

I. Fall and Protoevangelion

'It is Advent. Once more, Lord, the Church celebrates Your coming. She places on our lips the prayers of longing and of waiting, the hymns of promise and joyful hope. And all our needs and all our longing are gathered together around the one word, "Come". And this word emerges from the depths of our hearts: we pronounce it as sincerely as the patriarchs, kings and prophets of old, who saw your day from afar off and blessed it.'

(Karl Rahner SJ, *Spiritual writings*)

Ego eimi to Alpha kai to O legei Kyrios ho Theos

Ho on kai to en kai erkomenos, ho Pantocrator

Choir : "I am the Alpha and Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1: 8)

Sed et serpens erat callidior cunctis animantibus terrae ... Dixit ad mulierem: cur praecepit vobis Deus ut non comederetis de omni ligno paradisi? ... Vidit igitur mulier quod bonum esset lignum ... tulit de fructu illius, et comedit: deditque viro suo, qui comedit.

Bass solo : Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals ... He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ... When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good ... she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Vocavitque Dominus Deus Adam, et dixit ei: ubi es? Qui ait: vocem tuam audiui in paradiso et timui, eo quod nudus essem, et abscondi me. ... et dixit Dominus Deus ad mulierem quare hoc fecisti quae respondit: Serpens decepit me, et comedi. Et ait Dominus Deus ad serpentem: Quia fecisti hoc, maledictus es inter omnia animalia ... Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, et semen tuum et semen illius: ipsa conteret caput tuum et tu insidiaberis calcaneo eius ... Ejecitque Adam: et collocavit ante paradisum voluptatis cherubin, et flammeum gladium, atque versatilem, ad custodiendam viam ligni vitae.

Soprano solo : The Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered,

Bass solo : "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." ...

Soprano solo : Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals ... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel ... After he drove the man out, he placed in front of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life." (Genesis 3)

Orchestral Interlude : *Gravity and God's mourning for the world*

'When a man turns away from God, he simply gives himself over to gravity. He thinks that he desires and chooses, but he is nothing but a falling stone.'

(Simone Weil)

'Man is rebellious and full of iniquity, and yet so cherished is he that God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is saddened when forsaken by him.'

Like sparked logs lusting, thirsting for flames
my eyes cry to You, God,
Who rends His clothes in mourning for the world-
Let us see how Your face is mirrored
in the pupils of our eyes.

(Abraham Heschel , *Der Shem Hameforash: Mentsh. Lider (The Ineffable Name of God: Man. Poems)*)

II. Prophecy

Vocavit autem Jacob filios suos, et ait eis: Congregamini, ut annuntiem quæ ventura sunt vobis in diebus novissimis. Congregamini, et audite, filii Jacob, audite Israël patrem vestrum. ... Non auferetur sceptrum de Juda et dux de femore ejus donec veniat qui mittendus est, et ipse erit expectatio gentium.

Bass solo : Then Jacob called for his sons and said: "Gather round so that I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come. Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israël ... The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. (Genesis 49)

Interlude : *One octave too high*

Frightful is the agony of man; no human voice can convey its full terror. Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony [...] The prophet is human, yet he employs notes one octave too high for our ears.

(Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets*)

Dixit, dixit Balaam filius Beor, dixit homo cujus obscuratus est oculus: dixit auditor sermonum Dei, qui novit doctrinam Altissimi, et visiones Omnipotentis videt, qui cadens apertos habet oculos: Videbo eum, sed non modo: intuebor illum, sed non prope. Orietur stella ex Jacob, et consurget virga de Israël.

Choir : The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly, the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened. "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a sceptre will rise out of Israël."
(Numbers 24: 15-17)

Et tu, Bethlehem Ephrata, parvulus es in millibus Juda; ex te egredietur qui sit dominator in Israël, et egressus ejus ab initio, a diebus aeternitatis.

Soprano solo : But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israël, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. (Micah 5: 2)

Ecce dies veniunt ... et suscitabo David germen justum: et regnabit rex, et sapiens erit, et faciet judicium et justitiam in terra.

Choir : "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land." (Jeremiah 23: 5)

Interlude : The World Orchestra

Before the Word of God became man, the world orchestra was "fiddling" about without any plan: world views, religions, different concepts of the state, each one playing to itself. Somehow there is the feeling that this cacophonous jumble is only a "tuning up": the A can be heard through everything, like a kind of promise. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets ..." (Heb. 1:1). Then came the Son, the "heir of all things", for whose sake the whole orchestra had been put together. As it performs God's symphony under the Son's direction, the meaning of its variety becomes clear.

(Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Truth is Symphonic*)

III. Incarnation

In mense autem sexto missus est angelus Gabriel a Deo in civitatem Galilaeae, cui nomen Nazareth, ad virginem desponsatam viro, cui nomen erat Joseph, de domo David: et nomen virginis Maria. Et ingressus angelus ad eam dixit: Ave gratia plena: Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus. Quae cum audisset, turbata est in sermone ejus, et cogitabat qualis esset ista salutatio. Et ait angelus ei: Ne timeas, Maria: invenisti enim gratiam apud Deum. Ecce concipies in utero, et paries filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum:

Bass solo : In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. (Luke 1: 26-31)

Magnificat anima mea Dominum: et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo. Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae: ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes, quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est: et sanctum nomen ejus, et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies timentibus eum. Fecit potentiam in brachio suo: dispersit superbos mente cordis sui. Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles. Esurientes implevit bonis: et divites dimisit inanes. Suscepit Israël puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae: sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.

Soprano solo : My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me -
holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are
proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants for ever,
even as he said to our fathers." (Luke 1: 46-55)

Factum est autem in diebus illis, exiit edictum a Caesare Augusto ut describeretur universus orbis. ... Ascendit autem et Joseph a Galilaea de civitate Nazareth in Judaeam, in civitatem David, quae vocatur Bethlehem: eo quod esset de domo et familia David, ut proferetur cum Maria desponsata sibi uxore praegnantem. Factum est autem, cum essent ibi, impleti sunt dies ut pareret. Et peperit filium suum primogenitum, et pannis eum involvit, et reclinavit eum in praesepio: quia non erat eis locus in diversorio.

Bass solo : In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world ... So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2: 1-7)

Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Choir : Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests. (Luke 2: 14)

Interlude : *The Polyphony of Life*

Ego eimi to Alpha kai to O legei Kyrios ho Theos

Choir : "I am the Alpha and Omega," says the Lord God,

'Where the cantus firmus is clear and plain, the counterpoint can be developed to its limits. The two are 'undivided and yet distinct', in the words of the Chalcedonian Definition, like Christ in his divine and human natures. May not the attraction and importance of polyphony in music consist in its being a musical reflection of this Christological fact and therefore of our *vita christiana*.'

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Eberhard Bethge, *Letters and Papers from Prison*)

IV. Kenosis

Humiliavit semetipsum factus obediens usque ad mortem autem crucis.

Choir : He humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! (Philippians 2 :8)

Bass solo : *Et postquam venerunt in locum qui vocatur Calvariae, ibi crucifixerunt eum: et latrones unum ad dexteris et alterum ad sinistris. ... Erat autem fere hora sexta et tenebrae factae sunt in universam terram usque in nonam horam. Et obscuratus est sol, et velum templi scissum est medium. Et clamans voce magna Jesus ait: Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum. ... Et ecce vir nomine Joseph, qui erat decurio, vir bonus et justus: ... hic accessit ad Pilatum et petiit corpus Jesu: et depositum involvit sindone et posuit eum in monumento exciso, in quo nondum quisquam positus fuerat.*

When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left ... It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the stopped stopped shining, And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." ... Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man... Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus's body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no-one had yet been laid. (Luke 23)

Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum et donavit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen.

Soprano and bass soloists, choir : Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. (Philippians 2: 9)

Interlude : *Two notes in the depths of silence*

God created through love, for love. God has not created anything but love itself and the means of loving. He has created all forms of love. He has created beings capable of love at any distance. He Himself went, because nobody else could, to the greatest, infinite distance. This infinite distance between God and God, the supreme rupture, a pain which no-one else can approach, love's miracle, is the crucifixion. Nothing can be further from God than that which has become cursed.

This rupture, above which supreme love places the bond of supreme union, resounds perpetually through the

universe, in the depths of silence, like two notes which are separate but merged, like a pure, heart-rending harmony. This is the Word of God. The entirety of creation is only its vibration. When human music at its purest pierces our soul, this is what we hear through it. When we have learnt to hear the silence, this is what we grasp, more distinctly, through it. Those who persevere in love hear this note in the depths where misfortune has placed them. From this moment on they can doubt no longer.

(Simone Weil, *L'Amour de Dieu et le malheur*)

V. Resurrection

Una autem sabbati valde diluculo venerunt ad monumentum, portantes quæ paraverant aromata :et invenerunt lapidem revolutum a monumento. Et ingressæ non invenerunt corpus Domini Jesu. Et factum est, dum mente consternatæ essent de isto, ecce duo viri steterunt secus illas in veste fulgenti. Cum timerent autem, et declinarent vultum in terram, dixerunt ad illas : Quid quæritis viventem cum mortuis? non est hic, sed surrexit.

Soprano solo : On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them,

Choir : "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24: 1-6)

Interlude : Carillon

Ring out, my heart !

May your resonance be hard long and deep!

Play, strike and clap for your king :

Play, strike and clap for your God !

Here is your day of glory and resurrection !

Joy has returned.

(Olivier Messiaen, *Prière exaucée*, 1936)

VI. Ascension

Igitur qui convenerant, interrogabant eum, dicentes : Domine, si in tempore hoc restitues regnum Israël ? Dixit autem eis : Non est vestrum nosse tempora vel momenta quæ Pater posuit in sua potestate : sed accipietis virtutem supervenientis Spiritus Sancti in vos, et eritis mihi testes in Jerusalem, et in omni Judæa, et Samaria, et usque ad ultimum terræ.

Et cum hæc dixisset, videntibus illis, elevatus est : et nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum. Cumque intuerentur in cælum euntem illum, ecce duo viri astiterunt juxta illos in vestibus albis, qui et dixerunt : Viri Galilæi, quid statis aspicientes in cælum ? Hic Jesus, qui assumptus est a vobis in cælum, sic veniet quamadmodum vidistis eum euntem in caelum.

Soprano solo : So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israël?" He said to them:

Bass solo : "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Soprano solo : After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes,

Bass solo : and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. They said :

Choir : "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1: 6-11)

'It is Advent. Are you the one who is to come, the mighty God, the Father of future times, the Prince of peace, light, truth and eternal happiness ? Your coming is announced in the first pages of Holy Scripture, and yet, on the last page, to which nothing can ever be added, I read this prayer : Come Lord Jesus !

(Karl Rahner, *Encounters with silence*)

VII. Parousie

Aspiciebam ergo in visione noctis, et ecce cum nubibus cæli quasi filius hominis veniebat, et usque ad antiquum dierum pervenit : et in conspectu ejus obtulerunt eum. Et dedit ei potestatem, et honorem, et regnum : et omnes populi, tribus, et linguæ ipsi servient

Bass solo : In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

Soprano solo : He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. (Daniel 7: 13-14)

Et judicabit gentes, et arguet populos multos; et conflagrabit gladios suos in vomeres, et lanceas suas in falces. Non levabit gens contra gentem gladium, nec exercebuntur ultra ad prælium.

Soprano solo : He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Bass solo : Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more. (Isaiah 2: 4)

Interlude : The Perfect number

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars ... If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. (Revelation 3 : 1,3)

‘Seven is the perfect number, the six days of creation sanctified by the divine sabbath ...’

(Olivier Messiaen, *Quartet for the End of Time*, 1941)

In this world there is no longer any time other than that of your Advent. And at the end of the last day, there will be no more time : only You and Your eternity will remain. We claim that You will return. It is true. But in fact it will not be a *return*, because, from the moment when You entered our life, You have never left us.

(Karl Rahner, *Encounters with silence*)

Sint lumbi vestri præcincti, et lucernæ ardentes in manibus vestris, et vos similes hominibus expectantibus dominum suum quando revertatur a nuptiis

Soprano solo : “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet.” (Luke 12: 35)

Et ait ad discipulos suos : Venient dies quando desideretis videre unum diem Filii hominis, et non videbitis. Et dicent vobis: Ecce hic, et ecce illic. Nolite ire, neque sectemini : nam, sicut fulgur coruscans de sub cælo in ea quæ sub cælo sunt, fulget: ita erit Filius hominis in die sua.

Bass solo : Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.” (Luke 17: 22-24)

Et erunt signa in sole, et luna, et stellis, et in terris pressura gentium præ confusione sonitus maris, et fluctuum : arescentibus hominibus præ timore, et expectatione, quæ supervenient universo orbi : nam virtutes cælorum movebuntur : et tunc videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nube cum potestate magna et majestate.

Soprano solo : "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke 21: 25)

Dignus es, Domine, accipere librum, et aperire signacula ejus : quoniam occisus es, et redemisti nos Deo in sanguine tuo ex omni tribu, et lingua, et populo, et natione. ... Dignus est Agnus, qui occisus est, accipere virtutem, et divinitatem, et sapientiam, et fortitudinem, et honorem, et gloriam, et benedictionem. Et omnem creaturam, quæ in cælo est, et super terram, et sub terra, et quæ sunt in mari, et quæ in eo : omnes audiui dicentes : Sedit in throno, et Agno, benedictio et honor, et gloria, et potestas in sæcula sæculorum.

Soprano & Bass soloists, Choir : "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ... Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (Revelation 5)

Gloria in altissimis Deo.

Choir : Glory to God in the highest.