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Theology, Music and Time

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Music, time and eternity

> A God enthroned beyond time in timeless eternity would have to renounce music . . . Are we to suppose that we mortals, in possessing such a wonder as music, are more privileged than God? Rather, to save music for him, we shall hold, with the Greeks, that God cannot go behind time. Otherwise what would he be doing with all the choiring angels?[1]
>
> VICTOR ZUCKERKANDL

> The whole purpose of sacred music must be to lead us to the threshold of prayer or to the threshold of a true encounter with the living God. An Ikon . . . is beyond art – a real presence that we venerate, looking tenderly at us, helping us to pray, and lifting our minds and hearts above this earth (where we are in exile for a short time) into Heaven, our true 'Homeland'.[2]
>
> JOHN TAVENER

To gain some clarity about the relationship between God's eternity and created time is at once one of the most important and intractable tasks of theology. In fact, we have been touching upon the matter repeatedly in the previous pages. Here my purpose is fairly modest: to show that music has the capacity to play a valuable part in exposing and interpreting many of the most significant issues at stake, as well as advancing the contemporary discussion of them.

Icons of eternity? – John Tavener

I want to begin by entering the sound-world of one composer whose music brings questions of eternity and time very much to the fore. The spacious

1. Zuckerkandl (1956), 151. 2. Tavener, as quoted in Haydon (1995), 209.

and radiant compositions of John Tavener (b. 1944) have recently enjoyed huge popularity, especially since the premiere of *The Protecting Veil* in 1989 and the performance of his *Song for Athene* at Princess Diana's funeral service in 1997. The enthusiasm extends far beyond the devotees of 'classical music' – glowing reviews can be found in rock music magazines. In some ways, this success is an enigma. The lush harmonic extravagance of much of Tavener's music has, to say the least, not been prominent in the art-music tradition over the last few decades. More significantly, in a culture where it is often thought unwise for Christian composers to be very overt about their faith, Tavener is unashamedly open. Not only is his technique drawn to a large extent from the conventions and idioms of Orthodox church music, and not only does most of his music employ sacred texts, he often goes to great lengths to help the listener grasp its theological dimensions.[3]

Tavener provokes a variety of reactions. Some view his music as a route to eternity. The tenor Robert Tear has said: 'I really do think he's a great composer, responsible for a trend which is going to go right through art, where the spiritual quality will reassert itself.'[4] From the music-critical establishment, praise is not hard to find. Paul Driver wrote of his feelings at the end of the first performance of Tavener's monumental *The Apocalypse* (1993): 'It wasn't just relief that the ordeal of sitting was over, I believe, that gave one an alluring sense of the numinous at this point. Tavener's religious genius seemed nearly to achieve what Auden claimed poetry can never do: make something happen.'[5] Tavener himself believes that his music may well be tapping into a deep longing for the sacred in contemporary life, touching people at a level beyond and beneath emotion, will and intellect.[6] But he has his disparaging critics. Minds which thrive on aesthetic complexity distrust music so severely reduced and pared down. Is this anything more than an attempt to escape the buzzing, blooming confusion of post-industrial society's conflicting messages and communication systems? Robin Holloway, composer and lecturer, pronounces:

> I don't like it, I'm afraid. It's a lovely sound but it's so simple. What does it have to offer the musically literate? Every parameter has been drastically limited, so that what you have is ritual – repetitive simplicity. I think it's substitute religion, that's its appeal. At least Messiaen at his most vacant has a lot more content, gives the pure musician more to enjoy.[7]

3. He unashamedly calls his music 'liquid metaphysics'. See Begbie (1998), 20.
4. Quoted in Haydon (1995), 136. 5. Driver (1994), 21.
6. Ramsey (1989). 7. Tavener frequently alludes to Augustine's notion of the 'intellective organ of the heart'. See Begbie (1998), 18. 7. As quoted in Wood (1992), 19.

Others censure Tavener for his constant appropriation of religious themes. The composer John Bentley comments: 'I think he does a good line in ecstasy and makes some very nice noises . . . [But] I'm suspicious of Ideas imported into music in this way.'[8]

Yet, despite the misgivings of some, as a critic recently reflected, 'on the evidence of recent record sales, Tavener's music, for all its religious demands, is beginning to rival that of Johann Strauss the Younger in popularity'.[9] And Tavener is no isolated phenomenon. The Polish composer Henryk Gorecki (b. 1933) and the Estonian Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) – the latter is someone to whom Tavener feels especially close – also write in a similar vein and are enjoying a vogue (as the 'holy minimalists') quite unparalleled by any other serious composers of the last forty years.

The most decisive twentieth-century influence on Tavener is the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), himself a convert to Russian Orthodoxy. At the age of twelve, Tavener heard a broadcast of Stravinsky's *Canticum Sacrum* (1955). Its impact was considerable. The piece shows features which have become central to Tavener: a variety of textures; the coherence of the music with architecture (it was written specifically for St Mark's, Venice); palindrome (the final movement is a palindrome of the first)[10]; and the disciplined assimilation of a variety of styles (especially Byzantium, organum and Webern) into what Tavener calls a 'totally integrated synthesis'.[11] Perhaps most importantly, Stravinsky had drawn deep from the wells of ancient sacred music.

Tavener also owes much to the visionary sound-world and theological concerns of the French Roman Catholic Olivier Messiaen (1908–92). In Messiaen's music, he says, we find 'an impressive testimony of a sacred tradition in this century'.[12] The lusher side of Messiaen has greatly appealed to Tavener: 'In one sense,' he says, Messiaen 'stems from the saccharine school of nineteenth-century French organ music – half-way between the brothel and the Sacred Heart.'[13] But other elements of Messiaen were to have their impact: melodic arabesques, revolving harmonic patterns, a love of palindrome, and some currents in Roman Catholic mysticism. Tavener particularly underlines the impact of Messiaen on his own piece *In Alium* (written for a 1968 London Promenade concert).

The ghosts of Stravinsky and Messiaen can be sensed powerfully in a very dominant feature of Tavener's music – the construction of pieces around internally coherent blocks of musical material, connected only in very loose ways.

8. Ibid. 9. Driver (1994), 21.
10. A palindrome is the reversal of a musical sequence of some sort – e.g. ABC–CBA.
11. 'Sacred Music in the 20th Century', no page number. 12. Ibid. 13. Ibid.

> This is evident in his early dramatic fantasy *The Whale* (1965–6), the work which put him on the musical map. Instead of a progressive dramatic unity, with evolving or organic development of motifs or themes, Tavener juxtaposes substantial blocks of music. Within the blocks, a sense of stasis predominates, especially in the supplicatory music, but also in the 'Storm' which is characterised not by wildness but by an ominous stillness.
>
> *Doxa* (1982) for double choir, exemplifies the same technique. The piece is in five massive blocks; the bass pedal notes, sung in each block by the first choir, together form the first five notes of a melody that constitutes the only material of the piece: the other voices of the first choir sing this melody (sometimes in retrograde) repeatedly at different speeds; the second choir follows in strict canon at a bar's distance. The details of the scheme are not as important as the sonorities of the five blocks, and, particularly, the silences between them.

One effect of this block construction is to quell the sense of goal-directed momentum. Sometimes, a sense of motionlessness seems to take over in a number of Tavener's early works, deriving from elements of the Catholicism which attracted him in the early 1970s. For example, drawing on the writings of St John of the Cross in *Coplas* (1970), there is a sustained attempt to still the perception of temporal motion.

> *Coplas* (1970) is scored for SATB soloists and sixteen–voice choir. The soloists share verses from St John of the Cross (1542–91) – 'an ecstasy experienced in high contemplation'. The singers in the choir are arranged in the shape of a cross and given homophonic music, softly passing the syllables of the 'Crucifixus' between them. Behind this are played pre-recorded extracts from the 'Crucifixus' of J. S. Bach's Mass in B minor. Towards the end, the live chorus drops out section by section, leaving only the taped music. In Tavener's words, Bach is allowed to 'put my music to sleep'.[14] The soloists chant a twelve-tone row derived from the opening notes of each vocal entry in the Bach movement.[15]

14. Ibid.
15. *Coplas* became the fifth and last movement of *Ultimos Ritos* (1972), an hour-long solemn meditation on the crucifixion and one's own death. Every note is derived from Bach's 'Crucifixus'. Intended for a large church or cathedral with at least six seconds reverberation, it employs a vast array of instrumental and choral forces: multiple choirs, nine trumpets, six recorders, organ, multiple brass and wind, strings and pre-recorded tape. Twelve-tone techniques and palindrome abound, but especially noteworthy are the striking sonorities, not least in the second movement in which twelve solo basses chant to the accompaniment of seven piccolo trumpets.

Undoubtedly the most momentous event in Tavener's musical and personal development was his conversion to Russian Orthodoxy in 1977. From now on, all his output becomes linked to this tradition (though by no means all of it is designed for liturgical use). Life-changing as it may have been, however, the shift to Orthodoxy did not entail radical discontinuity with his earlier work. Within the Orthodox world were musical streams which were already part of his lifeblood: shifting parallel chords, a sense of stasis, ornamented melody, the exploration of a building's acoustic, and a belief in the centrality of the human voice. These were all basic to Tavener by 1977, and after this date many of his early compositional devices were retained.

> For example, we find a general evasion of a developing musical argument, the widespread use of block structures, simple melodic and harmonic fragments in close proximity to or in combination with their inversions, the extensive use of stretto, retrograde motion and a host of symmetrical large-scale structures. One of his best-known works, *The Lamb* (1982), sung in churches and cathedrals all over the world, displays many of these features. (Its counterpart, *The Tyger* (1987) exhibits them all.)

It is not in the least puzzling, therefore, to find Tavener describing his move to Orthodoxy as 'a sensation of homecoming'.

Nevertheless, from 1977 a number of fresh emphases emerge. Two may be highlighted here. First, we find an increasing simplicity.[16] Comparing the sound-world of a work like *The Whale* (1965–6) with that of a recent piece like *Syvati* (1995) will quickly make the point, as will comparing the visual impact of a score from 1977 (Example 5.1) with one from 1987 (Example 5.2).

> During the late 1970s and early 1980s Tavener was still making use of twelve-tone rows, though not in a serial manner. Gradually the twelve-tone writing is superseded by techniques and chants derived from Orthodoxy.[17] (There was a similar critical turning-point in Arvo Pärt's career.) *Akhmatova: Requiem* (1979–80) demonstrates clearly the confrontation between twelve-tone writing and very simple tonal or modal material, within a symmetrical structure. The form of the piece as a whole is governed by a straightforward passacaglia-like usage of note-rows. There are insertions of orthodox prayers and chants from the Orthodox Rite for the dead, and the influence of chant can be seen in Tavener's own free writing.

16. The beginning of a progression to extreme austerity was *Canticle of the Mother of God* (1977). This sets the Magnificat text, a solo soprano singing the Hebrew, the choir singing the Greek. Over a distant choral cushion, the soloist spins freewheeling, melismatic lines.
17. E.g. *Mandelion* (1981), for organ, coheres in relation to a twelve-note set derived from chant.

Along with simpler scales and note-series, there is a gradual replacement of the extrovert, leaping coloratura typical of the early seventies by the small intervals and sustained singing characteristic of Orthodox chant. The rhythmic palindromes of earlier years are often now set aside by the rhythms of the Orthodox church. The tonal colour palette becomes more restricted, much as an icon painter limits the range of colours.[18] More important now than large instrumental or choral forces is evoking a sense of 'space' and 'concept'. *The Protecting Veil* (1987) is designed to awaken an ambience of cavernous space, but it is scored only for 'cello and string orchestra. His *Ikon of Light* (1984) deals with an infinite concept (the uncreated light of God) but the forces are small-scale: voices and string trio.

> *Ikon of Light*, written for the Tallis Scholars, encapsulates most of the components of Tavener's mature style. Its overall plan is symmetrical – the first and second movements correspond to the sixth and seventh, the third to the fifth, and the fourth forms the centrepiece. The whole piece is steeped in large- and small-scale repetitions, and in long silences.

This scaling down is of enormous importance to Tavener. He is convinced that complexity and evil are closely linked.[19] The simplifying process also applies to the process of composition, which Tavener describes as 'an act of repentance, stripping away of unessentials, ever more naked, ever more simple . . . one might even say, ever more *"foolish"*.'[20]

A second emphasis to emerge is an intensification of what we might loosely call a contemplative ambience, in many cases achieved (at least in part) through music of exceptional slowness. Such music is sometimes dubbed 'iconic', a term Tavener is happy to use, for he speaks of his works as 'icons of sound',[21] media through which eternity may in some manner be brought to the ear. Tavener claims that his conversion to Orthodoxy came through gazing at an icon.[22] 'The Ikon is the supreme example of Christian art, and of Transcendence and Transfiguration.'[23] Many of his titles reflect this: *Ikon of Light* (1984), *Ikon of St Cuthbert* (1986), and so forth. In his large-scale work *We Shall See Him as He Is* (1990), virtually every movement is given the title 'Ikon'. In the same vein, he has spoken of his opera *Mary of Egypt* (1992) as a slow-moving icon.[24] His giant musical

18. The analogy is Tavener's (Garfield 1992, 18). 19. See Begbie (1998), 21.
20. 'The Sacred in Art', 88. 21. Garfield (1992), 17. 22. Ibid.
23. 'The Sacred in Art', 88. 24. Steinitz (1994).

27

G ca. 40"

staccatiss. e marcatiss. becoming wilder and wilder

Ob. pp a fff poss.

C.Bn. pp molto a ff poss.

Hn. pp pav. en l'aire

staccatiss. e marcatiss.

Tpt. pp

Trb. pp senza sord. molto a ff poss.

Timp. mp marcatiss. sfp sffp

staccatiss. e marcatiss.

Vn.1 pp

Vn.2 pp

staccatiss. e marcatiss.

Vla. pp molto

Vc. pp a ff poss.

D.B. becoming wilder and wilder

H 10/4 5/4

Vc.solo mp leggiero pizz. arco

Vc. p (pre-echo always) pizz. arco

D.B. pp

3/4 6/4

Vc.solo

Vc. pizz. arco

D.B.

Example 5.1 *Kyklike Kinesis* (p. 27), by John Tavener (1977)

for Martin Neary

GOD IS WITH US

John Tavener (1987)

With awesome majesty (𝅗𝅥 = c.60 throughout)

Basses mf dolce

God ___ is ___ with ___ us.

p sonore

Go(d). ___

Sing 3 times:
1st time mp — mf
2nd time mf — f
3rd time f — ff

S. 1 2 Hear ___ ye peo - - - - - ple, E - ven to the

A. 1 2 Hear ___ ye peo - - - - - ple, E - ven to the

T. Hear ___ ye peo - - - - - ple, E - ven to the

B. 1 2 Hear ___ ye peo - - - - - ple, E - ven to the

ut - ter - most ___ end of the earth.

ut - ter - most ___ end of the earth.

ut - ter - most ___ end of the earth.

ut - ter - most ___ end of the earth.

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Example 5.2 *God is With Us* (p. 1), by John Tavener (1987)

meditation on the Revelation to John, *The Apocalypse* (1993), is arranged as a series of 'Ikons'.

As already indicated, these two prominent marks of Tavener's mature work – its simplicity and its contemplative character – are achieved not only through devices he carried forward from his early pieces, but also through those of the Orthodox tradition, by far the most important of which is chant. One of the crucial musical experiences of his adult life was the discovery of Byzantine and Russian Znamenny chant,[25] and most of his works employ or adapt Orthodox chant to some extent, often with its chromatic and microtonal inflections. Along with chant goes the drone or *ison*, a long sustained note representing 'the eternal', sometimes lasting for an entire piece. Tavener speculates that the reason why some of his pieces have become so well accepted is that they are tapping into sounds which are rooted, ultimately, in eternity, in God. Chants and drones form a kind of 'umbilical cord' to the sacred[26] and music, he believes, should rediscover its sacred roots through chant. In addition to chants and drones Tavener also makes extensive use of *troparia*, short musical refrains, and hymns – the *kontakion* and later, the *kanon*.

Directionality, multiplicity, change and motion, beginnings and endings

We have already seen enough to be able to highlight features of Tavener's style which are very pertinent to conceptions of eternity and time. Either directly or indirectly, much of his work is concerned with an evocation of divine eternity (providing a 'window on God'[27]), and the eternity which is brought to sound appears to involve the avoidance, even the negation, of time: to be more precise, the restraint of directionality (as articulated through tension and resolution), multiplicity, change and motion, and the evasion of clearly defined beginnings and endings. We can look briefly at each of these in turn.

Undoubtedly, Tavener is writing music which in some respects coincides with the Western tonal tradition.

> Tavener can still employ, with modifications, major and minor chords, the twelve notes of the chromatic scale, conventional instruments associated with tonal music, demarcated phrases, regular pulse, and hierarchical patterns of organisation. He has little time, now, for serialism, electronic music and the techniques often linked with 'atonality'.

25. 'Sacred Music in the 20th Century', no page number. 26. Ibid.
27. Dunnett (1992), 20.

But in other ways he stands apart from Western tonality. He has become increasingly dissatisfied with the trappings associated with tonal music – e.g. the symphony orchestra, concert halls, etc.[28] Not least, he eschews and subverts many of the artifices which give tonal music its characteristic *directionality* and goal-orientation.[29] He avoids patterns of irreversible tension and resolution. The kind of music which establishes a polemic, pursues conflict and reaches towards resolution holds little attraction for Tavener. (He tends to link this with what he sees as the baneful influence of the dominating ego of the 'humanist' tradition, which pervades Western musical life.[30]) Even on the small-scale level, implicatory tensions are kept to a minimum.[31] An extreme example is his relatively early piece *Celtic Requiem* (1969), which is, in essence, a twenty-minute elaboration of the chord of E flat major. In one of his more extreme pronouncements, Tavener declared: 'I dislike the way that *angst* got into music through

28. He laments the move of music from Church or temple into concert hall: 'the present-day concert-hall is an anomaly which must be annihilated if music is to survive. The Orthodox Church and her music presents that which is not human, but a [sic] divine and theanthropic: what is beyond yet among us' (Tavener 1997, no page number). At the same time he sees a positive side to the concert hall, for it enables sacred music to be heard in 'secular' settings.
29. After the first American performance of *The Protecting Veil* in New York, some attacked the piece for having 'lacked argument'. Geoffrey Haydon tells us that Tavener's stock answer to this kind of objection was to say that 'complaining about the absence of argument in John Tavener's music was as sensible as attacking Jane Austen's novels for failing to serve up violence. He also recommended a visit to a Russian Orthodox Church' (Haydon 1995, 268).
30. Tavener wants to understand composition in its ideal form not as the struggle of a composer with ideas, or with materials, but a process in which God is allowed maximum freedom and space. Indeed, it is a form of prayer. He sees this as consonant with what he calls 'The Sacred Tradition' and links it with his appropriation of Augustine's conception of the 'intellective organ of the heart'. He interprets this as making possible an apprehension in which we understand not by the mind, nor by the heart alone, 'but by the mind that has extinguished the ego, and descended into the heart'. Speaking of a period after serious illness, he reflects on the remarkable steady and unimpeded 'flow' of music from him: 'the "ego" or the "John Tavener" had been torn to shreds, and something other, something new, something that had always existed but heard for the first time was coming to birth' (Tavener 1997, no page number). This leads Tavener to make some extreme statements about other traditions in which, as he views it, the composer's ego, especially the composer's mind, obtrudes.
31. Interestingly, the music critic Paul Driver comments: 'For me, the best Tavener works are those in which his religious austerity and aesthetic fervour are held in electric tension; for instance, the spectacular Bach-inspired *Ultimos Ritos* of 1972 or the dramatically thrilling *Akhmatova: Requiem* of 1980. In his works of the past decade, however, *tension of any sort is largely eschewed*; the fervour is entirely religious; the austerity no longer a dramatic gesture but a pre-condition of the only kind of art that Tavener now recognises: icon-making' (Driver 1994, 21). My italics.

psychology at the turn of the century. I think the composer should deal with his *angst* in the composing room, not in the score.'[32]

Typical of his pieces are symmetrical structures; not *strictly* symmetrical structures – for that would mean the almost impossible reversal of every parameter of the music, including the attack and decay of notes – but structures in which symmetrical arrangement is pursued to a much greater extent than in most tonal music. His liking for relatively discrete blocks of internally uniform and self-contained material also testifies to the suppression of directionality. There is sometimes a directional flow connecting the blocks – one leading to, or pointing ahead towards another – but one often has the sense that the sections could be juxtaposed in any order. Even when sections are not self-contained, repetition or internal allusion is not usually functioning to resolve (or increase) tension.[33] There is sometimes climax-building – for example, through blocks of music, each of relatively uniform volume, repeated at different pitches and/or volumes – but this is very different from the implicatory dynamic which is so basic to Western tonality. Tavener's music is more akin to the increase and decrease of light intensity than the winding-up and release of a clock-spring.

The second restraint – that of *multiplicity* – we have already spoken about at length. It is one of the most notable marks of his music over the last twenty years. The third, however – the suppression of *change and motion* – requires further comment. The word 'stasis' is often used rather loosely to describe music of extreme stillness or repose. And the word

32. Quoted in Wood (1992), 18. There are pieces and passages which evoke tears and sorrow: the loss of his own mother is sensed in *Eis Thanaton* (1986). It was written in memory of her and consists of a setting of Andreas Kalvos' 'Ode to Death'. Tavener remarks on the effect of his serious illness in 1980: 'I am aware since then, of a greater simplicity and a more canonical and iconographical approach to my work' ('Sacred Music in the 20th Century', no page number). In an interview he explains that 'it was necessary to go through the experience I went through of nearly dying . . . in order for certain aspects of my life to become clear' (Garfield 1992, 32). It is significant that the text of *Akhmatova: Requiem* has strong political undertones of protest, but these are ignored by Tavener who chose the text primarily for its expressive qualities and because it was so adaptable to his liturgical sympathies. 'He was neither unaware of, nor unreceptive to, the element of protest in the poem, but his purpose in setting it was entirely spiritual' (Phillips 1983, 30).

33. Kramer calls such musical structure, following Stockhausen, 'moment form' (J. Kramer 1988, ch. 8). Stravinsky and Messiaen are the key characters in the wings here. Stravinsky's highly sophisticated *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (1920) consists of mosaic-like self-contained sections presented in conjunction with more traditional goal-directed procedures. See J. Kramer (1988), ch. 9. Messiaen I speak about below. Karlheinz Stockhausen (b. 1928) – whose music and vision Tavener attacks as 'megalomaniac', betraying an 'aberrant spirituality' ('Sacred Music in the 20th Century', no page number) – can himself sometimes speak in similar ways to Tavener, though he has generally been motivated by a more oriental metaphysics.

'timelessness' is often yoked to it, along with 'eternity'. But it is important to be a little more precise. Total stasis, is, of course, impossible to achieve, whether in music or anywhere else. Music takes time to happen. It is normally understood as involving the succession of at least two notes. And as long as we are alive, we cannot freeze up our mental processes in any act of perception. Talk of stasis can only be shorthand for various degrees of *approximation* to the cessation of change and motion – in the music and/or in our perception of it. In Tavener's case this is most often pursued through music of a very slow tempo with a relatively uniform texture, and with an erasure (or near erasure) of regular pointed accent or pulse. The sense of changelessness and motionlessness is sometimes heightened indirectly through juxtaposing such music alongside strongly contrasting sections.[34]

Fourth, clearly delineated *beginnings and endings*, framed by strong opening and closing gestures, may be common in Western tonal music but are not in Tavener. Frequently the music emerges out of silence and drifts seamlessly back into silence, giving the impression of being in the midst of previously (and subsequently) unheard music. This too is often explicitly linked to the evocation of eternity. The fact that his beginnings are like processes and that his endings simply give way relates to his belief that the music of eternity sounds inaudibly 'before' the arrival of earthly sound and 'after' its cessation.

Parallels and forebears

Comparison with Tavener's mentor, Messiaen, is instructive here, especially since the latter's techniques were so strongly shaped by theological convictions. It was common for Messiaen to suspend the sense of time in music (except in those works which are based on birdsong in relation to nature), in order to express the idea of the 'eternal' – in which time does not exist – as distinct from the temporal.[35] Speaking of harmony, the manner in which Messiaen combines sounds, Robert Sherlaw Johnson explains that 'traditional symphonic procedure arose from a harmonic practice which depended on progression and on the tensions and relaxations created by the principle of dissonance and resolution'. This is not

34. It should be noted that not all of Tavener's music is characterised by slowness. There are some sections of his music, which swirl in a kind of rapture of motion (e.g. passages in *The Repentant Thief* (1990)). Yet even in cases like this, there will be little sense of progression and direction.

35. J. Kramer (1988), 214.

so in the case of Messiaen, which 'lends his music a static rather than dynamic quality, *his harmony existing in a state which is neither tension nor relaxation – the mood of the moment is captured and transfixed in a timelessness which is implied by the structure of the music itself*'.[36] Like Tavener, Messiaen wrote many works which deploy 'sectional' form, and he was strongly drawn to symmetrical structures. Moreover, '[i]nstead of a metre, which gives each moment in the bar a different significance and hence fosters a sense of orderly progression, Messiaen's music is most frequently tied to a pulse, which insists that all moments are the same, that the past, the present, and the future are identifiable. Sometimes the pulse is so slow that causal links are sufficiently distended not to be felt . . . But Messiaen's presto toccatas can be equally removed from any progressive experience of time: the race is around a circle joined by repetition (repetition of pulse, repetition of structural unit) in an ecstasy of stasis.'[37] There are important dissimilarities between Tavener and Messiaen. Messiaen's pursuit of simplicity is much less marked than Tavener, his rhythmic configurations are more often set over a clearly defined pulse and are generally more complex, the range of his musical sources is very much wider, and his output as a whole displays a greater variety of technique.[38] And, although it would be unwise to press too far the links between Messiaen's music and his vision of eternity, it would seem to be an eternity with much more room for movement than Tavener is prepared to allow. Nevertheless, the general posture towards created time, as far as it can be understood from his music and his own spoken and written reflections, bears more than a passing resemblance to that of Tavener. This is a decidedly negative attitude, especially inasmuch as time implies processes with direction.[39] And

36. Johnson (1989), 13. My italics.
37. Griffiths (1985b), 15f.
38. Indeed, one of the engaging aspects of Messiaen's work is the way in which he can combine strikingly different structural techniques – static block form and sonata form, for example – even within single pieces. See J. Kramer (1988), 213ff.; Johnson (1989), 22ff.
39. In the course of a description of his organ masterpiece *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (1969), Messiaen writes: 'Then comes eternity: God is eternal; he has neither beginning nor end nor succession. I treated this notion like a glittering flash of colour. God is immutable, which is to say, no change can occur in him' (Messiaen 1994, 126). His chamber piece *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* (1940), bears the inscription: 'in homage to the Angel of the Apocalypse, who raises his hand heavenwards saying: "There will be no more Time."' (The reference is to Rev. 10:6.) Interestingly, the phrase 'end of time' has a double meaning for Messiaen: not only the end of created time in heaven, but the end of musical time based on the durational divisions of classical music (Johnson 1989, 61f). 'There is . . . no thrust from one movement into the next . . . the movements are comparatively indifferent as to order', thus undermining any large-scale sense of temporal succession. Supporting this, the work is in some parts 'more blatantly symmetrical than anything outside his own output' (Griffiths 1985b, 100, 101). There is also a dislocation of pulse and the compression of history (a mixture of styles from different periods). The fifth and eighth movements directly concern eternity, the former a homage to Jesus as the eternal Word of God ('Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus') and the latter a homage to Jesus as Man, risen to immortality ('Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus'). Both are extremely slow. The fifth movement is marked 'Infinitely slow' and involves the gradual removal of chromatic elements from a very simple fundamental pentatonic scale. Here the harmony is in essence very straightforward, and in most Western music that would mean one could well move faster (speed and harmonic complexity vary inversely in most tonal music). But here harmonic simplicity is combined with exceptional slowness. The long delay of the end is felt to be worth it, so to speak, because of the gradual disappearance of the chromatic disturbances of the opening. Messiaen's purpose here, according to Paul Griffiths, was '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.' (ibid., 102). (In fact, Messiaen radically misreads Rev. 10:6, for the verse does not speak of the end of time. The vast majority of exegetes and translations understand it as saying: 'there will be no more time left before God completes his purposes'.)

his conception of the eschaton, the world's destiny in God's eternity, though not motionless, seems to be one which turns on the negation of time rather than, say, its fulfilment.

Further light can be thrown on Tavener by setting his work against the broader horizon of some other twentieth-century experiments in musical temporality. His propensity towards what we might call 'the spatialisation of time' is characteristic of a significant stream of composers, stretching back at least as far as Debussy and including such diverse figures as Mahler, Varèse, Stravinsky and Stockhausen. Musical space is constituted by pitch, timbre and volume – it is these elements which distinguish simultaneous musical phenomena.[40] In most music of the Western tonal tradition, these are subordinate to temporal patterns of tension and resolution. In Tavener, the spatial aspects of music become, or tend to become, ends in themselves. Sound is, at least to a considerable extent, explored for its own sake in relative independence from temporal factors. And much twentieth-century music travelled a similar path. Indeed, one way of reading the advent of 'atonal' music in the twentieth century is as a reversal of the dominant relationship between time and space to be found in most tonal music.

> In the art-music tradition, by the end of the nineteenth century, tonality, especially in the Germanic world, was in a state of exhaustion, 'burdened by an overextended harmonic vocabulary which was no longer solely dependent on simple triads and their functions or related melodic motions'.[41] 'Atonality' was already a living force in music by

40. We have already touched upon these matters in the introduction (see above, pp. 23ff). See Zuckerkandl (1956), 267–362; Morgan (1980); Rochberg (1984), 78–136. One important example of the spatialisation of musical time is notation, in which temporal sequence is presented on a two-dimensional surface which can be scanned in a similar way to a picture.
41. Rochberg (1984), 105.

> 1915 (though the term 'atonal' is highly problematic[42]). The twelve-tone method proposed by Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) was in part an attempt to solve the difficulties posed by the abandonment of tonality. Pitch relationships were organised according to non-hierarchical and non-functional harmonic principles. Even here, however, the musical phrase, related to metre, was not abandoned, though it became more supple and asymmetrical. Anton Webern (1883–1945), however, severely reduced the significance of phrases and metre: a tendency towards the 'single note', the loss of evident melodic shape and a penchant for structural symmetry led to music in which 'The beat and metre is . . . a frame, not a process – a frame on which to construct symmetries of pitch and rhythm.'[43] Now there is no 'moving from' and 'proceeding towards'. The metrical beat becomes merely a reference point: it assumes a mechanical function by means of which a structure can be temporally 'spread out'. In effect, Webern prepared the way for the emergence of pointillism and similar techniques, in which metre and recognisable phrases are abandoned altogether.[44]

As a result, 'a unique phenomenon occurred for the first time in music: sound, as concrete musical space, emerged as an independent structural force, no longer subject to periodicity; and duration, formerly embodied in the growth process of periodicity, emerged in a totally new role'.[45] In such music, time becomes no more than durational proportion, having no relation to metrical waves, or harmonic tension and resolution. Musical time, having first become separated from musical space, is, as it were, suppressed by it. To use Rochberg's categories, this is the music of 'space-time' as opposed to 'time-space':

> The prototype *time-space* generates dynamic architectural forms in which duration as passage shapes the course of the events in the musical discourse along a structurally continuous axis. The prototype *space-time* generates forms in which spatial projection, freed from the dynamism of rhythmic periodicity, occurs in unpredictable patterns, occupying a time structure which stands outside the propulsive influence of the beat and metric pulse. An essentially static structure is the end result, verified by aural perception.[46]

Numerous illustrations of this from the last hundred years could be cited.[47] To describe such music as 'timeless' would be inaccurate, for in

42. Norton (1984), 231f., 263. 43. Rochberg (1984), 111.
44. For a fuller account of these developments, see e.g. Norton (1984), chs. 10, 11.
45. Rochberg (1984), 105. 46. Ibid., 117. My italics.
47. See Morgan (1977, 1980); Rochberg (1984), 125ff.

many cases there are musical events of different durations, and events of different volume or timbre, and therefore at least the suggestion of temporal distinction between more and less significant events. However, the process can been taken to much further extremes, such that any impression of distinct past and distinct future is resolutely subdued. The entire essence of a piece may be one of near-unchanging consistency, in which no event is privileged over any other. Jonathan Kramer dubs this 'vertical time' music, in which, supposedly, past and future are denied in favour of an 'extended present'. Everything presses towards undifferentiated, equilibrial homogeneity. Vertical time music may be constituted by process as well as by stasis. Pieces such as Steve Reich's *Come Out* (1966) involve rapid internal motion: 'The result is a single present stretched out into an enormous duration, a potentially infinite "now" that nonetheless feels [or can feel] like an instant.'[48] The claim among some is that such pieces can induce in the sympathetic listener (one who does not attempt to project teleological order and succession into the music) a lack of awareness of any distinction between past, present and future; an 'eternal now' similar to that state achieved through the use of certain drugs.[49]

It may well be that some of this could be related to earlier observations we made about the theological aspects of modernity's unease with time. But here we are concerned with Tavener's location within this broad proclivity. He too shares an avoidance or suppression of directionality. Also characteristic is the exploration of musical space as intrinsically interesting in itself. This Tavener accomplishes through skilful manipulation of pitch-, timbre- and volume-differences. Spatial language can be prominent in Tavener's commentary on his own work. The drive towards simplicity and the suppression of change and motion contribute to a downplaying of time in favour of space. On the other hand, the suppression of temporal distinction is rarely taken to the extremes we find in 'vertical time' music. Further, most of Tavener's pieces will contain some kind of pulse (even if not metre), many are built around demarcated phrases, some contain hierarchical features, and some have very strong contrasts between constituent sections.

What distinguishes Tavener above all from most of the others in this stream is that the restraint of directionality, plurality, change and motion is carried out for specifically *theological* reasons. It has become common to

48. J. Kramer (1988), 55; see also 375–97. Other examples include Philip Glass's *Music in Twelve Parts* (1974), John Cage and Lejaren Hiller's *HPSCHD* (1969), and Iannis Xenakis' *Bohor I* (1962). 49. J. Kramer (1988), ch. 12.

claim that a composer's intention is at best irrelevant and at worst obstructive to musical analysis; as Tom Wright has put it, 'the road to hell is paved with authorial intention'.[50] But the fact remains that since Tavener's conversion to Orthodoxy, virtually all of his music has issued directly from this spiritual environment: quite literally every note he writes stems from his aspiration to produce 'liquid metaphysics'. Without pretending that his theological convictions can provide a total 'explanation' of his work, to ignore them totally, in addition to being somewhat perverse, would be to deny ourselves the opportunity which his music affords to open out crucial theological issues with respect to eternity and time.

Comments and questions

I am not competent to judge the extent to which Tavener is being faithful to Orthodox theologies of time and eternity. But, in commenting on Tavener, I do want to address two areas of theological concern. The first is to do with this music's cultural context. I have already cited those, such as David Harvey, who would see temporal disorientation as crucial to the postmodern sensibility, generated by 'time-space compression'.[51] If there is any force in this, it may be that Tavener offers a kind of musical de-compression, an aural 'space' amidst a temporally compressed culture, a stable place, in which we are not shoved and driven from 'here' to 'there'. And in a society overloaded with multiple and contradictory communication systems and messages, he provides a simple space – unified and relatively undifferentiated. This, I believe, may well point to a significant factor behind the economic success of his music: our culture's inability to live peaceably with time. And if so, while being cautious about the somewhat inflated claims which he and others have made about this music tapping into the 'sacred' in some privileged and direct way, we might nevertheless propose that one of the benefits of this music is its provision of a cool cathedral, so to speak, in a hot, rushed and overcrowded town. It offers a challenge and alternative to the destructive, distracting and alienating busy-ness which is so much a mark of our culture and, surely, far from what God intends.

The second area for comment concerns God's eternity and eternity's relation to time. Here my remarks are more critical. As I have said a number of times, music does not translate into anything like straightforward statements, theological or otherwise, capable of evaluation and

50. Wright (1992), 55. 51. See above, pp. 73f.

criticism. This makes doctrinal critique of music a hazardous business. There are indeed dangers, especially in the case of music, of leaning to heavily on 'authorial intention'.[52] Nonetheless, insofar as this music is presented (by Tavener and others) as offering a sonic approximation to eternity, it would appear to be an eternity construed largely in terms of the *negation of time*. The point can be expanded through asking some pointed questions, closely related to each other. First – and this links up especially with our discussion in chapter 3 – is there an adequate recognition that eternity, God's own life, has been made known decisively through *an engagement and interaction with the created world, in a history, climaxing in the history of Jesus Christ, in which God confirms the created goodness and reality of the world's temporality?* There seems more than a hint in Tavener of the idea that the more deeply we relate to God, the more we will need to abstract ourselves from time, develop an immunity to time's opportunities and threats. Is sufficient weight being given to the time-implicated character of God's self-giving, the embeddedness of salvation in trajectories of promise and fulfilment, waiting, patience, delay? Second, is there due attention to the conviction that God's eternity has been enacted through a human life which has embraced our *fallen humanity*, including the experiences of deprivation, fear, anxiety, hunger, loss, frustration and disappointment, and that these have themselves been drawn into, indeed, become the very material of salvation? In Tavener, the cool cathedral is in danger of bearing little relation to the sordid life on the streets. Third, is there sufficient concern for the way in which God's eternity has been opened up through a particular and ugly *death?* If the cross truly is the 'wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1:18–25), the icon of Golgotha cannot be erased from any truly Christian conception of God's eternity and our participation in it. Indeed all conceptions of the eternity–time relationship must pass through the cross. To be fair, Tavener sees himself in a tradition which views Good Friday as integrally linked to Easter: 'It is symptomatic of Western tradition that it stops at the image of the murdered Man and few go beyond. Perhaps that image has done more evil because of the concentration for so many years on the murdered Man rather than on the Resurrected one . . . [In the Eastern tradition] we never speak of the

52. Even in the case of literary texts, 'authorial intention' needs to be nuanced with considerable care: see the subtle discussion of meaning as 'communicative action' in Vanhoozer (1998), especially ch. 5. Owing to music's relatively weak referential power (to which we have alluded a number of times), determining 'meaning' (in anything like Vanhoozer's carefully qualified sense) is a far harder and more complex business than in the case of most literary texts.

Crucifixion without the Resurrection.'[53] For Tavener, everything must come under the 'glow' of the resurrection.[54] But the issue is whether eternity is linked sufficiently to 'the descent into hell' such that there can be no talk of the former (and no resurrection) without the latter. Fourth, questions need to be asked of *the vision of the eschaton* suggested and evoked by Tavener. For it seems to sit uneasily alongside the New Testament vista of the re-creation of the temporal and fallen world, the final participation of created reality in the eternity of God. In *The Apocalypse* (1993), we are offered magnificent musical sound-images of the book of Revelation, but the piece ends on one simple, single note (the 'eternity note') which fades into silence. The eternity of Revelation is one of multiplicity, activity and abundance – the new earth and the new heaven, complete with heavenly city (Rev. 21, 22). Tavener's eschaton appears to entail a divine eternity of absolute simplicity, and the negation of temporality; the same cannot be said of the writer of Revelation. Nor can it easily be said of any other New Testament author for that matter. What is the congruence, for example, between Tavener's 'one note' and what the writer to the Ephesians describes as the 'gathering up' of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10)? The problem here, I suggest, is not only Tavener's assumption about a necessary link between multiplicity and evil, but an eclipsing of the biblical stress on time as intrinsic to the goodness of creation and integral to the purposes of God for that same creation. (And even if it were claimed that God's eternity itself, considered apart from time and the eschaton, could be represented as one 'note', how could this be consonant with the irreducibly trinitarian character of God?)

Of course, no theologically inspired music can hope to cover the full gamut of the Christian faith, and certainly not single pieces. And, to repeat, Tavener's music does offer a welcome respite from the worst of fallen and alienating temporalities, and as far as it does this it is surely to be welcomed. But my point here is that, inasmuch as this is construed as a musico-theological vision, we find an evasion and even an obscuring of the belief that God's eternity has been made known and accessible through a redemption which has integrally involved created time.

Christ's time and ours

This discussion of Tavener has enabled us to clarify some of the crucial matters at stake in attempting to explicate the nature of God's eternity

53. Ramsey (1989), 7. 54. Begbie (1998), 20.

and eternity's relation to time. Is it possible for music to offer something more adequate to God's involvement with the temporal, created order, especially to the pivotal events of Good Friday and Easter?

Tavener is deeply pessimistic about Western tonality's theological possibilities. But, if our findings in the previous chapters are anything to go by, we need not be so suspicious. However, the potential of the tradition will only be properly seen when something of a theological reorientation takes place, specifically towards the divine sharing and reinstatement of our temporality in Jesus Christ.

This brings what has been implicit in much of the previous chapters to a head: created time, we are affirming, has in some sense been enfolded, judged, broken and re-fashioned in Jesus Christ, and our final destiny is nothing other than to participate fully in this redeemed temporality. Even the metrical wave picture we have been deploying falls badly short here. As with one-level linear models of time, it could lead us to overlook (a) the ontological decisiveness of Christ as the one in whose history the temporal world has 'once and for all' found its fulfilment in God's eternity, and therefore (b) the epistemological decisiveness of Christ for comprehending the character and significance of time and its relation to eternity. To lean too heavily on our wave model could lead us to treat Christ as merely 'another' event, another moment in a sequence of wave patterns. Christology would thus be in danger of becoming *determined by* prior conceptions of temporality rather than being *determinative of* all our thinking about temporality.

I have already suggested that the Christian conviction about the reality and goodness of time is grounded ultimately in the coming of the eternal Son in Jesus Christ. This has taken place not in a manner tangential to the world's temporality, nor through the insertion of a 'block' of eternity into our time (such as to 'push aside' our temporality), but through a respectful engagement with creation *including its temporality*, the temporality which was brought into being 'in' Christ, 'through' him and 'for' him (Col. 1:16).

Let us unfold this further, drawing upon what we have learned about music. The temporality in which music occurs is subject to a disruption between the temporal modes, past, present and future. It stands under the shadow of the fall and the promise of redemption. Though it has not been allowed to slip into sheer chaos and nothingness, created time has nevertheless become 'refracted time, time that has broken loose from God'.[55]

55. T. F. Torrance (1976), 97.

There is a myriad of ways in which this is experienced. We have already spoken of some of the modern and postmodern pathologies of time. As far as our past is concerned, perhaps the most basic experience of 'refracted time' is an acute awareness of the loss of what is good: destructive transience.[56] The past appears irrevocably behind us, gone for ever:

> For us the past is the time we leave and are in no longer. It was once ours. We had our life in it years ago or even this morning. In it we made our contribution to history. In it we were then ourselves. But we are so no longer. For, with all that filled or did not fill it, it has now eluded us and been taken from us. It has remained behind never to be restored.[57]

Our memory at best is limited in its powers of retention, so that 'even what we recall soon sinks back into oblivion'.[58] We can, of course, know a past which we wish would disappear but does not – the past which condemns and haunts, the tragedy of the past we long to forget but cannot. But the root difficulty here is still one of loss. The particular agony of the guilty memory, for example, resides in the permanent and increasing inaccessibility of the past event: it can never be grasped in order to be altered, lived again differently. Further, temporal refraction affects our future orientation: our future becomes apparently impenetrable, and thus engenders the fear that to step into the future is to step into a void. (The filling of the future in anticipation is a common but dangerous way of dealing with this, pouring energy into hopes which may well be dashed.) Furthermore, poised between future and past, as Augustine so agonisingly sensed, lies the seemingly durationless 'present', perilously insecure, midway between ungraspable past and unfathomable future. Something like this is arguably near the heart of many if not most pathologies of time – the temporal modes are experienced as alienated from one another, in contradiction and strife, they are not in mutual peace: 'beginning, middle and end are distinct and even opposed as past, present and future'.[59]

Such is the time in which music occurs. And such is the time Jesus of Nazareth shared: the Son of God inhabits this time with us as one of us, as part of God's determination to reconcile our time to his eternity.

We have seen that music is capable of offering an 'interpenetrating' temporality, in which, because of a complex hierarchy of waves of tension and resolution, we are given not an evaporating present but a present through which past is directed towards future, in which a past

56. See above, p. 93. 57. Barth (1960a), 512. 58. Ibid., 513.
59. Barth (1957), 608.

occurrence does not retreat into an ever-receding and unreal 'beyond', and in which future occurrences are not totally unknowable or unreal but can, in various ways, be intuited now. The 'reality' we experience at any one 'moment' in music is not exhausted by those phenomena which can be said to exist 'now'. Christian theology dares to speak of an interpenetrating temporality made possible and accessible through what has happened on Good Friday and on Easter Day. Golgotha speaks of eternity's submission to the 'ever-older' time, to the dis-integration of the temporal modes, ultimately to death. Here the past of Jesus and his future are threatened with non-being, in the abysmal, ruptured and silent 'present' of Holy Saturday. Here the old Adam dies. Here the old world dies. Here dissipated and corrupted finitude is taken into the heart of God. In the resurrection of the crucified Christ, a kind of temporality is established in which the destructive alienation of fallen time is overcome, in which there is no growing old. To speak of the resurrection is to speak of an occurrence, *the* occurrence, whose newness does not pass away; here is an event which does not fall back into an ever more distant remoteness, which does not run into dark forgetfulness or some vacuity of permanently lost events. In contrast to all merely worldly innovations, novelties and revolutions, the resurrection is utterly free from fading decay. And in this respect the resurrection establishes and anticipates the time of the eschaton, the end-times, in which there is no temporal fragmentation and nothing ever becomes old but is always new. More than this, we are witnessing here the fulfilment not only of the hypostatic union between humanity and God but of the union between the whole creation and the Creator. The resurrection marks the climactic fulfilment of God's intentions for *all* creation. All times are thus limited and determined by their proximity to the time of the risen Christ.

The risen Christ's time is properly considered to be the most fully true and authentic time. Thus, as Jüngel reminds us, the resurrection radicalises our understanding of the created world's temporality: 'The occurrence of something unsurpassably new which does not grow old, but rather remains *new for all time*, is completely out of joint with the popular understanding of time.'[60] Insofar as we are speaking of the life of Christ as his eternal life, we cannot separate past, present and future abstractly, but must consider them first of all as mutually co-inhering in him in such a

60. Jüngel (1995), 53.

way that the alienation and disruption which is characteristic of fallen time is healed. This does not mean that the historicity of Christ's earthly life is now (to us) of no account, or not fully real – for the risen Christ is indissolubly connected to that particular history; his 'lordship' over time implicates and includes it. Yet he is not encapsulated or contained by it; he both negates its corruption and reconstitutes its goodness within the life of God.

But what of our participation, as fallen creatures, in Christ's time? As we have said a number of times, in musical experience, we can enjoy a temporality which is in some measure incongruous with the extra-musical time(s) which we inhabit in our day to day lives. Something is happening which at its best might be described as music 'taking' our time and 'returning it' to us re-shaped in some manner. To share in music is to find a temporality in which – at least to some extent – past, present and future have been made to interweave fruitfully.

This 'taking' and 'returning' process can happen not only *between* a piece of music and the temporalities in which it is experienced and known, it can also happen – and often does – *within* a piece of music. We saw a pointed example of this in Beethoven's last string quartet.[61] But there are hundreds of examples of music which, within its own textures, engages with much more fractured and dislocated temporalities, re-moulding and healing them. A recent one is James MacMillan's *The Confessions of Isobel Gowdie* (1990), where a sonic nightmare is progressively healed and transformed by, among other things, Gregorian chant. Now internationally acclaimed, MacMillan is one of the leading overtly Christian composers of our day. His aesthetic contrasts sharply with Tavener's, centring much more on the three days of crucifixion and resurrection. MacMillan feels compelled, primarily *for theological reasons*, to integrate conflict into his work: 'I think that a lot of so-called spiritual music can be a monodimensional experience without the sense of sacrifice . . . I am drawn by the sacrificial aspect of the great Christian narrative, and I seem to be going round and round in circles round the same three days in history. The fact is that if history had to be changed – if *we* had to be changed – then God had to interact with us in a severe way. You can't have the Resurrection without the Crucifixion . . . the best stories are ones which have resolutions of conflict, not just resolution.'[62]

The process of salvation can be conceived along just these lines, as an

61. See above, pp. 114ff. 62. As quoted in Mitchell (1999), 19.

ongoing healing of our time through participation in the temporality established in Jesus Christ. The Church might be said to inhabit two temporal continua, the broad continuum of 'this passing world' and that of the new aeon which has already overtaken us in Christ (Christ's ascension underlining for us now the fact that the two have by no means yet found their correspondence, except in Christ). And while we live in both times, our redemption turns on the ongoing transformation of our time(s) by Christ's time. This occurs through the Holy Spirit, who enables a sharing in Christ's time in the midst of the world's dysfunctional and distorted temporalities. To take part in the temporality of the risen Christ through the Spirit is to discover an interweaving of the temporal modes. We discover that we were loved 'then' also, our past is real in Christ's eyes and God's eyes (Ps. 139:16). Our past 'not only was real but is real. It is not lost. It has not escaped us or ceased to be. It is as genuinely ours as our being in the present and future.'[63] To share in the 'redeemed time' of the risen Christ through the Spirit means there can be a 'looking back' with thankfulness – 'Forget not all his benefits' (Ps. 103:2) – but this is not a wistful longing, nor an attempt to transport what was into the now, but an act of gratitude flowing from a sense that the benefits of the past, remembered now, anticipate the future.[64] And *the* 'benefit' is Christ's own death and his risen life among us mediated by the Spirit. Moreover, since Christ's temporality is the temporality of the *eschaton*, the temporality which will mark the new heaven and the new earth, accessible now through the Spirit, we may agree with Pannenberg that 'It is possible to see all time-bridging duration, and all experiences of it in the flux of time, as an anticipation of the eschatological future of a participation of creatures in the eternity of God.'[65]

Far from abstracting us *out of* time, the vision opened up by music in this way is one in which to be 'saved' is, among other things, to be given

63. Barth (1960a), 537.
64. 'This future [of the new age] was already the benefit of yesterday. By its very nature it cannot be a thing of yesterday . . . It cannot, then, be the object of a sorrowful looking backwards' (Barth 1957, 628).
65. Pannenberg (1991), 410. There is of course a negative aspect to all this. Christ, as the eschaton, is competent to judge our past, for he is the telos of creation in relation to whom all will find their true telos. To share in the time of the risen Christ is to enter a sphere of judgement, in which our distorted, sinful nature comes under condemnation, and this judgement entails the possibility of eternal loss at the eschaton. The eschaton, achieved through Good Friday and Easter, determines whether something has a temporal future or an eternal future. Music offers little help in explicating this, given its tendency towards 'binding' past, present and future, except in perhaps relatively trivial ways – themes and motifs are sometimes not repeated or taken up; and music is followed by silence (though, as we have seen, even this need not be seen simply as cessation and void).

new resources for living 'peaceably' *with* time. There are obvious links here with a fairly vigorous body of theological writing on human identity and vocation. In contrast to conceptions of human personhood which trade on notions of quasi-timeless 'essences', the importance of time and narrative for the formation of identity has been underlined and explored extensively by Paul Ricoeur, Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, Anthony Thiselton and others. Some of this is Christologically oriented to a high degree. For example, Thiselton, after a forceful argument against some postmodernist construals of the self, especially those which would advocate 'instantaneousness' as a privileged vantage point, and thus create 'insoluble problems about meaning, identity, self and God', concludes that '"*who we are" emerges in terms of God's larger purposes and promises for the world, society, for the church and for us*. This purposive anticipation of the future finds expression in our sense of *being called by God to a task within that frame*. We find our identity and meaning when we discover our *vocation*.'[66] Thiselton has also pointed to the ways in which this finds substantial exegetical support in the New Testament, for example in Hebrews and 1 Corinthians.[67] Here we would want to point to not only the potential of music to help us comprehend these temporalities through concrete demonstration and experience, but also its potential to be taken up into the process of shaping a mature Christian identity.[68]

Matters may be taken a stage further, albeit very tentatively, by linking these reflections with the trinitarian ontology of God. Karl Barth is one of a number who wish to link a vision of redemption as the integrating of past, present and future in Christ with the dynamic interrelatedness

66. Thiselton (1995), 151.
67. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the paradigm of humanness is exhibited and fulfilled in Jesus Christ in a way which is irreducibly temporal. Christ is himself set in the context of an 'ongoing temporal narrative' in which promise and covenant (temporally grounded and understood) are prominent. The purposive history of the prophets, Moses and Joshua, the Psalmists, the heroes of the faith (now 'ahead' of us) provide the frame in which Jesus himself is presented. There is a contrast and narrative continuity between the 'prophets' who mediated revelation 'in various ways' (1:1) and Jesus who is the climax, the decisive and definitive revelation 'in these last days' (1:2). Hope is the 'anchor' (6:19), grounded in what God promised with an oath (6:17), and this stands in contrast to the tendency of human beings to 'drift' (2:1–4). Christ himself joins us in a frail, temporal pilgrimage. Human identity is forged in his own humanity, as one of us, suffering included (2:14ff.). Indeed, he learns obedience through suffering (5:8; 2:10). The ascended human Jesus, 'at the right hand of God', is the one who has journeyed with us. Hebrews' characteristic themes of 'entering in', 'approach', are, again, temporally grounded in the pilgrimage of Jesus. Consequently, patience and perseverance are demanded of us (11:1–39; 12:2), for this was the way of Jesus, our 'pioneer' or trail-blazer (2:10). Thiselton offers an illuminating exploration of these themes, along with an examination of similar ideas in 1 Corinthians (Thiselton 1998).
68. See Higgins (1991), *passim*.

of God's triunity.[69] Barth specifies the eternity of the triune God as 'pure duration', in which beginning, succession and end do not fall apart, in which there is no conflict between source, movement and goal, but rather mutual coinherence. Eternity, then, is 'a fluid conjunction of simultaneity and sequence'.[70] Temporal distinctions are not conceived as being absent from eternity, but rather as being present with a simultaneity that does not efface their sequence. What distinguishes eternity from time is 'the fact that there is in [God] no opposition or competition or conflict, but peace between origin, movement and goal, between present, past and future, between "not yet", "now" and "no more", between rest and movement, potentiality and actuality, whither and whence, here and there, this and that. In him all these things are *simul*, held together by the omnipotence of his knowing and willing, a totality without gap or rift, free from the threat of death under which time, our time, stands.'[71]

In this chapter, I have been setting out starting-points for discussion, not comprehensive theses. But they do, I believe, indicate substantial ways ahead for any who are concerned with the theology of time and eternity. While sympathetic to much in Tavener's music, and while certainly not

69. Barth (1957), 640. Barth refuses to define eternity apart from the particular temporality of Jesus. Only in and through Jesus Christ can the ontology of time be properly understood; there can be no general human temporality which takes ontological priority over that of Jesus Christ. 'Real time' is that time, revelation time, which God has for us, when the time of the world is turned back and reconciled to its Maker. To operate *a priori* with a supposedly neutral concept of 'created' time or 'human' time, or indeed a concept of 'fallen' time, is to risk reading the divine purposes for creation according to categories which have not been adequately shaped by and made consonant with God's bringing to fulfilment the created (temporal) order in Jesus Christ. It is a failure to grasp this methodological strategy which leads to so many misreadings of Barth; see Jenson (1969), 72; Hunsinger (1991), 15ff. The idea that in Barth's scheme, God's eternity either keeps him from making contact with time, or allows God to be temporal only by including a peculiar sort of time which is not ours, as Bruce Marshall has pointed out, trades upon a presumed opposition between time and eternity (not dissimilar to that presupposed by Tavener!). But in Barth's theology, 'As an attribute of his freedom, God's eternity is not his opposition to mundane time, but his transcendence of the opposition between time and timelessness.' The contact of God with our time 'signals neither its destruction nor his, but the conquest of our time's corrosive divisions' (Marshall 1993, 458).
70. Hunsinger (1991), 56.
71. Barth (1957), 612. Whatever questions we may ask of Barth, if this broad approach leads in the right direction, it would be unwise to insist that eternity is best conceived as mere timelessness, or as the polar opposite of created time. It would be equally unwise to insist that because the world is temporal, God *must* in some way also be temporal; that kind of argument (of which there are many versions) all too easily tends towards the projection of created time into God. Indeed, both lines of argument are in danger of projecting inappropriate qualities into God by short-circuiting the economy of salvation. The triune God through the work of Christ and the Spirit enacts a positive relation to time; this God is carrying all things, including their temporality, to their appointed end, a participation in his own life. Instead of speaking of God's being as non-temporal, or simply temporal, it may well be that something like 'more than temporal' offers a better way forward.

claiming it is devoid of theological value, I expressed some fundamental hesitations about its adequacy in opening up a vision of eternity and eternity's relation to created time, especially one which is faithful to the self-involvement of God with the world in Jesus Christ. There seems to be an avoidance, amounting almost to an obfuscation, of the belief that God's eternity has been made known and opened up through a time-intensive interaction with the created order, an interaction which turns on the three days of the crucifixion and resurrection. We suggested that other musical processes and our participation in them offer an impressive resource for opening up a view of time and eternity which is rather more adequate to the reality of God's participation and reinstatement of our temporality in Jesus Christ, the one by whom and through whom this temporality was created.

6

Repetition and Eucharist

> Our understanding of musical technique would have advanced much further if only someone had asked: Where, when, and how did music first develop its most striking and distinctive characteristic – repetition?[1]
>
> HEINRICH SCHENKER

The topic of repetition has attracted an enormous quantity of interest in the last few decades, especially in postmodern cultural theory. The perceived tilt towards 'sameness' and homogenisation in some currents of late modernity has raised critical questions about what constitutes an 'original' reality. It is said that with the proliferation of processes for the replication of products, texts and information, we are witnessing a diminution in the authority of ideas of originality.[2] Music is sometimes alluded to in this discussion: of what does the 'original' consist when the vast majority of music heard today is multiply processed by an increasingly sophisticated technology of reproduction?[3]

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1. Heinrich Schenker, quoted in Kivy (1993), 327.
2. A stream of writers from Benjamin to Baudrillard. See e.g. Deleuze (1969), Derrida (1976).
3. See Attali (1985) on the era of 'repetition'. For Attali, mass reproduction is in crisis. Overproduction leads to a devolution, even a universalising, of cultural power among users, because the enormous accessibility of music threatens all traditional 'uses' of music and communicative codes. Music, all music, is just *there*. Unlike Adorno, Attali sees no redemptive role for 'serious' music in this situation: in generating remote and inaccessible works, it shares with popular music the definitive meaninglessness and silence of repetition, confirming the end of music and of its role as a creator of sociality. For more careful and nuanced discussions of the same issues, see Connor (1997), 165ff. and Middleton (1990), especially chs. 2 and 3. For a balanced treatment of Attali himself, see Bowman (1998), 334–52.