.

This organization has only one unusual aspect, and it is powerful. It is the most vivid instance of a feature that characterizes the whole movement, namely that fulfillment can be dynamic, not static. It occurs in the third section (with the text, “et iterum venturus...”), where Bach resorts to a sonority that he uses only this one time in the Mass and very rarely elsewhere: the unison chorus of basses with minimal accompaniment.⁴⁸ The suddenly thinner texture and low register are not heard as a retreat from the fullness of the new life, but rather as the new life presented again and in a new form. For the melismatic lines that the men declaim together, one quickly discovers, horizontalize the pitch of F-sharp, and thus complete the horizontalization of the three pitches of the D major triad (the D and the A having been articulated in the first two sections). This triad is the very sonority that, in a vertical form, began the movement. There is growth within, not towards, affirmation: there is continuous completeness because the surface excitement takes place without disrupting or disturbing the underlying structure, and the con-

⁴⁸ Although the score does not indicate that this passage should be sung by a soloist, instead of the chorus of men, Stauffer argues (*op. cit.*, p. 127) that “the absence of a solo indication in the original score does not rule out a vocal solo in the ‘Et iterum venturus.’ Both the light instrumental accompaniment and the coloratura nature of the vocal line point to a bass solo.” It is worth pointing out that Bach does not insert a solo into a choral movement anywhere else in the Mass; a bass solo is no less unusual than a choral unison. In addition, many performers find the choral writing in other movements (such as “Cum Sancto Spiritu” and “Exspecto resurrectionem”) as demanding as that in “et iterum venturus est.” In any case, most of the comments above hold whether the passage is sung by a bass soloist or the men’s chorus.

figuration in the background is stable without stifling the exhilaration taking place on the surface.

That one stutters and stammers in trying to describe the new life and its continuity with the life that was lost does not mean that one has difficulty in grasping it when one hears it. Quite the contrary. One gets it right away. The immediacy both in the sense of being sudden and in the sense of not being mediated by anything else is important: though the new life is unprecedented and radically unfamiliar in terms of the world in which the crucifixion took place, it also becomes convincingly familiar very quickly.

The tonal center of “Et resurrexit” (namely, D⁴⁹) has a strong connection with certain other movements of the Mass, and this connection has a great deal to do with this unfamiliar familiarity. Although the Mass, taking its name from the tonal center of its first movement, is called the Mass in B Minor and although there are four other movements built on that tonal center and although the first three movements articulate the three pitches of the B minor triad (B, D, F# for Kyrie I, Christe, Kyrie II, respectively), still the most important tonal center for the work as a whole is the relative major of B minor: D major. Like most Mass settings, this one has five sections, corresponding to the five parts of the Ordinary of the Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei.⁵⁰ Each section has two or more movements. Not only is D the key of the “Et resurrexit” movement, it is also the key in which three of the five sections (namely, the Gloria, the Credo, and the Sanctus) begin and end, and it is the key in which the last section (the Agnus Dei,

⁴⁹ If the resurrection music is the reworking of a concerto movement, now lost, there is no way to know whether or not the reworking involved changing the tonal center. If Bach changed the tonal center when he reworked the movement, the change would indicate the self-consciousness of his intention to connect the resurrection music with other movements. In any case, the relation of the tonal center in the resurrection music to other movements is a conspicuous and audible fact.

⁵⁰ In the fair copy that Bach made, there are four sections: *Kyrie, Gloria, Creed*, and the five movements that support the liturgy of the sacrament (“Sanctus,” “Osanna,” “Benedictus,” “Agnus Dei,” “Dona nobis pacem”). By this reckoning, three of the four sections begin and end in D. In other reckonings, there are six sections: *Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei*. This reckoning seems strange because Bach directs that the “Osanna,” which forms the second part of the *Sanctus*, be repeated after the “Benedictus.” In still other reckonings, there are four sections because the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* are considered a single section, comprising what in the Lutheran tradition is called the *Missa*.

consisting of two movements, “Agnus Dei” and “Dona nobis pacem”) ends, and thus the Mass as a whole ends in the tonal center of “Gloria” and of the resurrection.⁵¹ In addition to these beginning and ending movements and the resurrection movement, there are four other movements in D, making twelve (of twenty-four⁵²) in all. The prominence of a certain tonal center is not unusual in Bach’s music or baroque music in general. The extent to which various movements using the same tonal center provide part of the context in which each of them is heard depends on the extent to which other musical gestures call attention to and support the tonal connection.

In the case of the B Minor Mass, this extent is considerable. The first and last sections of the *Gloria* (“Gloria in excelsis Deo” and “Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen”), the last section of the *Credo* (“Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum...”), and the “Osanna” sections of the Sanctus are not only in the same key as “Et resurrexit,” they are also in terms of musical material and sheer excitement closely related to the resurrection music. Because the texts are linked to one another by the musical links, these all become moments or aspects of the divine life, the life that transcends the world of the crucifixion and that the resurrection brings into that world. All four movements present, each in its own way, the same sense of life in a kind of reality that is radically different from that of “Crucifixus.” And, like the unfolding within the resurrection music itself, these four other movements are instances of growth within the completeness and fulfillment of the spiritual, divine life, the life that is absolutely new to the human world.

⁵¹ Mellers, *op. cit.*, p. 186, calls D the “key of Glory.” His analysis of the tonal structure of the Mass as a whole is consonant with what is described above. See *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁵² In some reckonings, there are twenty-seven movements. In these reckonings, “Gloria” and “Et in terra pax” are regarded as separate movements, as are “Confiteor” and “Et exspecto resurrectionem,” in spite of the fact that in both cases the musical motion is continuous from the first to the second without so much as a fermata to separate them. They are separated tonally and motivically. The other discrepancy in the count has to do with the fact that the “Osanna” is sung both before and after “Benedictus,” and one can count the repetition as another movement. According to the reckoning in which there are twenty-seven movements, thirteen of them use the scale of D major.

Thus, the continuity, heard as soon as the resurrection music begins, between its tonal center and the opening and ending of the *Gloria*, identifies the “place” where the resurrected Christ is located: it is the place where *Gloria* is sung and felt in continuously growing ways. But, remembering the semantic and musical elements of continuity between the crucifixion and resurrection movements, one remembers that the resurrected Christ is also located in the world where the crucified Christ was located. The outcome is that the resurrection is given two contexts—the *Gloria* and the “Crucifixus”—and consequently two kinds of continuity. They are apparently incompatible. The sum of the two incompatible continuities is a strangely discontinuous continuity.⁵³

The strangeness is compounded by the fact that each of the two kinds of continuity is itself marked with a strange discontinuity. To the degree that *Gloria* contextualizes “Et resurrexit,” the resurrection is not so much a new reality as an uncovering of what had already been the case in humans’ historical world, but had been hidden until the human body of Jesus perished. This continuity, however, is odd because it means that the place where *Gloria* is sung and the place where crucifixions happen can somehow come together. The continuity suggested by the link between details of the crucifixion and the resurrection music is odd because there is no physical counterpart to the continuity, except in a radically different sense to be taken up in a few pages.⁵⁴

Noticing the tonal connection linking the resurrection music with other movements leads to asking whether what happens with respect to the tonal centers from the end of the crucifixion music to the beginning of the resurrection music has any analogies elsewhere in the Mass. There are two. The tonal center of the first “Kyrie” is B, and that of the second “Kyrie” is a fifth higher, F-sharp. Although these choral movements are separated by the duet in D for the text,

⁵³ The nature of continuity from the world of history and nature to the spiritual world is an issue in the first two cycles of Handel’s *Messiah* (see David B. Greene, *The Theology of Handel’s “Messiah,” Beethoven’s Credo,” and Verdi’s “Dies Irae,”* pp. 23-30.). The joining of continuity with discontinuity also occurs in Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* (pp. 72-74, 97, 106, 107, 113 below) in connection with imagining a new temporality.

⁵⁴ Pp. 59-61 below.

“Christe eleison,” they may still be heard as forecasting the rising fifth of the crucifixion-resurrection connection. At the end of the Mass, the tonal center of the “Agnus Dei” section is G, and that of the “Dona nobis pacem” section, which closes the Mass, is D, again a fifth higher.

In the case of “Kyrie” I and II, the discontinuous continuity carried by the rising motion of the tonal centers by a fifth is more than offset by the powerful continuity generated by the way the tonal centers of the three movements of the *Kyrie* as a whole articulate the B minor triad. Giving in a horizontal form what the very first chord gives in a vertical form effectively makes the three movements cohere as a musical entity.⁵⁵

By contrast, the G—D of the “Agnus Dei”—“Dona nobis pacem” link is in fact a redoing of the discontinuous continuity of the crucifixion—resurrection link. Exactly the same tonal centers are involved. The Lamb of God is one of the oldest metaphors for the crucified Christ, and the parallelism between the shift of tonal centers here and at the resurrection music links the “Peace” that the lamb is asked to grant us with the resurrection of the crucified Christ. The link brings our peace, associated with the Lamb, into explicit association with the new life of the resurrected Christ. It puts “us” into the latter picture. It makes explicit that the resurrection has overwhelming importance for us human beings. Though the continuity is as strange at the “Dona nobis pacem” as it was at the resurrection, the discontinuity is somewhat less pronounced. The effect is that the two moments of discontinuous continuity explain and amplify one another. The certainty that Christ has been resurrected becomes the certainty that the Lamb will bestow or

⁵⁵ In view of the fact that Bach composed what turned out to be the B Minor Mass over a period of many years, and never heard it performed as a complete work (in fact, it was not performed as a complete work until 1859), some scholars have wondered whether perhaps he intended the individual movements to be performed alone as occasions required, and never conceived it as a single, unified work. From the perspective of this question, it would be silly to make much of the identity of the changes of tonal center in the two places (namely, “Crucifixus” – “Et resurrexit” and “Agnus Dei” – “Dona nobis pacem”). However, evidence from the fair copy that Bach made, in which he treated the score as an integral entity (see Stauffer, *op. cit.*, p. 46), and also from the musical similarities of movements using the same tonal center (especially those using the B minor scale and the D major scale), support the viewpoint that the unusual shifts of tonal center are meaningful, not merely accidental or incidental.

has bestowed peace, and likewise the sureness that the peace of the Lamb is real is wrapped up with a confidence that Christ has been resurrected.

2. Bach's Witness to the Actuality of the Resurrection

Witnessing to the actuality of Christ's resurrection, "Et surrexit" is in fact witnessing to the power of God, for that is what brings about the new life without contradicting the finality of death.

Bach is bearing witness to his own belief in the resurrection. He easily convinces me that he believes deeply and sincerely, and that he is not setting the text only because that is something composers do. I suppose that every listener could say as much.

But for me he also does more. As the first meditation has shown, he also shows me what he believes. He presents the resurrection. He does not witness only to his belief in the resurrection; he does not merely illustrate a previously held belief or show his affective response to the New Testament resurrection narratives. He witnesses to the resurrection itself, and his conviction is such that I feel compelled to consider the possibility that Christ really was raised from the dead into new life.

At first glance it seems that Bach does not, however, show me why he believes. Or why I should be persuaded by his witness to believe and allow myself to participate in his believing. Why not just say that I respond to the resurrection story by wanting to replicate its pattern? But that first glance may not be seeing everything that is relevant. It may have been too hasty. I should think more carefully about the nature of the witness offered by this music before I say it does not offer a "why."

The nature of this witness involves an ambiguity at its core. It could be that Bach's vivid and palpable presentation of Christ's resurrection comes from his prior conviction of its reality. Or it could be that the act of creating the music

brought on or deepened the conviction in him. It is not really possible to say which. Bach's verbal testimony⁵⁶ is usually construed to mean that he believed first and then "wrote up" his convictions. It is, however, entirely possible that what he thought he believed before he wrote the music did not completely match what he believed afterwards. It may be that all three of the following statements about composing the resurrection music are true: in writing the music, Bach was saying what he believed; writing the music was a means by which he learned what it was that he believed; through writing the music he discovered a reality that he thought he knew before, but the act of discovery entailed that what he knew before was, by comparison, abstract, pale, thin and so in fact a distortion of the resurrection.

Maybe equivalent statements are also true of me and get nearer to the heart of what I was trying to say when I heard this music and suddenly, strangely exclaimed that I knew Christ had indeed been raised from the dead. For the first time, I came to know what "Christ's resurrection" actually meant. If I believed before, my believing had been, by comparison to what I was now believing, abstract, conventional, thin, and pale. The content of this bloodless believing was more or less that of the Easter stories, though I saw that the story of the empty tomb tended toward thinking of the resurrection as the resuscitation of a corpse. Without being especially skeptical of the empty tomb, I preferred to think with St. Paul's term, "spiritual body." To the extent that I accepted Christ's resurrection as a fact, I saw it as a confirmation of the validity of the reconciling work of the Cross, and believed that new life came from participating in this reconciliation. Seeing the resurrection story's importance in this way, I did not have to know whether it was literally true; it was not important to specify the sense in which the event was an actuality.

⁵⁶ That Bach wrote his church music out of deeply held religious conviction and saw composing as an act of honoring and glorifying God is well documented. For a more carefully nuanced statement of this idea, see, *unter alia*, Leo Schrade, "Bach: The Conflict Between the Sacred and the Secular," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 7/2 (April 1946), pp. 151-94, especially pp. 153, 168.

The most significant change in my understanding of the resurrection, brought about by listening to Bach, is that understanding what it meant and knowing that what it meant was true came to me together. I couldn't know that it meant what Bach presented it to mean without also knowing that what the music presented was also real independently of the music, though my access to it was through the music.

If this changed understanding seems tantamount to thinking that Bach's presentation is so complete and so vivid that it cannot not be true, a clarification is in order. I am only secondarily saying that my new conviction is a judgment call that goes beyond what the evidence requires or allows me to make, though the urgency of the issue may be a warrant for doing that.⁵⁷ What I am primarily reporting is that this event involves much more than a judgment call on my part. In addition to the cognitive impact of Bach's witness there is an emotional impact. My feeling as well as my knowing is transformed. The music captures the authentic excitement of that to which it witnesses. If it were not true to the excitement it would not be true to that to which it witnesses. I am caught up into this excitement. It makes me eager to be part of the process. I become committed to live within this new reality. Just as Bach's witnessing is also a discovering and a deepening, so my hearing the witness is also a participating and a committing. While my participation could be called a response to Bach's witness, it is a somewhat unusual kind of response. I do not experience the response as being a matter of making a choice; confronted with what is real, I can make no other choice. But I do not experience it as being analogous to a mechanical or moral necessity either. The "response" is co-temporal with the hearing. To hear the music as Bach's witness is already to be participating in the reality to which it witnesses. If the participation were not already taking place, I would not be hearing the music as a witness.

⁵⁷ On the relevance of urgency in making a decision, see William A. Christian, *Meaning and Truth in Religion* (Princeton, NJ, 1964), pp. 247-48.

Acknowledging that Bach's witness and my response to it are unusual in these ways, I need to spell out the relation between physical evidence in Christ's resurrection and this kind of believing. It is in principle impossible for there to be evidence for the kind of event to which Bach witnesses—an event that begins as a physical event, but ends without a clear-cut physical component. A line in P. Joseph Ward's poem on the resurrection goes,

This mortal flesh wears God's eternity.⁵⁸

If Christ's resurrection were the resuscitation of a corpse, there could be evidence for it, and there would have to be in order for me to accept it. Likewise, there could in principle be evidence that the crucifixion never took place, and if such evidence were convincing, the question of the resurrection cannot even come up. But granting the fact of the crucifixion and thinking of the resurrection as a new life whose continuity with the previous life is not to be defined in terms of physical corporeality, one cannot imagine physical evidence that could be conclusive one way or the other. One does not have to accept as true the stories of the empty tomb before one can believe that Christ was resurrected. The empty tomb is not more basic than the resurrection.

That is not to say that the new life of the Christ is incompatible with the story of the empty tomb. The tomb really may have been empty on the third day, and if so its emptiness may well have worked on those who saw it in the same way as Bach's music works on me. It is striking that the Fourth Gospel says that the Beloved Disciple entered the tomb, saw it was empty and believed (John 20:8). In this telling of the story, seeing was not an observing from which certain inferences were drawn. After all, other inferences, which did not lead to believing in the way that Bach or the Beloved Disciple believed, would have been equally valid and possible—a corpse had been resuscitated, or someone (thieves? disci-

⁵⁸ "Jesus Is Risen," unpublished poem. Dr. Ward is the senior pastor at the West Raleigh Presbyterian Church, Raleigh, NC.

ples?) had stolen the body, or God had miraculously removed the body to prevent its further desecration.⁵⁹ It is also striking that in Mark's and Luke's telling, the story of the empty tomb did not convince the Apostles. For them, it was another mode of the presence of Christ (the meal at Emmaus for Luke) that efficaciously witnessed to the actuality of the risen Lord.

The Pauline letters, which antedate the narratives involving the empty tomb by ten to twenty years, talk a great deal about the resurrected Christ, but not in terms of an empty tomb. It may be that St. Paul had not heard this story, suggesting that it was a later development in Christians' efforts to state the resurrection reality. Or it may be that St. Paul knew the story, but found other ways of conveying the new reality to be more effective. The new life of the Christ is compatible with the existence of a tomb that was not empty, but contained the physical remains of the former body of Christ. In I Corinthians 15 St. Paul sees no difference between the resurrection as it applies to Christ and as it applies to Christians. In both cases, an animal body that has died is replaced with a spiritual body. There is continuity between the dead Christ and the raised Christ, between the dead Christian and the raised Christian, but not a physical continuity. What is physical is at only one end of the continuity. Only such physically discontinuous but nevertheless real continuity would be compatible with the spirituality of the new, transformed, imperishable body.

Although the nature of Bach's witness rules out physical evidence that would compel belief of this sort, there is a kind of material-world component that is compatible with the spiritual body. This corporeal element does not, can not induce everyone to believe, and, besides, it accentuates rather than reduces the oddness of the continuity from the crucifixion to the resurrection. It is, however and surprisingly, as integral to the resurrection as conclusive physical evidence is impossible. Thinking about it gets me a step closer to understanding the nature of Bach's witness and to seeing that the power to which his music witnesses can become a power in my life.

⁵⁹ See also above, p. 23.

For me, Bach's music is just such a material-world component; for the Beloved Disciple it was the empty tomb, for other Apostles it was the voice of Jesus with some sort of visual counterpart; for St. Paul it was light and a voice, which was also heard by those with him (according to the pertinent document, Acts 9:1-7). A physical component of this sort is necessary. Without something that is heard, seen or touched, the story could only be conveyed by some sort of mental or psychic telepathy. If there were no material-world counterpart whatsoever, there would also be no joining of the Spiritual with the human.

The nature of Bach's witness, then, comes down to this: his resurrection music stands at the very place in the story where the body of Jesus would stand if the story ended differently, and where the spiritual body of Christ does in fact stand in place of the crucified and dead Christ. It is not too much to say that things like this music *are* the body of the resurrected Christ. At the very least the power of the music persuades me of the possibility of the discontinuous continuity that it presents.

There are other events in which the spiritual and historical are intertwined in exactly the same way as they are in Bach's crucifixion-resurrection sequence—the enemy who forgives and a literally (and not merely apparently) impossible reconciliation takes places, the personal sacrifice that has genuinely redemptive power and changes someone from being a person for whom miracles do not and can not happen into a person for whom everything is a miracle, the stranger whose timely gentleness is the presence of the divine, the moment when in the face of a raging anger a word or a deed suddenly wipes out the unavoidable perspective from which anger was inescapable. Psychological and sociological terms can explain such events to some extent, but if the forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption are spiritual and not simply historical events, they cry out for a master narrative—the true story that explains these other stories and to which these other stories implicitly witness.

What “explaining” means requires some attention. Here it means that the resurrection story corroborates the pattern of these less cosmic stories, which involve

individual persons and only indirectly the whole of creation. Explaining them means confirming the soundness of the pattern and the validity of the consequences. It also means that the person who believes in Christ's resurrection also believes so strongly in the new possibility of new power to bring about new relations that the strength of the believing becomes a dynamic toward creating the new relations.

But most fundamentally Bach's resurrection music explains these other stories in the sense that the music, like the New Testament resurrection narratives, witnesses to the power of ultimate reality. The importance that overwhelms me on listening to Bach's music is that it manifests this power. This same divine power undergirds the lesser stories and makes possible the events in those stories. The master narrative tells the story of the event that preeminently stitches the human and the spiritual worlds together. Bach's music does not create either spiritual power or the historical world; nor, for that matter, do the New Testament resurrection narratives, but Bach's music and the biblical stories show spiritual power actually bearing on the historical here and now.

And so I hear Bach's resurrection music with ears attached to eyes that have seen possible examples of spiritual-historical joining in the events of forgiveness, redemption and divine presence. My ears convince my eyes that what is possible is actual. I know the actuality of Christ's resurrection, and I know that forgiveness, redemption and the encounter with God can and do actually take place and that they, like Bach's resurrection music, involve discontinuous continuity. These transformations work with other spiritual events in my life to transform me in other ways—moving toward deeper spiritual insight, gaining an enhanced ability to focus on what really matters, being able to love imaginatively, for example. What is of paramount importance is that the spiritual-human events in my life and the counterpart in Bach's resurrection music and in the New Testament narratives all witness to, because they are supported by, the power of ultimate reality, the power that brings about the resurrection of Christ.

It raises my spirit to know that spiritual-human events in my life are genuine, valuable and eminently worthy of deepening because they fit with the nature of what is ultimate and are supported by the divine. The sense of participation in what Bach is participating in is one of the most salient aspects of listening to his witness. In the final section of this chapter, it becomes clear that my participation is also, however strange it may be to say so, salient to the resurrection event itself.⁶⁰

My apprehension of new life as conveyed by Bach's resurrection music can be compared and contrasted to moments when I feel amazement at the sheer fact that there is anything, and I feel that the very being of anything and everything is intrinsically good, even in the face of the many indications to the contrary. These moments can be connected with the biblical witness to a creator, just as Bach's music can be connected with the biblical witness to radically new life in Christ's resurrection. The similarities and the differences between these two connections may help in understanding both of them.

On one side of the event of creation there is a physical component, on the other side there is not, and could not be, for the nature of createdness rules it out. There is continuity across the event of creation because the divine is present on both sides of it. There is also discontinuity, for materiality is present only on one side.

The situation with respect the resurrection is similar. The continuity from the crucifixion to the resurrection in Bach's music witnesses to an event that has a physical component on only one side, though it is the opposite side from that in the creation (the physical component is absent *before* the creation and *after* the resurrection). The creation of the world and the resurrection of Christ are both actual events, both involve the glory of God before and after the event, and both are events involving a discontinuous continuity. They are deeply strange events, so much so that it may be misleading to call them "events," for they are not events in the sense in which the term is used in the natural and historical sciences. Because

⁶⁰ See pp. 69-70 below.

of the absence of the physical component on one side or the other, they are inaccessible to the methods of these sciences.⁶¹

Evidently, the createdness of the created world is not such as to force everyone to see it. Likewise, Bach's music does not bully us into believing; it does not do our believing for us. For people who look at the world and do not see createdness or listen to Bach's music and do not hear new life, my hearing of the music means one of two things. Both of these distort rather than clarify what I want to say.

One of these is to say that I notice the spiritual-human joinings in my life, and I notice the way these joinings replicate the spiritual-human joinings in Bach's resurrection music, and I then draw the conclusion that because the joinings in my life are actual, so also is Christ's resurrection. The other distortion is to say that Bach's music makes me wish so fervently that Christ is actually risen that I lose my grasp on the difference between wishing and knowing, and behave as though what Bach's imagines and what I wish were in fact actual. From the wishing, these people might say, comes a new power into my life, not unlike the power of a placebo to ameliorate a medical condition. But for me and others like me, who hear Bach's resurrection music and know its witness is true, believing is a matter of recognizing, of discerning what is actually the case, not at all like wishing. Those who do not follow the witness to what I recognize as its source are not convinced.

Be that as it may, Bach's witness is important in three ways: (1) showing me how shallow had been my believing; (2) showing me what I might believe if I believed more deeply; and (3) showing me that that kind of believing fits both with the divine world of "Gloria!" and also with the presence of the new life in the

⁶¹ One should perhaps add, "... as currently practiced." Alfred North Whitehead, for example, calls for a deep-seated revision of scientific methods based on a more robust understanding that we have to construe the world in terms of the integrated body that takes it in, and at the same time we have to construe this body in terms of the general functioning of the world. "The togetherness of things involves some doctrine of mutual immanence ... [meaning] that each happening is a factor in the nature of every other happening" (*Modes of Thought* [New York, 1938, 1958], chapter 8, "Nature Alive," p. 225).

world of crucifixions. Bach's music does justice to both contexts of the resurrection—the finality of the crucifixion and the everlasting song of “Glory to God.” It is true to very real possibility of a very real and actual spiritual connection that does not undermine my very real and actual human corporeality and finitude.

It is in the precise ways, sketched in this meditation, in which this witness and my hearing it do not make sense that they make sense. Only the discontinuous continuity of putting the resurrection music into two contexts, which do not separately or together provide a comfortable continuity between the two worlds, could convince me that it is possible to be both human and spiritual. Bach's music not only shows me what he believes and what I might believe, but also witnesses to the power whereby this possibility is actualized in my own life. It is in the same sense of knowing this possibility as actual that, listening to the music, I know Christ was actually raised. And it is in the same sense of knowing, as I listen to Bach's resurrection music, that Christ was actually raised into new life that I am invited to know the discontinuous continuity of the spiritual and the human as actual in my own life.

3. The Holy Spirit's Witness to Christ's Resurrection in Bach's Music

Bach's music is a gift of the Spirit, and so it is nothing less than a concrete form that the Spirit's witness to the actuality of the resurrection takes on. Being able to hear Bach's music as a Spiritual gift and a resurrection witness is also a Spiritual gift. The gifted hearing summons me to take part in the event. Like the Spirit's witness, my participation also has a concrete form, namely the particular joining of the Spiritual and the human in my life.

Another beginning point for dwelling on and unfolding the impact of Bach's resurrection music is the Pauline understanding of the gifts of the Spirit, laid out in I Corinthians 12. The thought that Bach's inspiration was literally divine, a gift

of the Spirit, may have underlain the comment I made on hearing his resurrection music, “Now I know that Christ really has been raised from the dead.”

The gift of music making is like the other gifts of the Spirit—prophecy, speaking in tongues, practicing kindness to strangers, being an agent of reconciliation, and above all, loving kindly, patiently, open-heartedly, and creatively. Bach’s music slides easily into all five categories; it is kind of prophecy, a kind of speaking in tongues. It makes eminently good sense to say that it is gift of the greatest kindness to people, including millions whom Bach did not know at all. As a gift of the Spirit, the resurrection music is the Spirit’s witness, and not just Bach’s witness, to the actuality of Christ’s resurrection.

According to St. Paul (I Corinthians 12:10), the ability to understand what is said when a person is exercising a gift of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues or prophesying—or composing resurrection music—is also a gift of the Spirit. A gift of the Spirit is needed in order to discern and get to the heart of the meaning of a gift of the Spirit. In addition to the Spirit’s gift to Bach that empowers the excitement and fervor of the resurrection music, there is the Spirit’s gift to me that empowers me to go to the Spiritual origin of the music so that the power to which it witnesses becomes a power working in my own life.

Thus, when people are listening to Bach’s resurrection music and are moved to murmur to themselves, or shout to others, that Christ is risen indeed, there are two Spirit-wrought miracles going on, and they intertwine. One has to do with God’s presence and power manifest in bringing Bach’s “Et resurrexit” into being in the first place and subsequently in a particular performance (the gift of the Spirit working in the composer and musicians). The other has to do with encountering God and the divine power that is present and that has to be present in order that listeners may recognize that God’s presence and power are manifest in the coming-to-be of the music (the gift of the Spirit working in me, a listener).

To attribute to the Spirit the power to encounter God—discern the presence of the Spirit—in the music is not to explain anything. The attribution names a miracle, but does not describe the mechanics whereby it occurs. The attribution is

nevertheless important because it makes clear that those who receive this gift are not intrinsically more spiritually insightful than other people. Their Spiritual (now capitalized, because it means “of the Holy Spirit”) insight is not a sign of inherent superiority, but rather a sign of the presence of the Spirit. It is a gift, not a reward. It is a matter of grace, not of merit. In the case of hearing Bach’s music, attributing to the Spirit the power to discern the presence of the Spirit clarifies the surprise that I feel in finding my believing deepened. And the surprise in turn fits my sense that the power of discernment is not something I already possess and can call my own. The astonishment expresses itself in wanting to understand what is meant by linking the hearing to the believing—the wanting mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter.

During the course of the second meditation, it became apparent that some people hear Bach’s resurrection music and hear the possibility that Christ was raised to new life, but do not follow the music to the actuality of resurrection. Attributing the power of discernment to the Spirit clarifies that the music does not have this power within itself. It does not force listeners to be aware that it is a gift of the Spirit. There are people who can listen to this music without feeling compelled to attribute it to divine inspiration, at least not literally (they may say it is “divine” as a hyperbole for “very, very beautiful”). The miraculous gift of the Spirit that enables one to see that the coming to be of the music is a gift of the Spirit is not bestowed. For them, the piece does not prompt the words, “I now know that Christ was indeed raised from the dead.” They hear a gorgeous, powerful piece of music, and they are grateful for it, but it does not otherwise change their lives. The category, “gift of the Spirit,” is meaningless and even weird; it does not name anything that is real.

The two gifts are equally fundamental, and their equiprimordiality protects the miraculous character of the event. In order to be changed by the music, one must be undergoing change wrought by the Spirit. Yet the music (or a sermon, a Scripture lesson, a painting, if not the Bach piece) is needed in order that one be sufficiently Spiritual to discern the Spirit. That is, I am struck by something that

is, I recognize, the outcome of a Spiritual gift, and I am moved by the Spirit to see its Spiritual authenticity. The two miracles must have come together. Each miracle needs the other. Acknowledging the double miracle gives a spiritual and theological sense to my report in the second meditation that, on hearing Bach's resurrection music, understanding what the resurrection means and knowing that what it means is true come to me together. One miracle is that the Spirit gives Bach the gift to embody an understanding of what Christ's resurrection means, and the other miracle is that the Spirit gives me the gift of discerning that what it means is true.

Not only does each of these miracles need the other, each one also enlarges the other. Each one makes the other even more miraculous. Each makes the other more momentous, more comprehensive in its implications, more intensely life-changing. The story of my listening to Bach's resurrection music is an example. The first ten times I heard the "Et resurrexit" were either on a scratchy 1950s recording or in the rehearsal of a group preparing it for concert. Nothing spiritual happened. I thought of myself as a person who already accepted the story of Christ's resurrection. Bach's music referred to and illustrated what I already believed; setting it to music didn't affect the content of belief.

Then sixteen years later, I heard Rilling and the Stuttgart Bach Choir perform the B Minor Mass in a small auditorium for a smallish audience (three hundred people). Suddenly I realized that my believing before had been shallow, so shallow as hardly to be believing at all. The vitality and the profundity of the resurrection, as well as the uncanny joining of genuine finality, genuine newness and genuine continuity dawned on me with a force that had not happened before. The music made me understand for the first time that Christ really had entered into new life and brought it with him to us. It was also as though I had never really heard the music before. I must not have heard it before, or all this would have already happened. From meeting this gift of the Spirit, this outcome of divine inspiration, my understanding of the resurrection was expanded and sharpened. At the same time, the role of the Spirit to enable me to hear Bach's music as a gift of the

Spirit, presenting the Resurrection and convincing me of its truth, was clear and deep.

The point of this narrative is not to claim that the existence of the Resurrection music is proof that an event actually took place two thousand years ago and that because it did therefore a new spiritual life is available to me. It is also not to say that listening to the music warms my spiritual life to such a boil that I infer the veracity of the resurrection music and story from the putative validity of my bubbling spiritual life.

Instead, the story is simply saying that, on hearing the music, I know that the resurrection took place. While the distinction between knowing and proving may seem not to articulate a difference, it respects the fact that in spite of the fact that Christ's resurrection occurs in human space and time it is not susceptible to proof or denial in this-worldly categories or in categories that are exclusively spiritual. Knowing the resurrection occurs only in categories that join the human and the Spiritual in human space and time. The veracity of the event in terms of historical science is not at stake in the story told above. Rather, its point is that knowing the resurrection as presented in this music and knowing it as an actual event come together. They happen simultaneously. Neither is the cause of the other. Or else they do not come at all.

The simultaneity of knowing the actuality of an event and knowing the spiritual meaning makes possible a further development of the double gift of the Spirit. The simultaneity of the two knowings shows concretely what is meant by the simultaneity of the two gifts of the Spirit. As the Spirit's witness to the actuality of the resurrection and not to an imagined possibility, the music supports the actuality of the event even in the face of the impossibility of historical evidence. The music supplies what historical evidence or historical narrative cannot, namely a concrete grasp on the continuity between a human person, who was Jesus the Christ, and his new life in a radically new kind of body. Thanks to the Spirit's gift to me, this continuity comes into my grasp as the music puts forward the continuity of the new life of the risen Christ with the crucified Jesus Christ.

Bach's music, then, is nothing less than a concrete form that the Spirit's witness to the actuality of the resurrection takes on. As such the music summons me to take part in the event. Like the Spirit's witness, my participation has a concrete form also, namely the particular joining of the Spiritual and the human in my life. Thanks to the double role of the Spirit with respect to Bach's music, I know that Bach's resurrection story is not complete until I am participating in it, and my participating isn't actual until it takes root in my life. It is not real until the Spiritual and the human are joined in the miracles of everyday life described in the second meditation. The Spirit's witness to the actuality of Christ's resurrection amounts to nothing if it does not also empower the joining of the Spiritual and the human in my life and confirm that this joining is continuous with the joining of the same in Christ's life. The continuity between the two Spiritual-human joinings is an aspect of the resurrection itself, not a subsequent reaction to it. Thinking of the joining in my life as a "response" to either the story or the music or the actuality of the resurrection distorts the reality that the continuity is already occurring, not coming along later.

These ruminations lead to a somewhat startling end: unless moments of forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, reinvigoration in the face of hopelessness and other such moments that are empowered and supported by the nature of ultimate reality are actually taking place, then Christ's resurrection is also not taking place.

And so, when I say on hearing the "Et surrexit" movement from Bach's B Minor Mass, "Now I know that Christ really has been raised from the dead; I know that the resurrection actually took place," what I am talking about is the strange but essential continuity between the resurrection event and these moments in my life that join the Spiritual and the human.⁶² And what I am saying about that continuity is that, on hearing Bach's resurrection music, I know I am already

⁶² This outcome can be compared to the joining of the everyday and the spiritual in the sixth cycle of Handel's *Messiah*. See *The Theology of Handel's "Messiah," Beethoven's Credo," and Verdi's "Dies Irae,"* pp. 44-45.

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committed to actualizing it with a wholeheartedness that I do not remember having had before.

CHAPTER FOUR

Messiaen, *Quartet for the End of Time*.

New Visions of New Time

Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* envisions what it means to be at the end of time and what it is like to be without measurable durations and linear temporality. Written in 1940 while he was a captive in a German prisoner of war camp and scored for the only instruments available to him (violin, clarinet, a three-string cello, and a piano in wretched condition), it was first performed by the composer and three fellow prisoners in January 1941 for a large, profoundly appreciative audience of prisoners and guards. Today it is a standard piece in the chamber music repertory. Although Messiaen himself was a devout Catholic and a church organist, the *Quartet for the End of Time*⁶³ is very rarely performed in explicitly religious settings.

According to the composer's 1942 Preface for the piece, the title refers to Revelation 10:5-6, "And the angel ... lifted up his hand to heaven and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever ... that there should be time no longer."⁶⁴ His stated intention was to draw listeners "toward eternity in space or infinity,"⁶⁵ by the "abolition of time itself," bringing about the "ending of concepts of past and

⁶³ Alex Ross's *New Yorker* review of a performance by the Met Chamber Ensemble in March 2004 provides a good general introduction to the piece (August 29, 2011): http://www.thereisnoise.com/2004/04/quartet_for_the_2.html

⁶⁴ Messiaen was unaware that the phrase, "the end of time" was a mistranslation of the Greek text, which in fact reads, "There shall be no further delay [before God's purpose is fulfilled]." The mistake appeared in the Vulgate version of the Bible and consequently in French as well as English translations done prior to the middle of the twentieth century.

⁶⁵ Messiaen's Preface to the *Quatuor*, 1942.

future.”⁶⁶ To that end, he developed a musical language that is, he said, “essentially immaterial, spiritual and Catholic. Modes which achieve a kind of tonal ubiquity, melodically and harmonically, here bring the listener nearer to eternity in space or the infinite. Special rhythms, beyond meter, contribute powerfully in setting the temporal aside. (All this is but stuttering for one who is dreaming the overwhelming grandeur of the subject!)”⁶⁷ He is suggesting that the end of time does not mean Nothing in a negative sense or a timelessness that is in every sense non-temporal, but rather a duration that is like infinite space because customary temporality (including the kind of succession, continuity, and future-directedness that characterize it) are “set aside.” He seems to be envisioning the possibility that to hear the various movements is to be in or move toward a new kind of temporality or new kinds of temporality. Being related to God coincides with being in a temporality or duration that is radically different from the temporality or duration of physical experience.

Messiaen’s Preface points to two aspects of the work, whose salience would be obvious even without the composer’s comment. One is the treatment of durations, specifically instances when the quantifiability of duration is seriously challenged. The other is the treatment of the contrast between beginnings and endings, specifically instances when linear temporality is problematicized.

Measured duration and the contrast of beginning and ending are crucial for all linear temporalities, be they curvilinear, rectilinear directed to the past, or rectilinear directed to the future. The contrast between beginning and ending, the difference between “now” and “then,” and the distinction between what is remembered and what is expected all depend on each other. In cyclical time, succession becomes meaningful through the repetition of identical or analogous events, sometimes because the repetition is seen as revelatory of underlying cosmic order and sometimes because a desire for predictability leads to regarding what has always happened as what ought to happen. In rectilinear time, succes-

⁶⁶ See Antoine Goléa, *Recontres avec Olivier Messiaen* (Paris, 1960), p. 64, and Anthony Pople, *Messiaen: Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (Cambridge, UK, 1998), p. 13.

⁶⁷ Paris, 1942, p. i.

sion becomes meaningful when events are experienced in terms of that from which they proceed and on which they build or that toward which they are leading and for which they are striving.

In all three linear temporalities, meaningful succession depends on differentiating and quantifying durations. If duration is boundless and immeasurable, there is no succession at all. To sustain temporality and ensure continuity, the European musical tradition of 1600-1900, which Messiaen partly continues and partly rejects, not only has quantified durations but also equalizes the units of quantified duration in any given succession.

During the past century European and Euro-derivative arts and letters, including arts criticism and philosophy, have been keen to break out of an unthematized experience of time that is quantified and linear, and to risk or celebrate discontinuity, unpredictability and meaninglessness. In Heidegger's *Being and Time*, for example, measured and rectilinear time characterizes the temporality of inauthentic human existence. Authentic temporality is, in an important sense, unbounded, or at least bounded deeply differently from the way that the temporality of the they-self is measurable. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, for another example, challenges and undermines the meaningfulness of human existence lived in both cyclical and goal-directed temporalities. Anti-narrative music and literature, including Schoenberg's serial music, which breaks the linear connection between dissonance and resolution, the anti-narrative conclusion to García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (in which it turns out that a character within the story has invented the whole story, including himself, and so there is no story within which the story within the story may be told and no story-teller to tell it), and the self-destructive works of Pirandello, Borges, Pynchon, Calvino and many others, either eliminate or transform the contrast between beginning and ending as convincingly though perhaps not so economically as does Messiaen. Philip Glass's music of endless minimal changes no less than Rothko's boundless spaces make quantified time unviable and put their audiences into contact with unbounded duration.

What sets the *Quartet for the End of Time* apart from these better-known challenges to linear temporality has to do with the upshot of his specific treatment of unbounded durations and non-linear processes. This chapter is structured around three outcomes of Messiaen's treatment of linearity and duration.

First, Messiaen not only de-constructs measured durations and linearity, but also reaffirms what he has deconstructed, and audibly juxtaposes the undone and the reaffirmed, as other challenges to linear temporality usually do not. For example, there are places in the *Quartet* where the measurability of duration and the regularity of recurring units of duration is obliterated on the note-to-note level thereby seriously threatening predictability and continuity. On the phrase-to-phrase level, however, quantifiable duration is sustained. The two kinds of duration are simply and unproblematically juxtaposed; they contrast to each other, but are not set in opposition to each other. They are not combined. Neither modifies the other, but the juxtaposition also does not create an ambiguity to be clarified or a tension to be resolved. The two interact in the sense that their co-presence, neither dominating the other, draws listeners into a temporality in which durations are measurable and, concurrently, endless. What is apparently impossible has become audibly apparent.

Another example are places when the contrast between beginning and ending is set aside, yet also sustained. The possibility of growth toward fulfillment is undermined, yet there are actual moments of fulfillment. In the new relevance of past and future that Messiaen is imagining, continuity and discontinuity are co-possible. Likewise peaceful tranquility and growth toward fulfillment are co-possible. Messiaen's music instantiates these co-possibilities. As it does, the interplay between growth and fulfillment redefines both of them. Section One describes these and other interactions. It describes the ending of conventional time and the re-imagining of time in view of these interactions, and not merely in terms of undoing quantified duration.

These descriptions bring forward the variety in Messiaen's treatment of temporality in the *Quartet's* eight movements. Un-doing and re-affirming temporality

differently, they present various visions of ending time or being at the end of time or being drawn toward eternity. Even the sense in which the music is “for” the end of time changes. These visions are simply juxtaposed; they are not put into opposition with one another; they are not hierarchically arranged; they are not coordinated as though they were complementary images that add up to a single view; and the differences among them are not treated as a tension to be resolved.

That may be surprising. What is even more surprising is the second outcome of Messiaen’s treatment of linearity and duration: the non-organization of the juxtaposed visions turns out not to make completeness impossible. The *Quartet* is characterized by completeness, though it is a completeness that is neither achieved nor accidental. It is a new kind of completeness, distinctive to the *Quartet*. Though gently stated—or understated—the unique completeness is what makes it possible for the many juxtapositions of un-doing and re-doing duration and linearity to be unproblematic. Section Two amplifies this completeness.

Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Sartre among many other philosophers have argued that human consciousness presupposes temporality. As their suppositions about the nature of temporality different somewhat, so do their analyses of consciousness. The third outcome of Messiaen’s treatment of temporality is that it envisions a temporality that is vastly differently from all these philosophers. The *Quartet* opens up a new way of being humanly conscious that is comparable to but essentially unparalleled by what takes place in other arts and letters of the past hundred years. Pointing to the new temporality and new consciousness into which Messiaen would draw his listeners is the business of Section Three.

1. Boundless Duration

For several hundred years, meter in European musical temporality has involved both the regular recurrences of pulse and the focalizing role of a particular pulse—the downbeat. The undoing of quantifiable duration, pulse, and downbeat

occurs in the first, third, and sixth of the *Quartet's* movements. Each time it has the effect of undercutting predictability and thereby undermines the listeners' sense that each note reasonably continues in a direction suggested by the notes preceding it. If duration is unquantifiable, if, that is, there is no way to separate one duration from another, there is no way to separate "now" from "then."

First Movement. The Eucharistic liturgy is a ceremony that replicates Christ's action on behalf of human beings and that in some crucial sense becomes that which it replicates. The allusion to the Eucharistic liturgy in Messiaen's title, "Liturgie de cristal," suggests that his opening movement is a ceremony that replicates, and in that sense becomes, cut glass refracting light, which is, the Preface says, "the silent harmonies of heaven."⁶⁸ Each of the four instruments defines a distinct plane of sound, so there are four separate refractions of the One light that comes into the crystal and that is also the harmonies of heaven, which are inaudible. Each of the four planes has its own way of contradicting and thereby ending the time that shapes ordinary human experience. And so, each has its own way of making audible the inaudible. The four planes of sound are irrelevant to one another in the sense that none of them helps the listener to make sense of any of the other three. Yet the particularities of their mutual irrelevance help to sharpen the meaning of the "end of time."

The Preface also tells performers and audiences that the movement evokes a certain time of day—between three and four in the morning. Two of the sound planes are birdsongs as transcribed by Messiaen for the clarinet and the violin, in which pulse and downbeat are completely absent. When musical events do not occur with some sort of regularity, music ceases to be a way of grasping duration. The clarinet's music transcribes the early-morning song of a blackbird (to the extent that the pitch and timbre limits of the instrument allow); the violin's music is the early-morning song of a nightingale. Being of different species, the two birds hear each other only as noise, not as song. Neither one responds to the other, nei-

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* The oxymoron of "silent harmony" and the synesthesia of light and sound are typical of Messiaen's verbal discourse.

ther builds on, echoes, imitates, or in any way carries forward the other's singing. Neither helps listeners hear the other song as meaningful.

Although the two songs are not mutually relevant, the mutual irrelevance itself is relevant to each and to the two together. Each confirms the randomness and spontaneity of the other. In hearing the immeasurable gap between the two songs, listeners hear, as Messiaen would have it, the "stillness of the morning" when "now" and "then" literally collapse into each other. Together, the birdsongs constitute an aural metaphor for the infinitesimal moment between not-yet time and time, hence the interface between the boundless duration of the one and the measurable duration of the other. The morning stillness is duration that in principle cannot be quantified. Unquantifiable duration is a first metaphor for a contrast to conventional time; it is an aural image for that which is "other" to measurable time. The metaphor unfolds in two steps: the music evokes an image (early morning birdsong), which in turn works as a figure for something else (in this case, early-morning stillness). Two-step metaphors take place more and more often and become more and more important as the *Quartet* goes along.

The two layers of birdsongs are joined by two other layers of sound, the cello and piano parts. Their music is metered, pulses are regular, and focal pulses (downbeats) occur at regular intervals. The outcome is that measurable duration is juxtaposed to the unquantifiable duration of the birdsongs. In order to indicate the nature of this juxtaposition, the next paragraphs delineate some details of the cello and piano parts.

The cello part sneaks into the musical texture. Beginning as it does with a pianissimo harmonic on the weak part of the third beat, it hardly can be heard as beginning at all. It does not articulate a downbeat, and it is not anacrustic to a downbeat. It starts without beginning. The first time listeners know they are hearing it they also know they have already heard it. Once again, but differently, they are in contact with non-quantifiable duration.

Both the cello and piano parts consist of rhythmic and pitch ostinatos—particular patterns that repeat over and over. While the cello's rhythmic and pitch

ostinatos begin, move, and end with each other, the piano's two ostinatos do not; the piano's rhythmic pattern would have to be repeated twenty-nine times in order that a beginning of its statement coincide again with the beginning of the pitch ostinato. The rhythmic ostinato is actually stated only 9.2 times. Moreover, the cello ostinato is out of phase with both of the piano's repeating sequences. The piano's rhythmic pattern would have to be stated 957 times (requiring about 230 minutes) in order that the cello and piano sequences line up as they do at the beginning.

Each statement of an ostinato pattern defines and thus quantifies a particular duration. Consequently, the beginning of each statement is a higher-level counterpart to a pulse. In other words, three statements of a particular ostinato pattern correspond to three pulses and three units of the duration defined by them. The durational unit defined by the cello pattern differs from the unit defined by each of the piano's two patterns. The first movement of the *Quartet*, then, presents the interplay of three systems of quantifying duration in addition to the two unquantifiable durations in the birdsongs. And it imagines, but does not articulate, two more: twenty-nine statements of the piano's rhythmic pattern—the number required for the piano's two patterns to begin together again—define a durational unit and a pulse that occurs each time the two ostinatos begin together. Finally, the 957 statements required to synchronize the beginning of all three patterns, which would take almost four hours of performance time, define a single pulse on an even higher level.

The overlay of systems of pulses makes it exceedingly difficult for listeners to hear the quantification of duration projected by any of them. Only well-trained, highly disciplined listeners will hear any of these durations, and they will be able to hear only some of them some of the time. This limitation is most conspicuous with respect to the (theoretical) pulse that occurs only after 957 statements of the piano's rhythmic ostinato. No human mind could concretely experience a succession of pulses that are separated from one another by four hours. But even apart from that, the complex interplay of the five differently-lengthed pulses brings

about a duration that is as unquantifiable as that of the birdsongs. This immeasurability, however, comes from too much durational orderliness, while the other comes from too little. The mutually irrelevant birdsongs relate to each other by differing in the same way from the duration/non-duration of the cello and piano parts.

At the same time, the four parts significantly share one feature. As the composing out of the infinitesimal moment separating time from non-time, the birdsongs in principle cannot have duration. As the separation of one unit of duration from the next, a pulse is also infinitesimal. Durations can occur only between pulses. But in the case of the twenty-nine and the 957 statements of the piano's rhythmic pattern needed for a single pulse on higher levels, the beat associated with the pulse is left incomplete, and the pulse becomes meaningless when the movement ends. In a very real sense, the entire movement is the incomplete composing out of the duration associated with a pulse, something as infinitesimal as the birdsongs' separation of time from non-time.

Third Movement. Scored for solo clarinet, "The Abyss of the Birds" also transcribes birdsong. "Time," Messiaen says, drawing on the image of a bottomless pit from the book of Revelation to explain the title for the movement, is an abyss of "sorrows and fatigues." The clarinet's birdsong is also an abyss: like time, it is bottomless and endless. This abyss, however, is positive, for it consists of unending desire for light and joy.

Like the birdsongs in the first movement, the music in "The Abyss of the Birds" is unmetered. The "Abyss" has no time signature, and its bar lines have no audible meaning whatsoever. What is enclosed by bar lines varies in length from six to seventy-seven sixteenth-note values. Presumably the bar lines are of some use to the performer, but they have no presence to listeners. There being no pulse, there is no standard unit of time, and there is no possibility of regularly recurring foci.

Still, the movement quantifies duration. It does so by consistently following a melodic statement with a varied repetition of the same and by using a whole note

F-sharp that grows from triple *piano* to *forte* three times (bars 13, 20, and 41). Not hearing downbeats, whether recurring regularly or irregularly, listeners are both required and enabled to focus attention on the groupings created by these repetitions and the structure they generate and define (sketched in Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Sketch of Messiaen, *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, third movement

<u>section</u>	<u>bars</u>	
A	1-12	(divided into a [1-2] and a' [3-4])
B	13-24	(divided into b [13-19] and b' [20-24])
C	25-29	(a transition to the return of A)
A'	30-40	
C'	41-43	
Coda	44	

Like two statements of the ostinato pattern in the first movement, the statement and repetition function as two pulses and two durational units. Because lengths of the *de facto* pulses change as the movement goes along, the audible measurement of time is continuously changing (just as sunrises articulate divisions in time, though what is between the divisions varies by a few minutes each day). Duration, as Messiaen later said, is “malleable and transformable,”⁶⁹ on both the note-to-note and on the phrase-to-phrase levels and in the interplay between measured and immeasurable durations.

The effect of layering unquantifiable and quantifiable durations is radically different from its counterpart in the first movement. Each statement-repetition functions like two pulses on the metrical level in metered music, and these pulses (like the upbeat pulses in some waltzes) are anacrusic to some coming thetic event. Though the length of the units marked by statement-repetition is not stan-

⁶⁹ In an essay written many years later, *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie*, pp. 352-53, Messiaen writes that in the life of the Resurrection, “we will live in a duration malleable and transformable. The power of the musician, who retrogrades and permutes his durations, prepares us, in a small way, for that state” (translation by Ian Darbyshire, “Messiaen and the Representation of the Theological Illusion of Time” in Siglind Bruhn, ed. *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love*. [New York, 1998], p. 41).

andardized, the process makes the past and future relevant at every moment throughout the movement. This kind of temporal experience is quite different from that conveyed by music with downbeats, and especially regularly recurring downbeats, but it is no less temporal.

Regular recurring downbeats can be indifferent to other aspects of the musical organization; they keep happening regardless of what else is going on. This kind of temporal experience corresponds to one in which human concerns, hopes, disappointments are curtailed or at least complicated by markers that are hostile or exterior to a person's authenticity and therefore indifferent to it (factory whistles, workday alarm clocks, train schedules, equinoxes, lunar phases and earthquakes could be examples). Time that is marked by events that are indifferent or unfriendly to human aspirations is time that is full of sadness and fatigue. Messiaen has created a temporal process that stands in contrast to the temporality of sadness. The temporal process he has created corresponds to life that is shaped from within, that is, without reference to markers that are humanly extraneous and therefore experienced as arbitrary. The temporal process imaged in the third movement is one in which desiring takes place, but unlike the abyss of time, the abyss of desiring is not negative.

Most important to this difference is the fact that none of the futures projected by the various statement-repetition pairs ever come to be. The movement is continuously characterized by setting up closures that never materialize. Even at the end the closing is unstable, open to some undefined future. The continuous non-fulfillment, however, is not sad or wearisome. In the image Messiaen has created, in which duration is not quantified and desire is not fettered by anything that is humanly extraneous, the desire for light and joy is itself light and joy. Hence the desiring is a new kind of fulfillment, one that never occurs in the other kind of abyss. The new fulfillment is compatible with non-fulfillment. In fact, the two interpenetrate each other.

The interaction of non-quantified with quantified durations might well not achieve this effect were it not for the impact of another interaction in the move-

ment, namely the use of two scales. One is the E major scale: it sets up the pitch E as a tonic, and in some respects the melodies are built from this scale and work toward E. The other is what Messiaen calls the Second Mode of Limited Transposition, and in some respects the melodies are built out of it. This scale alternates whole steps with half steps (C –D–E b –F–G b –A b –A–B–C). It is of “limited transposition” because there are only three scales that consist of the same disposition of whole and half steps and that do not have all the same pitches in common; a fourth scale would have the same pitches as the first one (in the case of the major and minor scales common in European music for several hundred years, the same disposition of whole and half steps can generate twelve scales that do not have all the same pitches in common). One result of using this mode is that the same sounds keep coming up again and again, and so it is comparatively easy for listeners to learn what sounds are possible and where the limits of predictability lie. The “sound world” being fairly tightly constrained, listeners can become comfortable in it rather quickly.⁷⁰ Consequently, moves from tension to resolution are comparatively uncharged emotionally, and, more importantly, the absence of a stable closing is also not especially disturbing.

Unlike the major scales of European music, the Second Mode does not set up a particular pitch as a tonic. Any or none of its pitches could turn out to be the center. Compared to music in E major, music in this mode is less goal-directed.

⁷⁰ In addition, the limitation matters to Messiaen because of the connection he sees between it (and the limitations inherent in non-retrograde rhythms as well) and terms of negative theology: terms like “non-spatial,” “non-temporal,” “unbounded,” “unreachable” point out their own insufficiency and in doing so point toward what they cannot reach. He also thinks of non-retrograde rhythms and modes of limited transposition as examples of the “charm of impossibilities.” Such “closed circuits,” he wrote, “possess a spellbinding strength, a magical power, a charm” (*Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d’orinologie*, vol. III [Paris, Alphonse Leduc, 1996], p. 7). By this he seems to have meant that the limitations inherent in these techniques work like a charm—they work as if magically by themselves, regardless of the composer’s manipulation—to put listeners in touch with futurelessness, hence with a new consciousness, a non-temporal consciousness, one that is “after” in the sense of “beyond” or “other to” time. In this connection it is worth noting that the five pitches in the first-movement cello ostinato have all the pitches (except G#) of the whole tone scale, which is also a scale of limited transposition. To the extent that the quartet is structured on this scale, providing the pitches on which all the movements are based, the piece as a whole works out a “charm of impossibilities.”

Consequently, the interplay between the E major scale and the Second Mode scale is an interplay between a temporality in which arriving at a goal is expected and one in which it is not—exactly the effect achieved by the interaction of quantified and unquantified durations.

Sixth movement. The “Dance of Fury, for the Seven Trumpets” comes to an interplay of quantified and unquantified duration by a different route and with a different outcome. Alone among the *Quartet*’s movements, it calls up the Day of Wrath that is commonly associated with the end of time (such as the *Dies irae* movements in the Mozart, Berlioz and Verdi Requiems).⁷¹ Its timbre—the four instruments playing from beginning to end in unison or octaves—is disturbingly alien. In addition to the complete absence of vertically deployed harmonies, the use of non-retrograde rhythmic patterns and the relation of non-retrograde rhythms to a melodic pattern that is stated seven times in the middle section are the features that give the movement its character as a frenzied dance.

Like movements two, four and five, this one is organized into three sections, of which the third is a kind of reprise of the first. Once again, the nature of the reprise and the nature of its relation to the middle section are decisive for the meaning of the movement as a whole. The first part comprises four statements (presumably for the first four trumpets described in Revelation 8:6–10:7) of a theme one of whose outstanding features is a rhythm that equivocates: it has downbeats, but the durations between downbeats are not regular. One hears music in which duration is measured by beats that have different lengths, and at the same time, one hears music in which durations are so irregular as not to be quantifiable. Following a meditative middle section, the music of the first part is reprised. Here, instead of equivocating, the music becomes unambiguously non-quantified. The length of bars changes continuously, for in many cases the result of constructing non-retrograde rhythms is that the material from one downbeat to

⁷¹ Concerning the fact that only one movement responds to what many people expect of a work focusing on the end of time, Messiaen wrote in the late 1950s, “...to regard the Revelation merely as an accumulation of cataclysms and catastrophes is to understand it poorly; the Revelation also contains great and marvelous lights, followed by solemn silences.” See Anthony Pople, *op cit.*, pp. 13, 101.

the next has one sixteenth-note too many or too few to fit into the meters that had become conventional in seventeenth- through nineteenth-century European music. Instead of being 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8, for example, they are 17/16, 19/16, 21/16. Moreover, continuous sixteenth-note motion masks the pulse; downbeats dissolve in the tumultuous succession of notes. The sense of frenzy is thickened.

Into this melee is inserted a three-note pattern, articulating an augmented triad (F–C#–A). It is more conspicuous, more threatening at each of its four appearances. The same pitches are used at each appearance, but the durations are different from one to the next. This variation, far from disguising the pattern, however, makes each appearance more menacing than the previous one. Moreover, whatever the variation, all of them except the last one involve a metrical irregularity (in terms of conventional European music), and reintroduce the equivocation between ways of hearing it. In the first three, it is unclear whether the music involves unquantifiable durations or pulses of unequal length. The interaction of quantified and unquantifiable time, presented in the first part of the movement, has returned.

Increasingly dominating the scene, F–C#–A presents with mounting intensity that which is terrible. Much of this swelling results from the cumulative effect of metrical irregularity, which is irregularly irregular: there is no pattern to the procession of irregular meters, and the sense that duration cannot be measured grows. What might happen next becomes increasingly unpredictable, and the only thing predictable is that the degree of unpredictability will continue to increase. As unpredictability is stepped up with each successive blast of F–C#–A, the tenuousness of predictability turns into the impossibility of expecting anything in particular and then the impossibility of expecting as such. The possibility of synthesizing what is expected with past and present happenings slips away. Linear temporality is challenged at its most basic level. Frenzy is maximized.

Not expressing people's terror in face of the terrible, the passage distills more and more purely the substance of the terrible itself. The climax of presenting the awesomely awful begins at sixteen measures before the end, when the trumpet

call of the movement's first four measures recurs. However, its note values change, and it is in effect assimilated to the menacing, ever more dominating F–C#–A. The sound of the trumpet thus coalesces with the terrible event which that sound calls forth. The crashing octaves in the four instruments, played quadruple *forte*, become the meaning of the whole movement, namely the horror and finality implicit in the trumpet call itself.⁷²

The horror is that of closing down linear temporality, whether curvilinear, past-directed rectilinear, or future-directed rectilinear. The movement presents the ending of temporality by moving toward measureless duration and the impossibility of remembering or expecting and the unfeasibility of all kinds of linearity. From within linear temporalities it is impossible to imagine a human consciousness that is radically futureless. Movement toward the impossibility of expecting is movement toward the impossibility of human consciousness. Herein is the awfulness of the ending of time.⁷³

The awfulness is contemplated only from within time. In this respect, the movement is radically different from the second movement, which provides music for the angel to use in announcing the end of time from a perspective outside of time. If the gentle forward motion in the middle section, gently driving to its gentle climax, is heard as time coming to an ending, then the announcement is reassuring and soothing. There being no depiction of terror, the comfort has nothing to do with people's fears about universal destruction or everlasting punishment for guilt. Rather, it calmly sets aside whatever is negative about temporal experience, such as suffering, weariness or meaninglessness. It is music for an-

⁷² The concluding seven bars confirm this sense. They recapitulate the entire movement in a compressed form. P:1 refers to and reestablishes the force of the reflective moment (F:1) that follows the sounding of the first four trumpets. P:2 refers to and puts back into play the climax of the section that, after briefly holding back the sounding of the last three trumpets, leads into these trumpet blares and the terrible that they increasingly present. P:6-7, the final bars, refer to the main theme (A:4) and reveal with dreadful finality the horror implicit in the trumpet call itself.

⁷³ Similarly, Gustav Mahler uses a negatively charged fanfare in the first movement of his Ninth Symphony to challenge the meaningfulness of his more positively connoted sections and drain the movement of its forward-directedness. The result is that the end of the movement is neither complete nor incomplete. See David B. Greene, *Mahler, Consciousness and Temporality* (London: 1984), pp. 274-75.

nouncing release from temporality. The announcement has most of all to do with the act of looking ahead or outward to what is beyond temporality, and little with whether an “other” temporality is compatible with human consciousness and still less or nothing at all with what timelessness itself may be.

By contrast, metrical irregularities in the sixth movement and the dissolution of their meaning warp the temporal process, but they do not become the music of what is beyond linear temporality. This is music for—an image of and also the means of—shutting down every temporal process in which recollecting and anticipating take place in and only in measurable and therefore potentially predictable units. It is also music for the infinitesimal interface between linear temporality and its negation. From the perspective of sixth-movement temporality, there is nothing beyond the negation. The movement does not draw listeners into a Beyond, outside of time; instead, it implicitly and abstractly asserts the absolute nothingness that lies, from the standpoint of linear temporality, beyond linear temporal processes.

Although the movement does not imagine eternity or a non-linear temporality or a temporality of an interplay of linear with non-linear aspects, it may well make listeners wish they could. To this wish, it is relevant to comment that just as the equivocal threat in the “Intermezzo” does not undermine the light and joy of the desire for light and joy in the preceding movement, so also the mind-numbing eclipse of consciousness called forth by the trumpets does not undermine the praiseworthy eternity of Jesus performed in its preceding movement.

2. Temporality without Beginnings and Endings

The first movement, in addition to presenting an interplay of quantifiable and unquantifiable durations, also brings forward an interplay between a temporal process in which beginning and ending are contrasted and a temporality in which

there is no such contrast. This negation takes place on several different levels. On the lowest level, it occurs in what Messiaen calls “non-retrograde rhythms.” These are rhythms like { ♩ ♪ ♪ . ♪ ♩ }, which are non-retrogradable because retrograding them does not generate a different rhythmic pattern. A rhythm such as { ♩ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ } is retrogradable, because its retrograde [namely, { ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ }] is a different pattern. Sounding the same whether played forward or backward, the non-retrogradable rhythm obliterates directionality. If there is no distinction between moving from the past and moving toward the future, there is no real motion, as it conventionally conceived, and no distinction between beginning and ending. If this distinction does not exist, the possibility of growth toward fulfillment or denouement from a high point also does not exist.⁷⁴ Non-retrograde rhythmic units are especially conspicuous in the first, sixth and seventh movements. In all three, they are juxtaposed to and in some sense interact with aspects of the music that are forward-directed and express motion toward a goal.

On a higher level, the ostinato figures in the **first movement** both sustain and undermine the contrast between beginning and ending. As a fixed pattern, an ostinato has a definite endpoint. However, the beginnings of each ostinato are so masked by the other two ostinatos, with which it is not synchronized, as well as the two birdsongs, that even if listeners are aware of a repeating pattern they cannot be certain when new statements of it are starting. The contrast between beginning and ending is lost in the intricacy of the repeating patterns.

The “Vocalise for the Angel Who Announces the End of Time” (the **second movement**⁷⁵) consists of a middle part—the vocalise proper for violin and cello

⁷⁴ As Ian Darbyshire puts it (“Messiaen and the Representation of the Theological Illusion of Time,” in Siglind Bruhn, ed., *Messiaen’s Language of Mystical Love* [New York, 1998], p. 39), “[V]iewed as a complete unit, the non-retrogradable rhythm is an image of the effective simultaneity of the whole of time. And since space is inextricably connected with time, ... this is an image of the whole of space-time: the whole universe.”

⁷⁵ Both the name of the movement and its style brings to mind famous vocalises, like those of Rachmaninoff (the last of his Op. 34 songs) and Villa Lobos (in the fifth of his *Bachianas Brasileiras*). A vocalise is a composition for a singer who does not sing words. The singer is treated as though she or he were an instrument, chosen for the composition because of the timbre of the

playing in octaves plus piano—book-ended by music scored for all four instruments. One might suppose that the first *tutti* functions as an introduction and the second as a closing, but in fact each one is both introductory and final. While the second one is a little shorter, the two are more or less interchangeable. The vocalise itself behaves differently. It sets up a contrast between beginning and ending. Although the violin-cello humming is somewhat amorphous and although the piano part is largely derived from the piano of the first movement and thus alludes to the first movement’s slide into futurelessness,⁷⁶ nevertheless the middle section is still end-directed. It quietly but definitively moves toward a gentle, *mezzoforte* climax that occurs precisely half way through the vocalise, and then recedes toward the pianississimo with which it began.

The **fifth movement** does without the contrast between beginning and ending quite differently. This movement, “Praise for the Eternity of Jesus,” is Messiaen’s transcription for cello and piano of a long, slow passage from *The Festival of Beautiful Waters*, which he wrote for the 1937 Paris Exhibition. Of the earlier music the composer had written, it “turns the water into a symbol of grace and eternity, according to the book of John, ‘the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’”⁷⁷ In the 1940 context, Jesus’s gift of the water of eternal life becomes a synecdoche for Himself and His

voice and not because of the possibility of enunciating words. Messiaen is treating the violin and cello (which play the same pitch classes two octaves apart) as though they were a singer that is being treated as an instrument. Asking performers to imitate someone’s imitation of their performance style is not peculiar to Messiaen. The *Nutcracker* ballet does a corresponding thing when it asks dancers to imitate mechanical dolls that imitate human dancers.

Similarly, the “Vocalise” is a metaphor for a metaphor. Like birdsong in the “Crystal Liturgy,” it alludes to something (the violin and cello allude to a vocal solo) that in turn alludes to something else (a vocalise, by setting aside the vocalist’s power to add verbal to musical expression, alludes to non-verbally expressive instruments, of which violin and cello are prime examples). Messiaen’s instruments that are responsible for the allusion end up being that to which they are alluding, thereby obviating the way that ordinarily metaphors point away from themselves and imply a direction that requires space and temporality. Both space and time collapse into themselves when the distance between the pointer and that to which it is pointing is zero. This interaction of temporality with its opposite is different from any of the interplays of opposites in the first movement, or any of the subsequent movements, for that matter.

⁷⁶ For details of the relation of the piano part of the two movements, see Pople, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-34.

⁷⁷ Pople, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

eternity. In other words, the music is an aural metaphor for a water that metaphorically is Jesus's eternity. Like many ponds and lakes, this water is tranquil, yet moving; it is still, nevertheless, it is not stagnant. Like Jesus's eternity, neither the motion nor the tranquility attenuates the other.

As tranquil and still, it is without beginning and ending. At the same time, there are aspects of the music to which remembering and expecting are relevant. This linearity has two outstanding features. First, what is expected does not occur, and, second, the non-occurrence is not negative. The coming fulfillment does not connote an absence in the present. The fullness of the present does not connote that movement is an illusion. These general comments connect the movement to the theme of the end of time. In this case, it is not the time just before the end of time (as in the next movement—the music for the “Seven Trumpets”—which expresses temporality coming to an end). It is music expressing what it is like to be on the other side of, outside of, beyond (spatial no less than temporal prepositions necessarily fail) the end of time and temporality as usually understood. It expresses Jesus's eternity, hence also the eternity that he gives to humans, perhaps before as well as after their death.

To this effect three features of the music are pertinent. First is the undulating relation of the cello and piano parts to each other. At times the movement is a cello solo with piano accompaniment, and the piano supports the cello's tranquility; at other times, it is a duet of two independent minds, in which the piano is momentarily independent of what the cello is doing.⁷⁸ The undulation sets up a mild tension, whose solution is expected, but never comes. The gentle dynamism, consisting of gentle caresses of unpredictability and slight bumps against the sense of continuity, is not enough to generate an ambiguity, but still it inconspicuously wards off stagnation and boredom. Second, there are repetitions in

⁷⁸ Times when the cello moves but the piano part is static (A: 3, 4, 9, 10; B:1-5, C. 1-4, C: 8, D:1, 2 5, 6) support the sense that the prevailing texture is that of a solo melody with piano accompaniment. However, times when the piano moves, but the cello part sustains a single pitch (for example, A: 5, 11; B: 6; D: 6) support the sense that the piano has a mind and purpose of its own, and that the texture is that of a duet whose two parts have varying degrees and kinds of relevance to one another.

which the echoing statement deviates slightly from its model, but the change does not lead to anything; it projects a future; the projected future is never realized.⁷⁹ Third, there are times when a second phrase is paired to the preceding phrase, and the pairing expresses stability. But then the second phrase ends with greater mobility than does the phrase to which it is paired, and the connoted stability becomes problematic.⁸⁰

Fourth, and more important, is the treatment of the reprise. It follows a retransition—listeners are alerted to the imminent reprise—but the reprise’s arrival does not express fulfillment because the *crescendo molto* of the retransition gives way to a sudden *pianississimo*. This non-fulfillment is supported, as Pople stresses,⁸¹ by the fact that this retransition does not prolong a dominant harmony. The result is that there is no dominant to tonic, mobility to stability, expressed at the return. There is a sense of arrival, but no sense of fulfillment.

Fifth, and even more importantly, the end of the movement expresses a sense of resolution and fulfillment, but it is not a fulfillment that is earned or that comes out of a prior dynamic. Dynamism is implicit in the fulfillment, yet there has been no dynamic pushing toward fulfillment. The dynamism of what preceded the ful-

⁷⁹ One example occurs in the first phrase, which subdivides into a pair of subphrases. Although the subphrases are equally long, the second opens as a condensed form of the first one, and then ends with a prolonged version of the ending to the first phrase. The outcome is that the focal measure in the first subphrase contrasts gently but clearly to the focal measure in the second one. In the first subphrase, the third bar is the culminating focus, while the corresponding moment in the second subphrase is in the second bar, and its third bar sounds like an afterbeat in an extended feminine cadence. So the third bar shows change and movement without that motion heading toward anything, for its focus is in the past.

⁸⁰ For example, the pairing of A:1-6 to A:7-12 creates a dynamic tranquility/tranquil dynamism in the following way. The culminating moment in the paired phrase (bar 11) serves also as the culminating moment for the two phrases as a pair. However, the phrase’s last bar deviates from its first-phrase model as the cello reaches up to a high B and both the cello and the piano open out from the prevailing quiet level of sound (*piano*) to a *forte*, thereby undermining the stability of the second phrase and turning it into an anacrusis to the next section (the movement’s long middle section).

⁸¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 62: “[T]he sense of large-scale return at this point of the movement does not come primarily from a sense of prolonged dominant harmony, but rather emerges from factors such as the rhetorical play of dynamics across the bar line into D:1, the cello’s melodic arrival on E-natural, the piano’s relaxation onto the tonic triad, the statement by the cello of a recognizable variant of the movement’s opening theme, and probably some nuances of performance timing that serve to ‘place’ the downbeat gently but firmly.”

fillment turns out to be identical with tranquility, for it does not attain fulfillment. Dynamism, of course, implies movement from a beginning to a culminating ending; peace and tranquility imply motionlessness. Continuously co-present, the two interact without modifying one another.

This interaction takes the following form. Like the reprise in the “Intermezzo,” the movement five reprise elides the two subphrases of the opening phase into a single subphrase. There being no balancing subphrase, the potential for generating a responding pair is set aside. Instead of offering a culmination or even a preparation for a culminating moment that would give the section a well-rounded shape, the music simply quietly dies away over the next five measures, the closing bars of the movement. The dying away, however, lapses into an exquisitely beautiful E played by a cello harmonic and an E-major chord played in repeated, ever softer sixteenth notes on the piano—beautiful because they pull the entire movement together into a single sonority.

The effect of fulfillment without a preceding dynamism may well be unique, and consequently difficult to describe except oxymoronically. Comparing and contrasting this aspect of the fifth movement to the shape of the third movement may help. The “Abyss of the Birds” reaches toward fulfillment, but does not articulate it, yet the non-fulfillment feels like fulfillment, suggesting that this particular reaching toward fulfillment is itself a kind of fulfillment. In this way, the movement has conveyed that the desire for light and joy can itself be light and joy. In the fifth movement, the opposite occurs: fulfillment occurs, though there is no reaching toward it, suggesting that fulfillment includes in itself a kind—a new kind—of reaching toward it. In their different ways, both movements set forth a temporality that supercedes (and in that sense ends) the temporality of only moving toward an expected future.⁸²

⁸² The movement can also be usefully compared and contrasted to the joining of dynamic and tranquil temporalities in the “Qui tollis” movement of Mozart’s C Minor Mass. See above, pp. 32-38.

Messiaen's title for the movement, "Praise for the Eternity of Jesus," is more profoundly apt than may be immediately apparent. Most of all the movement praises by modeling itself after Jesus's eternity. It is music for transformed temporality, and as such it provides an example of Jesus's kind of eternity, not literally but metaphorically, but still actually.⁸³ Just as the movement has fulfillment, without setting up the grounds for attaining it, so it also praises without setting up the reasons why Jesus's eternity is to be praised. It praises by being, figuratively, that which it means to praise.

In the **seventh movement** ("A Tangle⁸⁴ of Rainbows for the Angel Who Announces the End of Time"), a temporal process without a beginning interacts with future-directedness by means of the juxtaposing, the interweaving and, at the end, the coinciding of two opposite formal procedures.⁸⁵

One formal procedure is the variation (the "A" sections in Figure 4.2). There are four statements of a slow, sustained string song with piano triads moving in continuous sixteenth notes. It recalls the second movement (the other movement for the "Angel Who Announces the End of Time) in a number of ways,⁸⁶ though the string and piano parts are more closely integrated, more closely given to a common purpose, in the seventh than in the second movement. Each of the four statements is different from the others, but not different in a way that suggests tension or movement toward a culmination. Time is cyclical: what will be repeats what has been; although each statement has a beginning and an ending, nothing marks one statement as more of a beginning than the others. As a whole, the set is like the succession of years, which in spite of superficial differences are essen-

⁸³ As Nelson Goodman would insist (*Languages of Art* [Indianapolis, 1968], pp. 68-71).

⁸⁴ The word Messiaen uses, "Fouillis," means a "disorderly bunch" or a "mess" of rainbows.

⁸⁵ A new kind of musical coherence is achieved when contrasts that do not depend so much on melodic, harmonic or rhythmic but rather structural elements are overcome. The nature of the coherence of Messiaen's seventh movement can be usefully compared and contrasted to the coherence described by Julian Horton in his analysis of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony (*Bruckner's Symphonies* [Cambridge, UK, 2004] chapter 4), in which the tension that drives the music from the opening to the coda is a dissonance between a structure and a counter-structure. The dissonance is resolved when the final cadence subsumes elements of the counter-structure into the domain of the tonic.

⁸⁶ Pople spells these out in *op. cit.*, p. 73.

tially the same, the whole is no different from the sum of the parts, and the choice of New Years Day is arbitrary.

Figure 4.2

A ₁	B ₁	A ₂	B ₂	A ₃	B ₃	A ₄	B ₄
A:1-12	B:1—C:6	D:1-12	E:1—F:1-8	G:1-3	H:1—J:9	K:1-12	L:1-4

Alternating with these four statements is a second set of statements. Its material is faster, more agitated and goal-directed. In comparison to the procession of A sections, the second through fourth B sections are much less loosely tied to their prototype. For example, they introduce different material from the second movement, they extend some phrases and omit others, and the effect of these changes it to generate a sense of increasing instability and mobility and moving forward. The accumulation of superimposed materials becomes increasingly a highly effective metaphor for a “tangle” of rainbows. Time is rectilinear: the set as a whole is like the work of years whose cumulative effect is something distinct from and greater than the sum of the individual years.

The two processes work independently of each other until the end of the third statement in the variation set. During the third statement of the goal-directed set, mobility increases and reaches its peak at the end of this statement. This mobility ushers in the last reprise of the variation set, which is powerfully restated in octaves by clarinet, violin and cello, accompanied by grandly sweeping piano arpeggios. The fourth statement of the variation set turns out to be not only the final variation in the cycle but also the goal of the developing set—that which absorbs its mobility and resolves its tension. The final statement of the developing set calmly reprises the beginning of its first statement. Curvilinear and rectilinear time have come together, though the moment of coincidence has two meanings, one in relation to each of the processes it joins. One is to confirm the validity of

goal-directedness. The other meaning is to refuse the reality of change, for within the variation set all the sections have the same meaning.

Consequently, the movement is “for” the angel announcing the end of time in two senses. One is that, by adumbrating the coincidence of end-directedness with changelessness, it adumbrates a temporality that is fundamentally “other” than rectilinear temporality, and as result is well-suited to announce the end of that temporality to people who are living in it. The other is that it is “for” that infinitesimal interface between the two temporalities, where the coincidence of the two undoes the contrast between them. In this moment there is no beginning or ending, but it relates itself to temporality in which beginning and ending have meaning.

The formal strategy of the *Quartet’s last movement* is decisive for its particular way of undoing future-directedness and the temporality in which “ending” has meaning. It consists of four sections, the first and third of which are nearly identical and the second and fourth are, says their composer, commentaries on the first and third. The first and third sections are tightly structured into six-bar phrases. The first commentary opens up the motifs of the first part and releases them from the confines of the phrase structure. In the second commentary, this releasing continues and attains a convincing *fortissimo* climax and, a few bars later, the highest pitch of the entire quartet. More importantly, the commentaries stretch out the future-directed theme of sections one and three. The stretching amounts to a prolonging that gradually but steadily increases durations so that temporality asymptotically approaches the non-temporality of endless duration.

Messiaen associates the eighth movement with the day after the seven days of creation. The eighth day is, of course, not a day at all, but the eternity that surrounds and permeates the “days” of creation and its time-boundedness. Messiaen’s idea is that the day of rest is “prolonged into eternity, ... everlasting light, ... eternal peace.”⁸⁷ “Day” is presumably a temporal entity, and “prolonging it” suggests that day and its temporality do not cease to exist as such even though day is

⁸⁷ Pople, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

prolonged indefinitely. “Prolonging” suggests not that temporality ceases, obliterated by measureless duration or eternity, but that the contrast between quantified and unbounded duration is not so much undone as outdone, that the two somehow coalesce. It suggests that there is not an abrupt break, but rather a smooth transition from linear temporality to the prolonged linear temporality that approaches eternity.

If the second section “prolongs” the temporality of the first section, then the third section makes the contrast between prolonged and not-yet prolonged temporality explicit. Then the fourth section dissolves the contrast by separating its loudest from its highest note. For linear temporality seems to end at the dynamic peak, a *fortissimo* fourth C# above middle C. But the prolonging continues, and as it does another goal emerges—the stratospheric E, higher even than the top C#, but now *pianississimo*. Temporality has persisted into the arrival of this last goal, but the goal is so gently articulated and temporality has been so stretched that the contrast between goal-directed and non-linear temporality just goes away. There is an ending, what has begun has ended, but the ending is curiously similar to a non-ending. Future-directed temporality having achieved the movement’s dynamic peak, the movement’s last four bars extend it into the movement’s highest pitch and at the same time into the annihilation of future-directedness. The extension joins the two peaks and makes the difference between them unproblematic. As it does, temporality and its annihilation are likewise joined and contrasted, also unproblematically.

This unproblematic juxtaposition is corroborated by a parallel juxtaposition that has to do with the source of pitches in the movement. The music draws from two sources: the E major scale and Messiaen’s Second Mode of limited transposition. In the six measures that constitute the first section, the music equivocates between the two. That is, the passage is to be heard as based on, derived from, the E major scale, and equally on and from Mode Two. Each scale is gainsaid by the presence of some tones that do not belong to it and the absence of some tones that

do.⁸⁸ Consequently, the music equivocates between the goal-directedness of music based on the major scale and the absence of a defined *telos* characterizing music based on Mode Two.

This equivocation continues in the first commentary, and a further ambiguity gradually emerges. The equivocation may a tension to be resolved. Or it may be a new kind of stasis; that is, just as Mode Two can be a workable alternative to the E major scale, so the interaction of the two can be a workable alternative to both of them—a resolution and stasis, not a tension-generating gesture. The third section repeats the first one verbatim, yet its meaning is actually different: while the first equivocates between E Major and Mode Two, its reprise carries forward the equivocation that the second section makes between the presence or absence of a tension between the two scales. In the last section, the first five bars are the work of Mode Two, but then the dynamic climax (the *fortissimo* on high C# over the E-major triad in the piano) emphatically reestablishes the E major scale. The other climax (top E, *pianississimo*) is approached by A#, which is in Mode Two, but not in E major, and is supported by both the E-major chord (whose pitches are in both scales) and pitches that are only in Mode Two (D and E#). To hear pitches from both scales extending the final peak into measureless and goalless duration is to hear the interaction of the E major and Mode Two both as a tension and as a new kind of stasis.⁸⁹

3. The *Quartet* as a Whole

The interplays between quantifiable and immeasurable durations and between linear and non-linear temporality vary from one movement to another. Surprisingly, the considerable differences do not set up a tension that calls for resolution.

⁸⁸ Pople, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

⁸⁹ The interaction of a major scale and a mode of limited transposition is anticipated in the melodic pattern in the piano part of the first movement. See footnotes 76, 90.

Each movement is self-sufficient and dynamically independent from the other movements.

Nevertheless, as the *Quartet* goes along, a sense of what might constitute its completeness as a whole emerges. Eventually, that completeness takes place. Two aspects of the completion are especially interesting. One is that it occurs at the end of the seventh, not the eighth, movement. The other is that the occurrence of completeness is not heard as a climax or culminating fulfillment. Decisive for the gradual emergence is a second completeness. Different in kind, it takes place in the eighth movement. It also resolves no tensions and is not a culmination.

Section One has described some of the ways the first movement forecasts events in subsequent movements: the contradiction of quantifiable duration, the interaction of quantifiable duration with its contradiction, the interplay of linear temporality with the undoing of the contrast between beginning and ending, the interplay of predictability and continuity with their opposites, and the use of two-step metaphors.

In addition, the cello part in the first movement forecasts events that will turn out to define and constitute the *Quartet's* completeness. The cello part consists exclusively of a single set of pitch classes (C – E – D – F# – B b), which is stated three times in each appearance of the cello ostinato, twenty-one times in all. It is the most prominent melodic aspect of the movement.⁹⁰ These pitch classes, it

⁹⁰ The five pitches, which are five of the six pitches of a whole-tone scale, recur on different parts of the measure, and their durations are different from one statement to the next. Consequently it is almost as hard to hear the repetitions within the fifteen-note pattern as it is to hear the repetitions of the total pattern. Since, however, listeners hear this pattern 21.8 times, they may well have come to recognize it as such by the end of the movement (only to be frustrated by the incomplete twenty-second statement). In any case, the prominence of the five pitches is salient, regardless of the extent to which the order in which they occur is salient. The rhythmic sequence in the piano part consists of seventeen durational values and is easier to hear than the cello's sequence, for every statement in the piano begins squarely on the beat and starts off with three fairly readily identifiable quarter-note chords. In addition, it ends with a half note, which sets off the beginning of the next statement. Compared to the derivation of the cello melody, the derivation of the piano's chords is less uniform and more complex (Pople, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-24, spells out the details of these derivations). The sequence does not move to an audible conclusion. While there are pockets of sameness, the shifts from one pocket to another—from one algorithm to another—are not the product of a readily discernible algorithm. It is not surprising that the sequence of chords is incomplete at the close of the movement. But, like the cello ostinato, it has an importance with re-

turns out, serve as centers for the various movements: the first movement is centered on B \flat (the last pitch class in the cello's set), the second movement on D, the third, fourth, fifth and eighth on E, the sixth on F#, and the seventh on C (the first pitch in the cello ostinato). Of these, E becomes most important in the sense that it is used for fully half of the *Quartet*. C also becomes important as the first one in the set and the last one to become a pitch center.

In some important respects, the *Quartet* is over at the end of the seventh movement when the C is horizontalized and all the pitches in the cello ostinato have become the pitch or tonic center of a movement (the pitch center of the eighth movement having been already articulated by three other movements). In addition, the seventh is the last movement in which all four instruments play (the clarinet and cello are silent in the eighth). More than any other movement, it refers back to earlier events in the *Quartet*, especially the second movement. In character, it is somewhat more like a *finale* than is the final movement, thus allowing the eighth movement's correspondence to the eighth "day" of creation, when the work and reflection on creation are over and the "day" is prolonged toward and into futureless and immeasurable duration.

Because there is no overarching dynamic that runs a course from beginning to end, incompleteness nowhere being felt as a tension to be resolved, the completeness actualized in the seventh movement cannot bring a sense of resolution. Completeness without culmination fits with the fact that, with respect to completeness, one movement could exchange places with another. What is not important to the wholeness is the order in which the pitch centers occur. For reasons other than completeness, the Intermezzo needs to be at or near the middle of the *Quartet*, and to the extent that the seventh movement is a quasi-finale, it needs to be placed at or near the end. But, so far as pitch-class completeness is concerned, the two movements for the angel announcing the end of time could change posi-

spect to the *Quartet*'s other movements: the piano's melodic ostinato sets up within itself an interaction between the major mode and the modes of limited transposition, as does the use of the major mode with the mode of limited transposition in the cello ostinato.

tions with each other, as could the two movements praising Jesus, and the music for the trumpets could come at any point.

There are, however, other considerations, and these do bear on the order of the movements. They constitute the *Quartet's* second kind of completeness. The third and fourth movements (“The Abyss of the Birds” and the “Intermezzo”) make a pair. The outstanding feature of the fourth movement is its continuous presentation of thetic statements that are self-generated and do not follow a preceding anacrusis. It thus corresponds to the salient feature of the third movement, which is the way its anacruses never lead to thetic statements. In contrast to the soaring freedom of the third movement, the “Intermezzo” seems to be continuously pulled down. Far from transcending temporality, it seems held back by the weight of the temporal structure on which it depends. The unique dynamic of dangling anacruses bonded to ungenerated (or self-generated) thetic moments holds together the two movements. By their very difference, each movement clarifies and emphasizes the nature of the other. In this respect, the fourth movement needs to follow the third.

The nature of the contrast between the third and fourth movements and their pairing to one another is replicated in the contrast between and pairing of the fifth and sixth (“Praise for the Eternity of Jesus” and music for the angels’ trumpets). The third movement undoes the contrast between fulfillment and pressing toward fulfillment, and the fifth movement undoes the contrast between motion and stasis. Squarely within the temporal process, the fourth and sixth undo none of the aspects of future-directed temporality, but both of them post the news that this temporality will not continue indefinitely, the one doing so with whimsical, somewhat menacing light-heartedness and the other with deadly earnestness. The contrast between three and four makes them a pair, and likewise five and six form a pair.

And, most importantly, each pair is the counterpart to the other. Although the pairing does not respond to an instability left hanging at the close of the first movement in the pair and does not gainsay the independence of each movement

from the others, the pairing of three-four with five-six fits with the significant pairing that takes place in the *Quartet's* musical process on many levels. Both the pairing of phrases within a section and the pairing of successive or alternating sections are integral to the *Quartet's* interplay of measurable duration and linear temporality with the undoing of both.

The next-to-last movement (the rainbows) replicates many aspects of the next-to-first movement (the vocalise). Already paired by their titles, “Vocalise / Tangle of Rainbows for the Angel Who Announces the End of Time,” the two movements are musically paired by similarities in tempo (both have quite slow sections as well as robust, moderately faster ones), melodic, rhythmic and harmonic material, and sonorities (violin-cello in unison in the vocalise, violin or cello solo in some sections of the “Rainbows” music, both with perpetual sixteenth-note motion in piano).

The first and last movements are also counterparts to one another, in spite of the obvious differences between them. The first-movement birdsongs, occurring on the cusp between late night and early morning, are an image of the non-moment of silence that comes before the *Quartet* begins, before, that is, the beginning of time, while the eighth movement is the silence that comes after the *Quartet's* finale, after, that is, the ending of time. The differences between the textures and the forms of the outside movements are starkly obvious, and these differences equal and project the difference between not-yet time and no-longer time.

There are other similarities that are deeper, though subtler. Both movements are notated with key signatures (B-flat and E, respectively), and both have a tonal center that is severely attenuated. Both movements are notated with a meter (triple and duple, respectively), indicating that both have downbeats and that the downbeats recur at regular intervals, though the beats between the downbeats are not unambiguously regular in the first movement. Both movements transcend the feeling of measurable time, with which metrical music comports, by stretching measurable time beyond the limits of human apprehension. The eighth movement

carries out this stretching by its extremely slow tempo. The first movement (“the work’s most palpable evocation of endlessness”⁹¹) stretches out measurable time into undifferentiated duration by the length of its cycle, as defined by the place where the various sub-cycles end and re-commence together. In both, the eclipsing of measurable time images temporality turning into a transformed, non-linear temporality.

Like movements two and seven and three-four and five-six, movements one and eight are, in view of these likenesses, a pair. The likenesses even suggest that they are interchangeable. After all, not-yet and no-longer are not intrinsically different. Although linear temporality contrasts to them differently, in and of themselves they are undifferentiated. Pople marshals evidence, which he says is not conclusive, to the effect that the “Crystal Liturgy” was the last movement to be composed.⁹² If so, Messiaen may have had in mind as he was composing it that since it articulates the last pitch in the cello’s ostinato it should be the last movement in the *Quartet*.⁹³

If what are now the first and last movements are interchangeable, then the decision as to which one to place where is at least somewhat arbitrary.

⁹¹ Pople, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁹² *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁹³ The similarity of the titles for movements five and eight raises the question whether they may be interchangeable. Both are transcriptions of earlier pieces into the key of E; both are slow solos for string instruments with similar piano accompaniments; both praise Jesus—the one for his eternity, the other for his immortality. The question is pushed by the fact that the other two movements with similar titles (two and seven) are arguably a pair. However, there is a greater difference between movements five and eight than their titles suggest. The “Praise of Jesus’s Eternity” uses a process to project a single image, namely the dynamic tranquility of Jesus’s eternity. That is, a process unfolds a reality that itself does not unfold. Undergoing the process belongs to the order of listeners’ knowing, not to the order of Jesus’s being. The image of Jesus’s eternity is developed, but there is no idea that the eternity itself develops or undergoes process. In the eighth movement, the image is that of a process, namely the process of temporality merging with non-temporality. Messiaen’s title for the movement links this process to Easter: Jesus “resurrected as immortal,” as Messiaen wrote above the movement.

Because of these differences, the eighth movement cannot serve as a counterpart to the third movement; only the fifth movement can do that. Consequently, the procession three-four does not find a counterpart in the putative procession of eight-six (that is, the procession that would occur if movements five and eight exchanged places). Furthermore, the features of the eighth movement that make it interchangeable with the “Crystal Liturgy” do not occur in the “Praise of Jesus’s Eternity.”

That is not to say that the decision does not have consequences for the shape of the whole. In first-movement position, the “Crystal Liturgy” forecasts procedures that define the *Quartet* itself. But the “Crystal Liturgy” would also be important, though differently important, if it came at the end. There it would serve as a review and composite of what each movement has put forth and achieved. The “Crystal Liturgy” would be easier to understand if it were preceded by that which it sums up.

Putting “Jesus’s Immortality” in first place would open the *Quartet* with a far more accessible movement. Like the “Crystal Liturgy,” it would forecast the other movements, though differently, providing that to which they contrast (the fourth and sixth movements) or indicating that to which they are tending (the second, third, fifth and seventh). Like the “Crystal Liturgy” it would forecast without setting up a goal to be reached or a tension to be resolved.

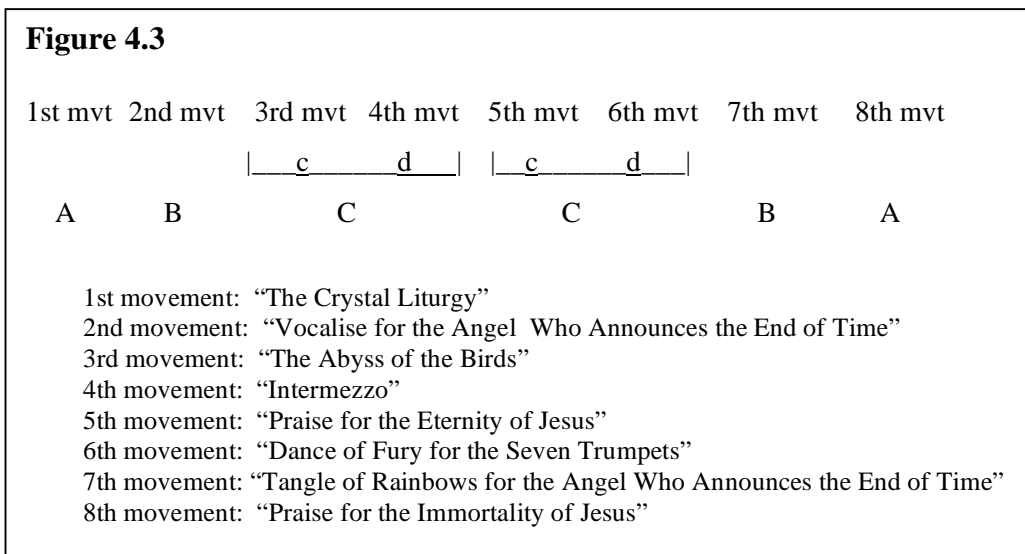
But although the placement of the outside movements affects the shape of the *Quartet* as a whole, the change in shape would not much affect the meaning of the whole. Or rather, it is precisely this reversibility that gives meaning to the shape of the whole, for it contributes decisively to the shape of a palindrome.⁹⁴ The palindrome is the second kind of completeness that is realized by the *Quartet* as a whole.

The palindrome shape is important throughout the *Quartet* on various levels. On the lowest level is the non-retrograde rhythm, which is the same played backwards as forwards, and in which the mirrored duration values, being identical, are literally interchangeable. As Pople points out,⁹⁵ the rhythmic pattern divides into

⁹⁴ Paul Griffiths (101), who calls attention to aspects of the Rainbow music that give it the structure of a palindrome, also sees “strong indications of a palindrome” in the Quartet as a whole. In his analysis, there is also an interplay of temporality with this aspect of non-temporality, for he also hears “at the same time ... a “powerful finality to the last movement.” Composers may take advantage of the structural power of musical palindromes more frequently than is generally realized. John Butt, for example, hears it as the structure of the Credo in Bach’s B Minor Mass (*op. cit.*, pp. 94-95).

⁹⁵ Pople, *op. cit.*, p. 21. If the eighth note is assigned the value of 1, then the half note would have the value of 4, the dotted quarter note the value of 3, and the pattern could be written: 434411311113114. The pattern divides into two groups, 434 and 411311113114. Very few listeners have the musical discipline to hear the second group as a palindrome.

two groups, and both of them are palindromes. In the second movement, the sections on either side of the central vocalise are both gestures that are as much introductory as they are closing, and are therefore interchangeable and challenge the contrast of beginning and ending at a higher level. Some aspects of the seventh movement structure it as a quasi-palindrome. On the highest level, the *Quartet* as a whole is a palindrome. Movements one and eight are counterparts to one another, as are the second and seventh movements, and the pair consisting of movements three and four is the counterpart to the pair consisting of movements five and six. See Figure 4.3.



While the palindrome shaping the quartet as a whole makes beginning and ending interchangeable, it also puts limits on the extent to which movements can be repositioned. The palindrome affects the ordering of movements, though it is not completely determinative. It supports a kind of completeness that does not depend on the usual markers of temporality, such as the sense of moving toward an arrival and the contrast between what has been and what might be. Like the completeness of the pitch classes, the palindrome is an effective way to organize a

work in which each movement presents a distinctive vision of the ending of time, but none is presented as more basic or culminating than the others. Listeners are not given a musical reason for prioritizing any movement. The palindrome is valuable not for its own sake nor for the sake of a rational ordering but for the sake of undermining the definitive character of either beginning or ending. The palindrome simply organizes the eight movements without putting them into a hierarchy or a rectilinear process.

Carrying out two very different modes of completeness is one of the *Quartet's* most important unique aspects. The two processes are independent: the musical events that bring about the completeness of pitch centers do not play a role in bringing about the completeness of the palindrome, which comes about through events like phrase structure, rhythm and texture. Both processes are a coming upon rather than a working toward completeness; expecting or needing or even desiring completeness does not happen in either one. They both set aside linear temporality, but do so quite differently: the palindrome partly resembles curvilinear time, but the resemblance is only superficial and in the end irrelevant; the completion of pitch classes partly resembles rectilinear time, but the differences outweigh likenesses. The two juxtaposed processes of completeness replicate on the level of the *Quartet* as a whole the interplay of two different temporal arrangements that occurs within the individual movements.

The importance of this observation can be pointed up by contrasting it to the outcomes of analytical approaches to the *Quartet* in which it does not play a role. There are two kinds of approaches. One is that practiced by musicologists, who give sensitive and well documented analyses of musical phrases and shapes of individual movements. They point out motivic and procedural connections among the various movements, but do not say much about the structure of the *Quartet* as a whole. As for “the end of time,” they do not go beyond quoting Messiaen’s words and citing one or two places that illustrate his religious inspiration, tacitly acknowledging that carefully connecting the quartet as a whole with eternity requires skill with a different set of concepts from those of musical analysis.

The other approach is that practiced by analysts interested in the theological meaning of the music and its potential impact on spiritual life. These analyses attend almost exclusively to Messiaen's compositional techniques (modes of limited transposition, non-retrogradable rhythms, meterlessness, *ostinati*) and tease adumbrations of eternity from these. They do not pay attention to what is actually heard, namely, the unfolding of these techniques into phrases, sections, climaxes and wholeness.⁹⁶ This second approach has two problems.

First, by dealing exclusively with compositional techniques, they imply that the quality of the actual music is irrelevant to the aural images of moving toward the Beyond. A second-rate composer might easily use all these techniques and write a piece that would, as per this approach, have exactly the same impact on temporality as Messiaen's.

Second, the differences in envisioning eternity in the various movements slips through the net of this methodology. Apparently assuming that there is a single vision of eternity at work in the piece, they regard the various movements as different ways of projecting that one vision. These differences, they say, come from the way that something temporal is necessary—given audiences' limitations—in order to project something that is essentially non-temporal.⁹⁷ The assumption that the survivals of temporality are preliminary—something to be jettisoned when that to which they point comes into view—makes it hard to hear the re-doing of quantified duration and the now-then contrast and even harder to hear the interplays between the un-doing and the redoing. Missing these interactions and the differences they make in the different movements, they also miss the

⁹⁶ For a useful critical review of both musicological and theological approaches to Messiaen and his music, see Robert Fallon, "*Olivier Messiaen: Le livre du Centenaire*" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 63/2 (Summer, 2010), pp. 378-92.

⁹⁷ For example, Jean Marie Wu, *op. cit.*, sees the temporal as something merely to be transcended because it imposes limitations that "reflect the temporal limitations he faced in his life on earth—limitations that he believed would dissolve in eternity" (p. 114). Accordingly, "Messiaen attempted to transcend the temporal limitations of his music, to express his faith as he aspired towards eternity" (p. 86). Paul Griffiths writes from a similar position in saying of the "Crystal Liturgy," "The problem is to give the impression of changelessness while all the time there is change, to make an image of blessed eternity that is still intelligible to minds existing in the present world" (*op. cit.*, p. 102). Griffiths does not see the possibility that Messiaen's changelessness may be dynamic.

interchangeability of movements, the palindrome shape of the whole, and the strangely wonderful new completeness that Messiaen puts around his listeners.

On the assumption that the business of the *Quartet* is only to undo quantified, linear duration, and not to present interplays of un-doing and re-doing, they see undoing as the aim, and the *Quartet* as a whole becomes directed toward that goal. Ironically, then, by seeing the un-doing as the goal, un-doing is precisely what is lost, for reaching the goal amounts to re-doing linear temporality with all the continuity and predictability that goes with it. The upshot is that, for this approach, the *Quartet* is a linear temporal process after all, and has a structure that vitiates the very images Messiaen essays to project.

4. Messiaen's Temporality and Time in Twentieth-Century Arts

Messiaen's *Quartet* lets listeners know what the eclipse of past and future is like. For many contemporary works of art, the loss of linear temporality induces negativities like terror, confusion, cynicism, apathy, or sighs of regret; some works (such as Eugene O'Neill's plays) single out people who hope and stridently accuse them of self-deception. By contrast, Messiaen's music relates listeners to the eclipse as an affirmation, in general more like a release from than a fall into meaninglessness.

The generalization obviously sits ill with the sixth movement, in which the impending end of goal-directedness terrifies a consciousness that is exclusively end-directed. But there is a more basic problem with the generalization, which is that the concrete feel of being without a sense of past and future depends on the particular way it is brought about. These ways range from the non-retrograde rhythms, to the anacruses that do not lead to thetic statements, to arrivals that come from nowhere, to the interchangeable movements, to a finale that is not final, and to palindrome structures (the second movement; the quartet as a whole), and their effects range from a brief "time out to smell the roses," to growth that is

within rather than toward fulfillment, to contentments whose nature is such that they do not require the work of preparation, to culminations that are both confirmed and surpassed, to a completion for which duration is relevant but the particulars of succession are not. These complexities decisively distinguish Messiaen's vision from aural metaphors presented as straightforward metaphors for the bliss of boundless duration, which often strike listeners as pretty and insipid.⁹⁸

Further complexity comes with the realization that the *Quartet* also sustains end-directedness of certain kinds. The third movement lets listeners know what it is like to be end-directed, even though the end is never attained, but (unlike Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*) the non-fulfillment does not undermine the meaningfulness of future-directed experience. The fifth movement lets listeners know what simultaneous motionlessness and end-directedness is like, and the seventh movement lets them feel what it is like to be alternatively and then simultaneously in cyclical and rectilinear time and consequently unambiguously in neither. The eighth movement sustains end-directedness as it gradually turns into the opposite—endlessness.

Endlessness that is asymptotically approached but not reached at the end of the eighth movement (and presumably indefinitely approached and not reached in the silence following the last sound) is measureless duration, showing listeners what it is like to be in unquantifiable duration. Infinitely long duration is not meaningfully broken up into units whose recurrences make possible successive units, without which musical continuity and predictability are also impossible.

Duration may also be measureless because it is infinitely brief, for example, the time of the pulse, which is the time between two durations of time; or the infinitesimal moment between not-yet time and time (first movement), and between time and no-longer time (sixth movement).

⁹⁸ For some listeners, the final movement, "In Paradiso," in Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* is an example.

Messiaen is not the only artist to present interplays of two apparently contrasting and mutually exclusive temporalities, though he may be unique in presenting so many of them, and each of them with such economy of means. Gustav Mahler, for example, presents the interplay of growth and fulfillment in the long, slow movement that concludes his Third Symphony: the music continues to move forward powerfully, yet never achieves an arrival that surpasses the level of fulfillment sustained throughout the movement.⁹⁹

Some philosophers and theologians also present comparable interplays. Karl Barth (like Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne) sees the richness of God's eternity in the fact that divine immutability and faithfulness to itself interacts with continuous free reaffirmations of itself.¹⁰⁰ Barth also sees two temporalities interacting in the event of human justification by faith. "I was, and still am, the former man, ... a wrongdoer. ... I am already and will be ... the man whom God has elected and created for Himself,"¹⁰¹ the one coming from the past and persisting futurelessly, the other having no beginning in the person's own spirituality, but nevertheless being the basis of that person's entire future. These interplays are quite different from that toward which Messiaen draws his listeners, but they are sufficiently comparable that spelling out the differences can help toward understanding both.

Whitehead's analysis of reality likewise depends on the interaction of a temporality which comprises measurable durations and successions—what he calls the advance of actual occasions—with a temporality to which physical time is not relevant, but succession is (namely the succession of phases "in which new prehensions arise by integrations of prehensions in antecedent phases" in the process of concrescence whereby an actual occasion becomes itself.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ See Greene, *op.cit.*, ch. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Ed. G.W. Bromily and T. F. Torrance, Tr. G.W. Bromily. Vol. IV/1. (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 561.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 544.

¹⁰² *Process and Reality* (New York, 1960), p. 26.

Messiaen's interactions enable listeners to know concretely the co-presence of different temporalities, which Barth and Whitehead describe conceptually. The musical interactions let listeners feel what it means to live fully in linear temporality and the measured durations needful therefor and also at the same time in non-quantifiable, non-linear durations.

This enabling implies that the "end of time" does not need to "begin" only after a person dies or after the world is destroyed. Indeed, seeing a temporal succession between time and post-time vitiates eternity; the end of time and the beginning of eternity is not at all analogous to the beginning and ending of something within the temporal process. In Messiaen's model, the two are mutually irrelevant, and yet they interact. The theology that talks about "realized eschatology" struggles to maintain that a person can be fully present to the eternal and to the non-eternal simultaneously, and the theology of hope struggles to maintain that hope is the presence of what for the moment is absent. Messiaen's interaction of linear temporality and measured durations with non-linear temporality and boundless durations presents analogous possibilities, but they do so unproblematically and without the mediation of concepts, and without the problems raised by concepts that are only partly adequate. The *Quartet's* title does not mean that hearing it necessarily involves leaving history in favor of a static eternity. Rather, the listening involves overcoming the contrast by unproblematically joining them. Spiritual life can take place in the interplay between the two.

While Messiaen's interplay between quantifiable and measureless duration and between linear and non-linear succession may be a most important contribution to theological thinking, and while it may, as he hoped, draw listeners into a new spirituality, even more important is his presentation of a wholeness and completeness to which linearity is irrelevant.

Messiaen's open completeness separates his from others' interactions of temporalities. For example, Todd Andrews, the protagonist in John Barth's *The Floating Opera*, says, "I begin each day ... reminding myself that goals and objectives are without value and close it by demonstrating that the fact is irrelevant.

A gesture of temporality, a gesture of eternity.”¹⁰³ A consciousness living toward open completeness, and aware of the interplay of two temporalities, does not experience the tension between cynicism and faith.

Mahler’s Ninth Symphony is one of the few twentieth-century works to end with an open completeness that transcends cynicism and faith. Comparing this ending to Messiaen’s points up what is distinctive to each. Through a process that embraces most of the Adagio-Finale, a certain tone (A-flat in the context of D-flat major) is constituted as the *finalis* or pitch center (a note which is to be heard as the final note, though it is not a tonic, which would be a pitch class conveying stability, in comparison to which all other pitches are heard as unstable). With the last articulation of the *finalis*, listeners know the movement is over; its motion is complete. Yet they can imagine a more complete completeness than what they are given (namely motion to the tonic D-flat), even while they know absolutely that this other completeness will not take place. A future that will never happen has an impact on the present.¹⁰⁴

Messiaen’s completeness that is open to the future is comparable: the beautiful completeness at the close of the fifth movement does not rule out other or further completeness; the rest coming with the completion of the palindrome is co-possible with further completeness, just as stillness and motion are co-possible within the fifth movement.

Messiaen’s pitch-class completeness, like Mahler’s Ninth Symphony completeness, comes about without a movement from tension to resolution. In one sense there is no fulfillment in either case, but if completeness means fulfillment, there is indeed fulfillment woven into this non-fulfillment. In Mahler’s case, tension is set up but not resolved, and the problematic character of non-resolution is gradually removed. With Messiaen, incompleteness is not heard as such, no tension is set up, and no resolution is felt when completeness occurs.

¹⁰³ John Barth, *The Floating Opera* (New York, 1967), p. 50.

¹⁰⁴ Greene, *op. cit.*, ch. 4.

Important as that difference is, the most striking and distinctive aspect of Messiaen's open completeness is that it comes not just from one but two processes—pitch class completeness and palindrome completeness. Accordingly it models the interplay of two temporal processes unfolding simultaneously. The modeling is indifferent to whether the two temporalities are the eternal and the historical, or two kinds of eternity, or even two kinds of non-linear temporality in ordinary life. In the first case, the two kinds of open completeness, like the interplay between linear and non-linear temporalities on the level of individual movements, models the possibility of a spirituality that is full and complete even while a person is undertaking a historical life that is also, but differently, full and complete.

Although the completeness by pitch centers and completeness by palindrome are independent, each reinforces the reality of the other; each reassures listeners that the other actually exists. They share many characteristics, and thus nudge those characteristics into salience: succession without purposiveness, completeness without end-directedness, the undoing of beginning and ending, the high value of this new kind of completeness, and above all the co-presence of completeness with openness. Both of them draw listeners toward or into a concrete consciousness that knows about the succession of events, but is not anxious about the particular order of their occurrence. This consciousness knows the complete satisfaction of a present, but is open to future events, including the events of a changing relationship with an Other and others. Open completeness means these events and relationships will be differently, but not more, glorious than the present.

4. Messiaen, Heard Theology, and Spirituality

(1) Theology Heard in the ...*End of Time*

Although the movements of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* do not have texts, they do have titles. The music does not so much illustrate these titles as present and amplify them and give them a particular meaning. With the possible exception of the *Intermezzo*, all these meanings have to do with the same thing—the end of time. They do not relate the end of time to other theological concepts or constructs, such as sin and forgiveness, the history of Jesus Christ, the nature of revelation, the Lordship of God or finding hope beyond despair.

However, in view of the variety of Messiaen's presentations of the end of temporality and duration and the multiplicity of pointers to something beyond the contrast between temporality or duration and their opposite, it is not quite accurate to say that there are seven or eight interpretations of “the same thing”; the differences are too deep-seated. Consequently, there is the possibility that these very different images could also be related by the music in a way analogous to the way the *Credo* in Beethoven's *Mass in D* and the *Dies Irae* in Verdi's *Requiem* work on their texts such that listening to the music becomes a hearing of theology. It could be that differences generated tensions which then resulted in refinements and modifications of earlier meanings, so that the *Quartet* as a whole would be a process of successive clarification and illumination. And this is what does not happen.

Although one cannot, therefore, talk about a “heard theology” in connection with the *Quartet*, one can take notice of the insistence, projected by the *Quartet* as a whole, on the complementarity of images, none of which is more fundamental than the others. This insistence goes to a basic issue in what may be called a style of thinking.

To focus on and be content with a complementarity of images is to think and feel in terms of a both/and: both predictability and unpredictability are involved in

a new temporality; both continuity and discontinuity as well as motion and stillness are likewise co-possible. To be related to God through the co-presence of various images that only partly overlap might even amount to knowing the co-presence of various Gods. This somewhat shocking statement fits with the somewhat shocking, but well-known fact that Messiaen was devoutly Catholic, yet had no problem in borrowing rhythms from Hindu music and using Hindu concepts in describing the nature of his Catholic, Christian music.

This style of theological thought is sharply different from a style, whether verbal or musical, that applies the rectilinearity of human temporality to theological understanding and hope. Rectilinearity predisposes one to think and feel in terms of an either/or: either there is completeness or there is not; either there is resolution or there is not. For exemplars of this style of thinking, the either/or approach is self-evident and self-evidently obligatory.

With Messiaen, by contrast, various dualities are set up, which can be described as contraries—goal-directed continuity and succession without a goal; anacrusis without a downbeat and downbeats without anacrusis—but the two sides of the dualities are not in tension with one another. They contrast without being opposed to each other. As such, they do not cry out for resolution, and in that way they differ fundamentally from instances of heard theology in which precisely the connection between passages pressing for resolution and passages embodying it has an impact on the meaning of the texts carried by the two passages.

Because Messiaen's thinking is not characterized by an either/or, the non-happening of resolution is not experienced as an absence or even an ambiguity. No expectation is set up by the juxtaposition of "contraries," so it begins to seem inappropriate to call them "contradictions." They are different, but nothing comes of the difference. The end of time can be announced both as something positive and confirming, as in the second movement, and also as something menacing as in the sixth; temporality can be both light-hearted, as in the fourth movement, and tranquilly serious, as in the fifth, and also threatening, as in the sixth; imagining an "other" temporality can be abstract and intellectually challenging, as in the first

movement, and also very concrete, direct and immediate as in the third, seventh and eighth movements.

(2) Spirituality and the *Quartet for the End of Time*

What Messiaen has written about his *Quartet for the End of Time* indicates that he himself saw its religious significance as its link more with spirituality than with heard theology. He talks about “leading” listeners into a new kind of time, thus aligning what happens on listening more with spiritual exercises, with encountering the divine than with contemplating the nature of God and theological concepts. To hear the images in whatever order is not only to be led into a new temporality but also to be led into several new temporalities that overlap to varying extents.

“Leading,” however, would be misunderstood if it were taken to mean a temporal succession, as though Messiaen means that first listeners hear the music, then they come into a new awareness of time. Messiaen avoids this possible misunderstanding when he talks about the music “drawing” listeners into a new kind of time. For to hear the new temporality in any of the eight movements is already to be in the presence of God. And obversely, to be related to God is already to be in a new temporality, and the relation is immediate, direct and concrete even if it involves techniques as apparently abstract as meterlessness, contrast of quantifiable and unquantifiable duration, and the coincidence of future and past.

The complementarity of movements becomes important in a new way in connection with encountering the divine on listening to the *Quartet*. That the various movements’ interactions between temporality and “other” temporality are complementary rather than hierarchically coordinated means that no intellectual, conceptual or even musical apparatus is introduced to mediate among the various interactions. Those listeners for whom to hear the music is already to be temporal in a new way are *ipso facto* directly, non-mediatedly related to God. That the

various modes of temporality are not coordinated means that listeners relate sometimes simultaneously, sometimes serially but always directly to all of them.

The complementarity of movements, for which no single interpretative, integrating key is provided, indicates still another way in which Messiaen's work is relevant to a listener's ongoing encounters with the divine. What he brings forward can serve as a model for relating and interrelating spiritual exercises that consist of listening to several different pieces of sacred music. Like the various movements in the *Quartet*, these too may be significantly or even radically different, so that in addition to the encounter with the divine that occurs on listening to each one individually there may be the spirituality of the contrasts among them. And here too the both/and style of thinking, rather than an either/or, can be in force.

For Messiaen offers a model in which hearing in succession these deeply different pieces of sacred music can, precisely because they are dissimilar, complement one another. Listening to these works in succession can be like listening to the series of movements in the Messiaen. Each work, like each movement in the Messiaen, brings historical, everyday time to an end, but differently. Accordingly, the series as such forms, and works like, another—a new—*Piece for the End of Time*.

It is no less important that Messiaen also offers a model of completeness that this “new piece” may replicate. Without the control of aspiring to some sort of completeness the succession could include pieces that are not only so different but also so divisive that they weaken or even cancel one another's impact. This risk could move one to prefer and limit oneself to what is familiar and conventional, and listening would become more like what Buber calls an experience of than a relation with the divine. Vis-à-vis this concern, the openness of Messiaen's completeness becomes importantly relevant in a new way. The paradigm it uniquely offers is not necessarily easy to follow, but at least it is available. Modeling a succession that is complete but whose completeness is open to further completenesses that are likewise both genuinely complete and genuinely open may turn out

to be as important an outcome of the *Quartet for the End of Time* as the encounters with the divine into which it leads its listeners.

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