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THE SCRIPTURES AS INTERPRETED THROUGH
MUSIC: A STUDY OF THE CREATION, ELIJAH,
THE ST. MATTHEW PASSION, THE MESSIAH,
ST. PAUL

By

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THE SCRIPTURES AS INTERPRETED THROUGH MUSIC:
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of Problem.

The main problem of this study is to find out just what happens when certain scriptural passages are selected and set to music by a composer. What is the resulting effect? What is the composer's purpose? If he is successful in achieving his purpose by what means has he arrived? The further question will come, what is the value of this musical interpretation of scripture? What is the effect upon the scripture passages and is it accomplished? The purpose will be to see what practical values may come from this method of interpretation.

If no difference is made by the time and work of the composer, the training and work of many performers, and the expense involved in the publication and performance of such works--if there is no advantage in musical interpretation over the usual scripture reading and thirty-minute sermon by an individual minister, what justification is there for their performance in our churches? If these sacred works have no religious value for the listener, there is no

justification for their presence in houses of worship. Let us then find what values may be derived from the musical interpretation of the scriptures.

B. Delimitation of the Subject.

One can readily see the difficulties and many ramifications that a study of this kind might have; therefore, any study of the lives and personalities of the composers of the compositions selected or any study of contemporary history or music have been omitted. The study has been confined to the selected compositions themselves.

C. Method of Procedure

A selection of five well-known sacred works with scriptural texts has been made; these compositions offer a wide range of great spiritual truths and have been chosen with the importance of this variety and scope in mind. The arrangement in the order of the oratorios with the progression in thought as well as their chronological sequence has been made by way of a psychological approach.

In an effort to aid the reader in an appreciation of these works and of this type of interpretation, the continuity of the compositions has been kept intact so that the psychological value may not be lost.

In order that the reader does not begin to read some long chapter on a work that may not be familiar to him

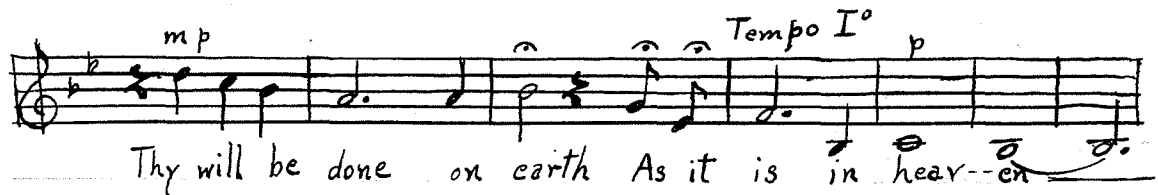
and become discouraged while reading about something which he should be hearing, a short composition which is very well-known will serve as an illustration of the treatment of the selected masterpieces. The composition chosen for this purpose is, "The Lord's Prayer" by Albert Hay Malotte.

The composition in the key of B flat major begins in common time and is marked "Lento, religioso"; the words "Our Father," are set off by rests and emphasized by notes of long time value, the reverent atmosphere is continued in the words "which art in heaven" sung softly, and to which a certain sense of dignity is given in the deliberate descent of the three quarter notes and the notes of longer value on the word "heaven."

Each syllable of the word "Hal-low-ed" is on a different note, ascending eighths, but each note is marked with a hold, the word "be" is held for seven counts and the word "name" for five. The effect is heightened by the subdued but constantly moving accompaniment in triplets.

In the next section, "Thy kingdom come," the rhythm is accelerated and the deliberate quarters descend. This together with a temporary change of key to G minor gives the effect of petition--a plaintive note. With the words, "As it is in heaven," the original tempo is resumed as is the original key. The melodic line has now unobtrusively but definitely worked its way down to a lower register and on

the word "heaven" whole notes are used for each syllable, the latter tied over into the next measure.



A change of time is introduced in the instrumental interlude, a new melodic idea is also set forth:



The rhythm now has more movement as the words begin "Give us this day," there is a "poco accelerando" with "And forgive us our debts" dropping back again in the reflective "as we forgive our debtors," which gives an indication of the real meaning of the phrase; something of the feeling quality of the word, "temptation" is achieved by the repeated notes, then the upward skip of a third on the word itself; the use of minor harmonies in this section serves both to create the atmosphere for the section and to heighten the contrast between this and the following climactic passage.

With the words, "For thine is the kingdom," the rhythm begins to broaden, the key is again major and the melodic line begins to make its way upward. Up to this part the greatest amount of volume has been "moderately soft," now on the word "glory" it is marked "very loud." In addition to the melodic ascent, there is a chromatic ascent in the bass of the accompaniment. The chromatic exhilaration

reaches its climax in the E flat minor chord on the first syllable of the word "glory" at which place the time signature is changed to 12/8 giving a further broadening effect and in which the word "ever" takes up one whole measure. On the word "Amen" it goes back to fundamental harmonies of common triads once more and, of course, in the original key ending on the tonic chord--giving a feeling of completeness and assurance.

D. Sources for the Study

In order not to become opinionated or influenced by philosophical, theological, or musical specialists and in order to make a psychological approach, this study has been confined for the most part to the current editions of the selected compositions.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE CREATION

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STUDY OF THE CREATION

A. Introduction

Franz Joseph Haydn started to work on The Creation in 1795. The oratorio was completed in 1798.

In Parts I and II the story of creation is given. Part III gives expression to the gratitude and blissful state of Adam and Eve in their early naivete.

B. Analysis of the Oratorio

Part I

The overture, "Representation of Chaos," provides the atmospheric setting for the work and is explained in the recitative, "In the beginning God created the Heav'n and the Earth: and the Earth was without form and void." Immediately follows the chorus with the famous "Let there be light" passage, brief as it is but with tremendous power of contrast. The tenor recitative continues "And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness."

In the air, "Now vanish before the holy beams," the evil spirits are so frightened that they descend into the deep abyss. This excitement is accomplished musically by use of the diminished seventh chord and chromatics. The end of the chorus with the words, "A new created world," in

its well-ordered harmonies and even rhythm expresses something of the order which has come out of the chaotic condition previously described.

Then follows the recitative, "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament.." This is followed by a brief descriptive passage, "Now furious storms tempestuous rage"; the music well expresses the word content by means of loud passages played in contrary motion, also passages of descending sixteenths in the treble supported by tremolo in the bass and by free use of the diminished seventh chord. This is followed by solo and chorus in a joyous expression of praise in the key of C major:

"The marv'lous work behold amazed
The glorious hierarchy of heaven;
And to th' ethereal vaults resounds
The praise of God, and of the second day."

Another recitative, "And God said, Let the waters," is followed by the air, "Rolling in foaming billows, uplifted roars the boistrous sea," with a perpetually moving accompaniment of sixteenths, which is later quieted with crawling chromatic units of sixteenths to describe the flow of the rivers "in serpent error." With the gliding of the brook the key is changed to D major with small rhythmic units now of triplets. There is another recitative, "And God said, Let the earth bring forth..," followed by an aria in B flat and in six-eight time:

"With verdure clad the fields appear,
Delightful to the ravished sense;
By flowers sweet and gay
Enhanced is the charming sight..."

The rhythm of the music gives a lilting effect and the melody is one of sweetness; it is most ornate when used to depict the "charming sight enhanced." This aria is followed by the brief recitative, "And the heavenly host" with the chorus:

"Awake the harp, the lyre awake,
And let your joyful song resound.
Rejoice in the Lord, the mighty God;
For He both heaven and earth
Has clothed in stately dress."

The music again is elaborate and seems to be the most fitting medium for expression of praise.

The next recitative, "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night.." precedes the beautiful rising of the sun (instrumental) explained in further recitative, "In splendour bright is rising now the sun." "With softer beams" and softer chords follows the silver moon. The glory of the heavenly bodies is expressed in the familiar chorus and trio which brings Part I to a close:

"The heavens are telling the glory of God,
The wonders of His work displays the firmament;
Today that is coming speaks it the day,
The night that is gone to following night.
In all the lands resounds the word,
Never unperceived, ever understood.
The heavens are telling the glory of God,
The wonder of His work displays the firmament."

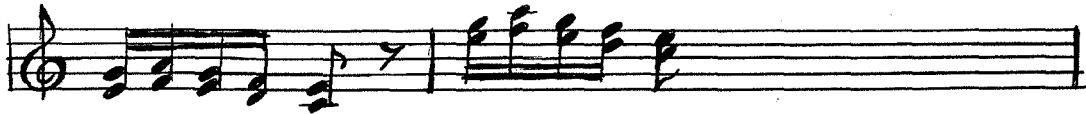
Part II

With the heavens and earth created, Part II deals with animal life. It opens with the aria, "And God said: Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures

that hath life...", followed by the air in F major, "On mighty pens" wherein is described the eagle in flight toward the sun, the lark, the cooing dove and the song of the nightingale with many turns and trills; the cooing of the dove is expressed:



The accompaniment adds bird-like effects:



Then the recitative, "And God created great whales, and every living thing that moved.." followed by the song of the angels in:

"Most beautiful appear, with verdure young adorn'd,
The gently sloping hills; their narrow, sinuous veins
Distil, in crystal drops, the fountain fresh and bright.

In lofty circles play, and hover, in the air,
The cheerful host of birds; and as they flying whirl,
Their glitt'ring plumes are dy'd as rainbows by the sun.

See flashing through the deep in thronging swarms
The fish a thousand ways around.

Upheaved from the deep, th' immense Leviathan
Sports on the foaming wave.

How many are Thy works, O God!
Who may their number tell?"

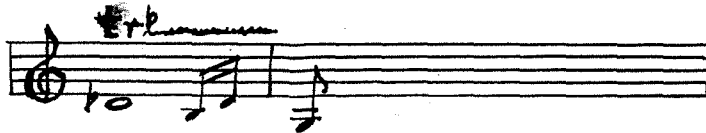
The chorus and trio then sing, "The Lord is great, and great His might, His glory lasts forever and forevermore."

Two recitatives continue the story, "And God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind,

cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind," and "Straight opening her fertile womb." In this is heard the roaring lion, the tiger with his sudden leaps, the stag, and the noble steed; the recitative ends with a pastoral scene. Two examples will show the musical treatment. The flexible tiger is introduced by quick, irregular, units of ascending sixteenths:



The lion is simply represented by a long trill:



The crowning touch has not yet been added; the incompleteness of creation is expressed in the air:

"Now heaven in fullest glory shone;
Earth smil'd in all her rich attire;
The room of air with fowl is filled;
The water swell'd by shoals of fish;
By heavy beasts the ground is trod:
But all the work was not complete;
There wanted yet that wondrous being,
That, grateful, should God's power admire,
With heart and voice His goodness praise."

The creation of man is simply narrated in the recitative, "And God created man in his own image...and Man became a living soul," in which man is pictured as the culmination in the work of creation:

"In native worth and honour clad,
With beauty, courage, strength, adorn'd
Erect, with front serene, he stands
A man, the lord and king of nature all.

His large and arched brow sublime
Of wisdom deep declares the seat;
And in his eyes with brightness shines
The soul, the breath and image of his God.
With fondness leans upon his breast
The partner for him form'd,
A woman, fair and graceful spouse.
Her softly smiling, virgin looks,
Of flow'ry spring the mirror,
Bespeak him love, and joy, and bliss."

The recitative continues, "And God saw everything
that He had made, and behold, it was very good.."; the
heavenly choir closes the sixth day in the chorus:

"Achieved is the glorious work;
The Lord beholds it, and is well pleas'd.
In lofty strains let us rejoice,
Our song let be the praise of God."

The trio of angels takes up the song:

"On Thee each living soul awaits;
From Thee, O Lord, all seek their food;
Thou openest Thy hand,
And fillest all with good:

But when Thy face, O Lord, is hid,
With sudden terror they are struck;
Thou tak'st their breath away,
They vanish into dust:

Thou sendest forth Thy breath again,
And life with vigour fresh returns;
Revived earth unfolds new strength
And new delights."

There is a repetition of the first part of the chorus
ending with an extended exaltation of hallelujahs.

Part III

The instrumental introduction is marked in
parenthesis "Morning," and is in the key of E major. The
vocal part opens with a recitative by Uriel introducing "the
blissful pair":

"In rosy mantle appears, by music sweet awak'd,
The morning, young and fair.
From heaven's angelic choir
Pure harmony descends on ravish'd earth.
Behold, the blissful pair,
Where hand in hand they go: their glowing looks
Express the thanks that swell their grateful hearts.
A louder praise of God their lips
Shall utter soon; then let our voices ring,
United with their song."

This praise is continued in "Of stars the fairest" which begins with a solo by Adam who is joined by the chorus in exhorting the sun to proclaim the power and praise of God. Then Eve exhorts the moon and stars to sing--then Adam addresses the elements and is again joined by the chorus. Eve now exhorts the fountain to tune His praise, and the flowers to breathe to Him their balmy scents. Adam addresses the mountains and the creatures, then he and Eve continue with chorus finally ending with exultant praise declaring the praise of every created thing--

"The heavens and earth thy pow'r adore;
We praise Thee now and evermore."

This is followed by a recitative sung by Adam and Eve, "Our duty we have now performed in offering up our thanks to God," and a duet sung by them, "Graceful consort." In these numbers Adam and Eve express their love to one another, their wonder at the world about them, and their gratitude to the Lord by whose hand it was given.

A brief recitative sung by Uriel merely suggests that there is a possibility of a shadow:

"O happy pair, and happy e'er to be,
If not, misled by false conceit,
Ye strive at more than granted is,
And more desire to know, than know ye should."

The oratorio closes with quartet and chorus in "Sing the Lord, ye voices all." The theme of which is "Jehovah's praise forever shall endure." This is embellished by many florid passages and the employment of interesting and involved counterpoint:

"Sing the Lord, ye voices all,
Magnify His name thro' all creation,
Celebrate His power and glory,
Let His name resound on high.
Praise the Lord. Utter thanks.
Jehovah's praise forever shall endure. Amen.

C. Principal Elements of the Oratorio

1. Message of the Composer.

In this oratorio the glory and wonder of the creation and the power and majesty of the Creator are the chief points of consideration.

The freshness of the creation is retained. There is no feeling of the commonplace that beclouds dull senses; there is wonder at the delicate, the exotic, the grotesque, the gigantic, the animate--at life and beauty.

2. The Place of Climax

The glories of the heaven and earth, of plant and animal life having been sung, the composer reminds his hearers that "all the work was not complete." This aria serves to delay the action and prepares the listener for full appreciation of the final act of creation, that of man whose glory is sung by Uriel in the air, "In native worth."

3. The Atmosphere of the Music.

The music for all the poetic sections is highly descriptive and parallels the thought in each development as in "Now furious storms tempestuous rage" and "With verdure clad." The music is rather naive in its simple descriptions or imitations.

4. The Use of Solo, Chorus, and Instrumental Parts

Solo parts are used both for the narrative and the description in Parts I and II. In Part III Adam and Eve are given solo parts. The other solos are by the three angels: Raphael, Gabriel, and Uriel.

The chorus is used chiefly as the expression of praise at the end of each period of creation. The chorus is never used in the descriptive poetry. It is used once in relating the narrative, in the "Let there be light" passage.

The instrumental parts provide atmosphere as in the overture, and are often used to introduce word-ideas as in the case of the lion and tiger.

5. The Psychological-religious Value

The listener is so entranced in hearing and, perhaps, in imagining the freshness and beauty of each progression in creation that he is struck, as are the singers, only by the beauty and wonder of it all. For the moment one's thoughts are concentrated on the glory of the creation, not on the creative process or method. Inherent in the oratorio is the joyous note of spontaneous praise and gratitude springing

from the human heart. This enthusiasm is contagious.

6. Theological Implications

God as the Creator of all things is the basic theological assumption. God is considered not only as Creator but Sustainer of His creation; all His creatures are dependent upon Him for their life.

The doctrine of original sin is not stated, but is suggested in the last recitative, "O happy pair, and happy e'er to be..."

CHAPTER III
STUDY OF ELIJAH

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A. Introduction

The first performance of Elijah was in England in 1846.

The brevity of the story and its dramatic treatment contribute to the popularity of the oratorio.

Part I includes the prophecy concerning the drought, the raising of the widow's son, Elijah's second appearance before Ahab and the contest on Mount Carmel.

Part II includes Elijah's experiences under the juniper tree, on Mount Horeb and his ascension in the whirlwind.

B. Analysis of the Oratorio

Part I

At the beginning of the oratorio the idea of human need and divine salvation is treated with unusual understanding. There are common material needs, the elements of nature, and the awful cry of the distraught people.

Mendelssohn has truly kept himself well to the text in his portrayal of human emotions--primitive, passionate, blood-thirsty, revengeful, but at the same time those of faith, hope, and love.

A note of doom is announced in the very opening words of Elijah's prophecy of the drought. The music of the overture depicts the increasing feeling of desperation and anguish of the people. This music leads without interruption into the passionate cry:

"Help Lord! wilt Thou quite destroy us? The harvest now is over, the summer days are gone, and yet no power cometh to help us! Will then the Lord be no more God in Zion?"

The recitative chorus continues:

"The deeps afford no water; and the rivers are exhausted! The suckling's tongue now cleaveth for thirst to his mouth; the infant children ask for bread, and there is no one breaketh it to feed them!"

A different voice part is used for each of the above comments-- every individual is afflicted. Then with change of key (still in minor) comes the more subdued soprano-alto duet with chorus:

"Lord! bow thine ear to our prayer! Zion spreadeth her hands for aid; and there is neither help nor comfort."

For this there is almost harp-like accompaniment of simple harmony. The tenor recitative by Obadiah follows, "Ye people rend your hearts, and not your garments" with the promise in the aria:

"If with all your hearts ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me. Thus saith our God. Oh! that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come before His presence."

In the next tumultuous chorus (the cry of the people), "Yet doth the Lord," is a consciousness of sin

and fear of Jehovah, but the chorus ends changing in key to C major and in mood to one of contemplation and yearning with the words "His mercies on thousands fall, fall on all them that love Him and keep His commandments."

The scene is changed as an angel in soprano recitative bids Elijah to depart to Cherith's brook. This is most appropriately followed by the double quartet in G major, "For He shall give His angel charge over thee." From Cherith's brook the angel (alto recitative) bids Elijah depart for Zerepath. Then with the significant raising of the widow's son, the widow asks, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?" Elijah is made to answer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God...with all thine heart, soul and might." His last words, "O, blessed are they who fear Him" are taken up by the chorus.

In the recitative Elijah's determination to face King Ahab is shown:

"As God the Lord of Sabaoth liveth, before whom I stand, three years this day fulfilled, I will show myself unto Ahab; and the Lord will then send rain again upon the earth."

In the continued crescendo and the jerky though determined rhythm of the interlude one can almost hear the steps of the prophet as he makes his way into the presence of the king. Ahab asks, "Art thou Elijah? Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" The chorus accuses him, "Thou art Elijah, he that troubleth Israel!" The prophet replies fearlessly,

"I never troubled Israel's peace: it is thou, Ahab, and all thy father's house. Ye have forsaken God's commands; and thou hast followed Baalim! Now send and gather to me, the whole of Israel unto Mount Carmel..."

There is another change of scene to the dramatic contest on Mount Carmel. The chorus, "Baal, we cry to thee," begins with a rather slow almost monotonous rhythm, the motif:



Baal, we cry to thee

being oft repeated--then the tempo and rhythm change to a triple rhythm with faster tempo--the voice parts simple, but with an accompaniment of ascending and descending double thirds largely chromatic, till finally, at the close in the phrase, "Baal-Hear-Us," each soprano note is held for four measures. Then with Elijah's urging, "Call him louder"--there is a change of key to F sharp minor and of rhythm to six-eight time when the chorus breaks into a mad, "Hear and answer, Baal."

After this last cry and two measures of silence, the people are given an invitation to draw near. There is a brief modulation to the key of E flat major then Elijah prays unto the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel that the hearts of the people may be turned; this is followed by the interpretative chorale, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." The prayer is then concluded, "Thou, whose ministers are flaming fires! Let them now descend." The excited chorus, "The fire descends from heaven" (in which the audience fairly

see the flames) draws near an end with a softer, "Before Him upon your faces fall"--then a brief chorale, "The Lord is God."

After giving this vivid, faithful and complete account of the religious experience of the people neither does the composer, nor Elijah, nor the people, permit the prophets of Baal to escape. This is followed by Elijah's aria (baritone), "Is not His word like a fire." The music is marked "Allegro con fuoco e marcato"; the accompaniment consists of tremolo in the treble and hammered chords in the bass. The alto solo continues, "Woe unto them who forsake Him!" After a brief recitative by Obadiah and Elijah and a two-measure chorus, follows Elijah's prayer for rain and the conversation with his servant. The appearance of a cloud is accompanied by rapidly played units of six sixteenths. As the storm approaches the accompaniment changes to a series of tremolos which continue in crescendo to the chorus:

"Thanks be to God! He laveth the thirsty land!
The waters gather; they rush along; they are lifting
their voices! The stormy billows are high; their
fury is mighty. But the Lord is above them, and
Almighty!"

The waters as "they rush along" are heard in the accompaniment of ascending arpeggios and descending scale passages in fast tempo.

Part II

The second part begins quietly with the soprano solo, "Hear ye, Israel" going into the chorus, "Be not afraid, saith God the Lord." Then for the third time,

Elijah is before Ahab accusing him of his sins and prophesying against Israel. This time there is no word from Ahab, but the Queen, Jezebel, in her accusations of him, stirs up the people to fury as they take up her words, "He shall perish!" The chorus continues with "Woe to him, he shall perish, he closed the heavens. And why hath he spoken in the name of the Lord?...He shall die."

In the aria, "Man of God," Obadiah warns Elijah of the impending danger. There is a brief interlude introducing the pathetic theme of "It is enough." After Elijah is safely asleep under the juniper tree comes the angelic trio, "Lift thine eyes" followed by more comforting and equally beautiful passages, "He watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps," "O rest in the Lord" and "He that shall endure." Then as Elijah seeks communion with God he sings, "Night falleth round me, O Lord! Be Thou not far from me!" The angel bids Elijah to stand on the mount. This marvelous experience on Mount Horeb is pictured in the chorus, "Behold God the Lord." The music, so descriptive, helps the listener not only to see but to experience the presence of the earthquake, the warmth and glare of the fire, and perhaps, even to hear the still small voice. The effect of the earthquake and the wind is described musically by means of tremolo in the bass with staccato chords in the treble. The effect of fire is accomplished by means of a measure of sharp, accented chords

followed by a measure of loud tremolo; the diminished seventh chord is used constantly. The passage "And after the fire there came a still small voice" is in the key of E major and marked pianissimo. The notes are of long time value. This is followed by the quartet and chorus in the reverent "Holy is God the Lord." Elijah's new confidence is expressed in the recitative, "I go on my way in the strength of the Lord" and in the aria, "For the mountains shall depart."

There is a sharp contrast as the chorus in minor key and exciting, syncopated rhythm bursts forth with, "Then did Elijah"--depicting his ascension in the whirlwind accompanied by a fiery chariot with "fiery, fiery horses." Here, again, the music seems to leave nothing unsaid.

The oratorio is not yet ended, the tenor aria, "Then shall the righteous shine forth," shines forth as a pure and holy light followed by the chorus's:

"But the Lord, from the north hath raised one who from the rising of the sun shall call upon His name and come on princes. Behold, my servant and mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth! On him the Spirit of God shall rest: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of might and of counsel, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

and, "O come every one that thirsteth...come unto Him."

The final chorus brings the oratorio to a triumphant close:

"And then shall your light break forth as the light of morning breaketh; and your health shall speedily spring forth then; and the glory of the Lord ever shall reward you. Lord, our Creator, how excellent Thy name is in all the nations! Thou fillest heaven with thy glory. Amen!"

These choruses clearly have Messianic implications and are universal in sweep.

C. Principal Elements of the Oratorio

1. Message of the Composer and the Place of Climax

The theme is the triumph of right over wrong and of the righteous over the wicked. The progression is built up in an interesting manner. The triumph of true religion over false religion, of the true prophet over the false prophet especially as shown in the contest on Mount Carmel, and in "Then did Elijah" finally reaches the climax, "Then shall the righteous shine forth in the Heavenly Father's realm."

There are so many passages of great emotional intensity and musical excitement that the contrasting tenor aria ("Then shall the righteous") is a high light of assurance and peace as well as triumph.

2. The Atmosphere of the Music

The emotional quality of each of the experiences is not only present, but really freed from the bondage of words and so intensified.

Each scene is made more vivid by the music. The contrasts, the agitated rhythms, the use of the diminished seventh chord, extremely fast tempo, ascending and descending chromatics, and the tremolo serve to make real the more exciting experiences as the earthquake and fire. The slower

rhythms, notes of long time value, and simple harmonies bring out the devotional elements of the work. The music is most descriptive.

3. The Use of Solo, Chorus, and Instrumental Parts

Solo voices designated as representative of characters are: Elijah (bass), Widow (soprano), Angel (soprano recitative), Obadiah (tenor), Ahab (tenor), and Jezebel (soprano). Solos are also used in interpretative passages as, "O rest in the Lord" (alto), and "Then shall the righteous" (tenor).

The chief use of the chorus is to represent the people. They are portrayed as fickle and easily swayed. At one time they take up Elijah's words, at another time they take the words of the queen against the prophet. The solo voice of Elijah as against the voices of "the people" emphasizes the theme. The first chorus in the expression of universal need may be said to be representative of all humanity.

Instrumental parts are used for description in the accompaniment. They provide the atmospheric setting for the whole; the interludes serve to introduce changing moods.

4. The Psychological-religious value.

The experiences of Elijah are not explained but the elemental feeling of the whole is vividly described and keenly felt by those who hear it.

The listening experience is so intense that this Old Testament character becomes alive. Each of his experiences is seen with the feeling quality of the original. A large gamut of human emotions is portrayed in this work.

The prophet's message and example of fidelity and morality penetrate the scepticism of the listener.

5. Theological Implications

Monotheism is the emphasis in this oratorio. God is pictured as Creator, Sin-forgiver, and Omnipotent. The ultimate triumph of right over wrong is the theme. Suggestions may be found concerning immortality and the person of Christ as meeting the needs of the world.

CHAPTER IV

A STUDY OF THE ST. MATTHEW PASSION

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A. Introduction

The St. Matthew Passion was written in its earliest form by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1729. It was first performed on Good Friday of that year in St. Thomas's Church, Leipsic.

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of "The Passion" is the guidance which the composer has provided for the listener; the experience is interpreted for the hearer to the extent that the extra-narrative material seems to express just what one's emotional response should be to that which is told him. The use of the chorale is especially notable in this; the words of the chorales, in reflective mood, give an impression of serving a double purpose,--that of picking up threads of the story and at the same time being a subtle reminder to prick a sensitive conscience.

Part I deals with the announcement of the death of Christ, the anointing, the betrayal, the Last Supper, the prayer and the arrest in Gethsemane.

Part II has to do with the trials, Peter's denial, the end of Judas, the crucifixion and the burial.

B. Analysis of the Oratorio

Part I

The work begins with the invitation:

"Come, ye daughters, share my anguish;
See Him! Whom? The Bridegroom see.
See Him! How? A Lamb is He.
See it! What? His innocence.
Look! Look where? On our offence.
Look on Him, for love intense
On the Cross content to languish.

In this number a second chorus is used antiphonally in the questions. The questions are asked simultaneously except, "Look where"; the voices come in independently and give the impression of slight confusion and, perhaps, of bewilderment. The second chorus ends, "A Lamb is He" sung fortissimo. The melody of the chorale, "O Lamb of God most holy" is sung above the chorus usually by boy sopranos.

The evangelist (tenor) in recitative begins the story, "When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to His disciples." The words of Jesus are taken by a bass in recitative, "Ye know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up to be crucified." The words, "be crucified" are made prominent by a series of sixteenths on each syllable except the last two, "fied" each of which is on one eight note. The chorale follows:

"O blessed Jesu, how hast Thou offended,
That such a doom on Thee has now descended?
Of what misdeed hast Thou to make confession,
Of what transgression?

Then the evangelist tells how the chief priests plot to kill Him in the recitative, "Then assembled the chief priests." The double chorus is heard in the brief but stirring, "Not upon the feast, lest haply an uproar rises among the people."

The evangelist tells of the scene at Bethany in his recitative:

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came to Him a woman, who had a cruse of exceeding precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He reclined at meat. But when the disciples saw it, they had indignation and said"

The chorus follows with the question, "To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor." The evangelist continues, "When Jesus perceived it, He said to them." The words are then taken by the bass, "It is a good work she hath wrought: for ye have always the poor with you, but Me ye have not always..." This incident is made personal for the listener by the words of the alto recitative:

"O blessed Saviour, grant,
Though these may indignation have,
Because this woman's care
With ointment would prepare
The body for the grave:
Yea, this we ask for, this we want,
That we, our eyes with tears o'erflowing,
May penitence unfeigned be shewing."

This recitative is in D major with flute accompaniment of sixteenths in thirds and sixths. The idea of repentance is carried over into the alto solo in A major in triple rhythm:

"Grief and pain, grief and pain
Rend repenting hearts in twain.
May the anguish of my spirit
In Thy sight acceptance gain.
Lord, Thy favour I would merit."

The bargaining of Judas with the chief priests is related in tenor-bass recitative and is followed by the beautiful soprano aria, "Bleed and break, thou loving heart," the melody of which has a sorrowful and beautiful dignity. The evangelist continues with the story, "Now on the first day of unleavened bread came the disciples to Jesus and said unto Him"; the chorus takes up their words, "Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?" The tenor and the bass continue:

"He said: 'Go ye into the city to such a man and say to him: The Master saith to thee: My time is at hand I will keep at thy house the Passover with my disciples! The disciples did as Jesus had appointed, and made ready the Passover. And when evening came, He sat down to meat with the twelve. And He said, as they were eating, 'Verily I say to you, One of you shall betray me! And they grew exceeding sad; and they began, each one of the disciples, to say unto Him."

The brief chorus with the words, "Lord, is it I?" expresses through the music the confusion of the situation, each disciple not waiting for the other to finish asking the question, so in the music the parts begin alternately and continue while the next comes in, then ending together, "is it I?" Again there is a chorale which expresses something of the feeling of the listener:

"The sorrows Thou art bearing,
With none their burden sharing,
On me they ought to fall.
The torture Thou art feeling,
Thy patient love revealing,
'Tis I that should endure it all."

In another tenor-bass recitative, the words of the evangelist and the words of Jesus tell how "He that his hand with me in the dish hath dipped, even he shall betray me"; Judas finally asks, "Lord, is it I?" and receives the answer, "Thou sayest." In the bass air the words of institution of the Lord's supper are given. The soprano recitative that follows provides a commentary on this:

Although both heart and eyes o'erflow,
Since Jesus now must from us go,
Yet doth His Testament and soul uplift,
His Flesh and Blood, O precious gift,
Bequeathed by Him, our Heavenly Friend.
As He while in the world did love His own,
By Him of old foreknown,
He loves them still unto the end."

The accompaniment gives an effect of sweet sorrow by use of double thirds (minor) and minor sixths. The soprano aria continues with words of self-dedication,

"Lord, to Thee my heart I proffer,
Enter Thou, and dwell in me,
All I am or have I offer,
Myself would I lose in Thee.
Know I not, Thy face to see,
More than all the world would be?"

This melody is simple and dignified, marks of sincerity. The tenor resumes the narrative, "And when they had sung an hymn of praise together, they went out unto the Mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them"--the bass takes the words:

"This very night ye shall be offended because of me.
For it hath been written: I will smite the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.
But when I am raised again, then I will go before you
into Galilee."

On the words, "sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad,"
the accompaniment gives the sensation of both confusion and
scattering by means of staccato chords in units of sixteenths
played in contrary motion--at first close together then
farther apart, then back again. A plea for protection follows
in the lovely chorale,

"From ill do Thou defend me;
Receive me, lead me home..."

In the next tenor-bass recitative we are told of
the arrival at Gethsemane and how Jesus left the disciples and
took the three with Him to pray. The tenor solo and chorus
follow:

"Behold how throbs the heavy-laden breast!
The spirit faints, with agony oppressed!
He must alone the burden bear,
There is no help, no comfort near,

The powers of darkness overtake Him,
His very friends will soon forsake Him....

"My Saviour, why should agony befall Thee?
Ah, my offences thus to suffer call Thee.
Yet I should bear the pain of my demerit,
Not Thy sweet spirit.

This is followed by another solo and chorus,

"I would beside my Lord be watching,
That evil draw me not astray.
For my sake He to die will undertake;
His sorrow joy for me secureth..."

"The lightnings" is on the highest note approached and released by a skip of a fourth, the impression on the hearer is that of sudden lightning literally thrown at him. The second theme is made up of a series of ascending sixteenths which add to the excitement; these themes continue in contrapuntal style--one against the other. The words, "Let hell with its manifold terrors affright," are introduced by tremolo on the distinctively peculiar chord of F sharp major. The contrapuntal chorus continues with an accompaniment of moving thirty-seconds accentuated every two measures by a sforzando. The two choruses end in harmony sung fortissimo, on the words, "the faithless betrayer, the merciless band."

The following recitative tells how one of the disciples struck off the ear of the high priest's servant and of Jesus' rebuke and His words to the band. The evangelist ends, "Then all the disciples left Him, and fled."

The first part closes with the beautiful chorale in E major:

"The melody is Mattheus Greitter's (1525). The semiquaver figure on the flutes and oboes is one of Bach's characteristic motives of lamentation:



But the whole movement is charged with emotion, and in craftsmanship is not excelled by any of the great Choral Fantasias in the Cantatas of Bach's maturest period."¹

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1. Terry, op. cit., p. 40.

The words follow:

"O Man, bewail thy grievous sin!
The Son of God, thy good to win,
From Heaven itself descended,
As man to live and die for thee,
From sin and death to set thee free,
Both guilt and bondage ended.

He came new life and hope to give,
That henceforth man to Him should live,
To perfect freedom rising,
And shall the Son of God sustain
The weight of all our guilt in vain,
Mankind His Cross despising?"

PART II

Part II begins with the alto solo and chorus in, "Ah! now is my Saviour gone." The narrative is taken up again. Jesus is taken away to the high priest and the chief priests and elders vainly seek for a false witness. After this recitative comes the chorale, "The crafty world." In the next recitative two false witnesses finally come with the same story, "This fellow said: I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it up again in three days." These parts are given to alto and tenor; the music in its counterpoint subtly gives the same impression by its duplication as do the words--that they have agreed on what to say. The high priest asks for Jesus' answer to these witnesses, but the evangelist tells us, "Jesus held His peace." The tenor recitative this time is interpretative:

"He holds His peace,
To not a word replying,

Thereby to us declaring
That He, to save a world from dying,
Himself from death will not release:
He bids us men example take,
And Him our pattern make,
When persecution we are bearing."

The tenor aria continues, "Be still, be still! Yea, if
lying lips assail thee."

"In No. 40 ("He holds His peace") the detached quaver chords in the accompaniment measure the Saviour's silence before His accusers with the regularity of a chronometer. In the following Aria (No. 41), too, His patient reticence is expressed in the Violoncello obligato, where a suave subject alternates throughout with a restless rhythm which represents the 'false tongues' of the accusers:"¹



In the following recitative the high priest (bass)
asks Jesus whether or not He is the Christ, the Son of God,
Jesus answers him:

"Thou sayest. Yet I say unto you: Hereafter ye shall
see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power,
and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The high priest immediately accuses Him of blasphemy and asks
his fellows, "What think ye?" Their answer comes in the
brief but stormy double chorus in which each part enters at
a different time but all with the words, "He is of death de-
serving." Their treatment of Him is told further in the
evangelist's recitative, "And then did they spit in His face,
and then did buffet Him. Others smote Him with the palms
of their hands, and said"; the double chorus takes up their

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1. Terry, op. cit., p. 44.

words, "Now tell us, Thou Christ, by whom Thou art struck."
The very short staccato eighths on "Now tell us" portray the
spite and hate of His accusers. The chorale follows in
reverent contrast, "O Lord, who dares to smite Thee..."

Peter's denial is the subject of the following
recitative, in which two sopranos take the part of the two
maids as Peter (bass) denies his association with Christ; the
evangelist tells us that when the cock crew, Peter "went out
and wept bitterly." The alto aria follows, "Have mercy, Lord,
on me, Regard my bitter weeping..." The chorale assists the
listener in his application of the story to his own experience:

"Once I loved from Thee to wander,
Now I seek Thy face again,
All the more, whene'er I ponder
On my dying Saviour's pain.
Lo, my guilt do I confess;
Yet, Thy grace and righteousness,
Blessed truth, are far excelling
All the sin within me dwelling."

In the next recitative we are told of Jesus' being
delivered to Pilate and of Judas' returning the thirty silver
pieces when the chief priests answer in double chorus, "And
what is this to us? see thou to that." After the evan-
gelist tells of Judas' suicide, two priests declare that the
money should not be put in the treasury" because it is the
price of blood." The bass aria is inserted here:

"Bring Him back, is all my prayer,
See the price of murder done
At your feet in horror thrown
By the lost betrayer."

The narrative is resumed in the following recita-
tive telling of the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy in the

purchase of the field of blood with the thirty pieces of silver. The evangelist (tenor) and two basses (Pilate and Jesus) give Pilate's questions and Jesus' brief answer and Pilate's reaction of wonder. Another chorale of assurance follows,

"Whate'er may vex or grieve thee,
To Him commit thy ways..."

Having given the progression from the mock trial in the ecclesiastical realm to the unfair trial in the political realm, Bach now gives the background in the following recitative for the crucial point in the narrative. The custom of releasing unto the people one prisoner at the time of that feast is told, further, that Barabbas was a notable one. The message of Pilate's wife to her husband is given; the chief priests persuasion of the multitude "that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus." The moment is a tense one as Pilate (bass) asks them the question, "Tell me whether of the twain ye will that I release to you?" The tenor, on three eighth notes, sings, "They answered"-- there is a quarter rest, one count, before the double chorus storms out the name, "Barabbas!" The contrast here between the solo voice and the double forte of the double chorus in the accented diminished seventh chord is tremendous. The answer of the multitude is not repeated nor is it treated contrapuntally; they are united in their answer, their choice is definite, final, and ultimate.

Another diminished seventh chord, but played softly, introduces the brief recitative:

"Then Pilate saith to them: What then shall I do unto Jesus, to Whom they give the name of Christ? They all say "Let Him be crucified!"

These words are sung contrapuntally by both choruses joined together in four-parts; the theme is solid and determined with the emphasis on the word "crucified":

The image shows two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff contains the melody for the words "Let Him be cru". The second staff continues the melody for "ci-fied". The music is written in a simple, rhythmic style with various accidentals (sharps and flats) and dynamic markings (accents). The lyrics are written below the notes, with dashed lines indicating the alignment of the notes with the words.

A chorale again gives us a contrast; from the sharp fortissimo chord of the chorus we have the simple adoration:

"O wondrous love, this sacrifice to offer,
The shepherd for the sheep content to suffer,
The righteous Lord their debt for sinners paying,
And they betraying!"

Pilate asks, "Why, what evil hath He done?"; before giving us the answer of the multitude, the composer has inserted the true answer in the soprano recitative, "To all men Jesus good hath done," in which his ministry is summarized; the soprano aria continues, "In love my Saviour now is dying, of sin and guilt He knoweth naught..." After this insertion the narrative is resumed, "But they cried out the more and said: "Let Him be crucified"; the music is the same as that used for these words before except for tonality, it is

transposed one step higher. In the following recitative Pilate, when he sees that a tumult is arising, washes his hands before the multitude and declares his innocence of His blood; the angered mob recklessly cries, "His blood be on us and on our children." The evangelist continues, "Then released he Barabbas to them, but Jesus did he scourge, and then he delivered Him, that they might crucify Him." Then follows the pathetic alto recitative:

"O gracious God, behold, and see the Saviour bound...
It should more gentle thoughts impart,
To see such anguish meekly borne..."

The rhythm of the accompaniment, a continued series of dotted sixteenths and thirty-seconds marked "larghetto," gives the effect of bowed grief. In the aria that follows, "If my tears be unavailing...Take the very heart of me...", the time is changed to 3/4 but the same effect is achieved by the same device. In the recitative we are told of the mockery by the soldiers, the choruses cry out antiphonally, "We hail Thee, King of the Jews." This scene of humiliation and tragedy is appropriately brought to a close by the chorale, "O Thou, with hate surrounded."

The evangelist tells how He was led away to be crucified, and that Simon of Cyrene, "compelled they to bear His Cross." A beautiful interpretation is given to this scene in the brief bass recitative:

"Come, healing, Cross, for me prepare it,
My Saviour, lay on me its weight;
Whene'er my burden grows too great,
To Thee I look for help to bear it."

In the tenor recitative and the chorus is given a picture of the mockery at the cross. The double chorus in counterpoint rails at Him:

"Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou art the Son of God, come down from off the Cross."

They continue, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save... He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He desireth Him, for, He hath said: I am the Son of God." The music is a continued crescendo throughout; the ending is broadened and accented, the last note is played marcato, the words "I am the Son of God" are sung in unison, the accompaniment in octaves, giving full effect to their highest accusation. The sad, "Ah, Golgotha" is sung by an alto with the falling figure in the accompaniment:



The thought is again carried along in the words of a chorale:

"The Lord of Glory here beneath a curse is lying:
He hangs upon th' accursed tree,
Who shall the world's Redeemer be;
The Lord who heaven and earth created,
By earth is now reviled and hated:
The sinless, lo, for sin is dying:
With stricken soul the sight I see."

This is followed by alto solo and chorus in, "Look ye, Jesus waiting stands." The chorus is used antiphonally, asking the questions.

In the recitative, "Now from the sixth hour" are heard the last words of Jesus in His humanity. They come from the depths of a soul of utter loneliness, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" (My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?). This solemn moment is interrupted by a chorus of by-standers, "He calleth for Elijah" answered a little latter by the second chorus, "Wait, wait, and see if Elijah cometh to save Him." The evangelist ends, "And again Jesus cried aloud, and departed." The listener having himself felt something of desolation of this hour, is ready for the words of the chorale,:

"When life begins to fail me,
I fear not, having Thee;
When pains of death assail me,
My comfort Thou wilt be.
Whene'er from woes that grieve me
I seek to find relief,
Alone Thou wilt not leave me,
For Thou hast tasted grief."

The mood is broken and the significance of the event begins to dawn in the cosmic upheaval related in the contrasting recitative, "And then, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain..." These words are made alive by the musical treatment, the quick ascent and descent of spaced thirty-seconds give just that effect of rending the veil. The earthquake is further depicted by means of the tremolo and the diminished seventh chord. In the resulting declaration, "Truly this was the Son of God," the double chorus is used in four-part counterpoint. A mention of the women is made, then the recitative closes as Joseph of Arimathaea receives permission from Pilate to take the body of Jesus.

The tranquil and exceedingly meaningful bass recitative follows in which there is a contrast made between Adam and Christ:

"At evening hour of calm and rest,
Was Adam's fall made manifest;
At evening, too, the Lord's redeeming love.
At evening, homeward turned the dove,
An olive leaf the while she bore.
O beauteous time, O evening hour!
Our peace with God is evermore assured,
For Jesus hath His Cross endured.
His body thou dost crave,
Thou, His disciple, for the grave.
O let us all regard with thankful wonder
His precious death, and on its meaning ponder."

The bass aria in the relative major key, B flat, continues in a calm, joyful melody but one that is restrained, in the words:

"Make thee clean, my heart, from sin,
Unto Jesus welcome giving,
So within my cleansed breast
Evermore within me living.
World, depart, let Jesus in.

After this period of reflection the listener is taken again to the narrative in which he is told of the burial of Jesus and of the great stone being rolled to the door of the tomb. In the words of the double chorus the chief priests and Pharisees ask for a guard for the tomb. Pilate tells them to "make it as sure as ye can." The evangelist ends, "They went their way, and guarded the grave with soldiers, and they sealed the stone."

With solo and chorus homage is paid to the One who had suffered and Who has achieved "full redemption":

"And now the Lord to rest is laid,
His sorrows o'er, for all our sins oblation made.
O consecrated body!
See, with repentant tears we would bedew it,
Which our offence to such a death hath brought.
While life shall last, let us adore and praise the Lord,
That He for man has full redemption wrought.
Lord Jesus, rest in peace."

The use of individual voices and the chorus gives the impression that several individuals would like to voice their respects to the departed One.

The composer has not yet ended for he would give us a glimpse of a glorious future, this is accomplished naturally and impressively by the double chorus:

"Here yet awhile, Lord, thou art sleeping,
Hearts turn to Thee, O Saviour blest:
Rest Thou calmly, calmly rest.
Death, that holds Thee in its keeping,
When its bands are loosed by Thee,
Shall become a welcome portal,
Leading man to life immortal,
Where he shall Thy glory see.
Saviour blest,
Slumber now, and take Thy rest."

The composer has said in his way what another has expressed in words alone:

"Rest now in thy glory, noble pioneer! Thy work is achieved, thy divinity established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thine efforts crumble through a flaw. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou shalt behold, from the heights of heavenly peace, the infinite consequences of thy deeds. At the price of a few hours of suffering, which have not even touched thy mighty soul, thou hast purchased the fullest immortality. For thousands of years the world will depend upon thee! Banner of our contradictions, thou shalt be the sign around which the fiercest battle shall be waged. A thousand times more alive a thousand times more loved since thy death thou during the days of thy pilgrimage here below, thou shalt become so truly the corner-stone of humanity, that to tear thy name from

this world were to shake it to its foundations. Be-
twixt thee and God men shall distinguish no more.
Thou hast utterly vanquished death, take possession
of thy kingdom, whither, by the royal road which thou
hast shown, ages of worshippers shall follow thee."¹

C. Principal Elements of the Oratorio

1. Message of the Composer

The St. Matthew Passion is an excellent example of the setting forth of a scripture passage with enough interpretative guidance to make it effective. The composer has set forth the narrative with extra-biblical material inserted at strategic points; the material used after the institution of the eucharist, the chorale, "When life begins to fail me" just after Jesus "cried aloud, and departed" are some outstanding examples of this; the great significance of His passion and death may be found in the closing section of the word, some of these indications are "When life shall last, let us adore and praise the Lord, That He for man has full redemption wrought," and in the final chorus, already quoted, in which are suggested the victory over death and the eternal glory of our Saviour.

2. The Place of Climax

The turning point in The Passion is epitomized in one word when the mob voices its choice of "Barabbas." This is accomplished musically by contrast in volume and in the

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1. Ernest Renan: Life of Jesus, p. 267.

answer by the double chorus against a solo voice. The harmony employed is that of a diminished seventh chord. The suffering and loneliness of Our Lord are seen in the gradual withdrawal of His friends until left alone on the cross He cries, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me," the last cry of His humanity. The divine answer to this tragedy is vividly portrayed in the dramatic, "And then, behold, the veil of the temple," the human result of which is the awful realization, "Truly this was the Son of God."

The climactic points are always those of scripture, but how much more meaningful they are made by interpretation and application found in the words of the chorales.

3. The Atmosphere of the Music

By means of the diminished seventh chord, the tremolo, chromatics, flashing sweeps of sound up and down the keyboard, accelerated rhythms, and contrapuntal effects, the moments of tenseness and excitement are emphasized and revitalized. By means of minor tonality, certain deliberate, slowly descending steps, slow rhythm, and plaintive melodies the elemental feeling of suffering and sorrow is maintained throughout. The reverence and dignity of the work is greatly enhanced by the devotion and beautiful sincerity of the chorales.

4. The Use of Solo, Chorus, and Instrumental Parts

The narrative is told by the evangelist for which purpose a tenor recitative is used consistently. For the

conversational parts, characters are assigned to certain voices or groups of voices; bass solo voices are used for the direct words of Jesus, Judas, Pilate, the high priest, Peter; soprano solos for the two maids, and Pilate's wife. Soprano, alto, bass and tenor solos are also used in the interpretative materials and give the effect of one individual's response to the situation and thereby also serve as a channel of expression for the individual listener; the chorales, however, really gather up the thought and serve the individual both as his personal response and as that of a part of the group (his fellow listeners).

The use of the chorus heightens also the dramatic elements by providing many voices and many people for either the confused shouts of the mob or their united and determined effort together. The antiphonal and contrapuntal devices are especially effective.

The instrumental parts, both as accompaniment and as interludes accomplish many effects impossible for the human voice. The loud crashes, and the different timbres, shades of tone, made possible by the peculiar quality of particular instruments or the stops of an organ intensify the listening experience.

5. The Psychological-religious Value

The intensity of the music captures the listener's mind and safely takes it away from any distractions. At the time of listening, what is being heard is the only reality

of the moment. In the person who listens religiously, any natural scepticism is so completely overpowered that God and the whole religious faith stands out as of supreme importance and only thing that seems real.

At a performance of a work of this kind the scepticism of the individual is also overcome by the personalities of the soloists, the great chorus of singers, the expression of the gigantic personality of the composer--all having become channels of communication for the great religious truths.

6. Theological Implications

An emphasis is found upon the will and power of God, and a great reverence for the Lord's Supper is manifested. The doctrine of original sin is assumed in the contrast between Adam and Christ. The indwelling Christ also appears as a natural expression of belief.

The most clearly pronounced of the theological doctrines found is that of the atonement; the composer clearly states the redemptive power of the cross of Christ. He also states the belief in immortality and, though not dogmatically stated, the exaltation or glorification of Christ and of the believer is evident.

CHAPTER V
STUDY OF THE MESSIAH

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A. Introduction

The Messiah is Handel's best known oratorio. It was composed in 1741 in just twenty-four days.

The two most outstanding characteristics of this work are its scope and unity. The subject is central throughout, but the tremendous sweep from Messianic prophecy to the Revelation covers not only much progress in thought but many centuries in time.

Part I includes prophecies concerning the Messiah and the story of His birth. Part II includes the passion and final triumph. Part III has to do with the victory over death.

B. Analysis of the Oratorio

Part I

The oratorio opens with an overture followed by the tenor recitative in E major,

"Comfort ye my people....The voice of him that crieth
in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

The tenor air continues, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight, and the rough places plain." The chorus (A major) follows in

contrapuntal style: "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Then follows in the key of D minor the bass recitative:

"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts:- Yet once a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.

The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; Behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The bass air continues: "But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire. "In this as in the preceding airs there is an inclination toward the ornate on the part of the composer. The chorus, "And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness," (G minor) follows in which long passages of rhythmic units of flowing sixteenths are taken by one voice part and then another, occasionally transferred to the accompaniment in thirds and sixths.

The alto recitative in D major and six-eight time follows: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us." The alto air and chorus continue:

"O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid! say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Arise, shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Then comes the bass recitative in four-four time:

"For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

The intervals close together and played softly in the first part of the accompaniment give the effect of obscurity or indistinctness:

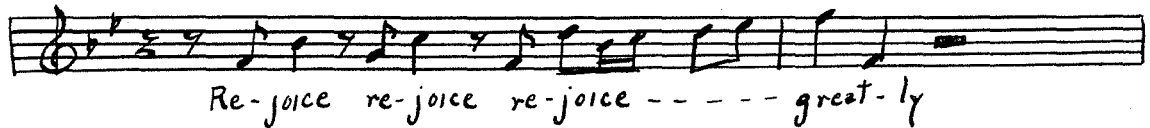


downward in alto and tenor on the word "good-will."

The soprano air is taken from the prophet, Zechariah:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee. He is the righteous Saviour, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen."

The word "rejoice" is emphasized by repetition and ornamentation:



The next recitative is from Isaiah, "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened" with the familiar air for alto, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd" in six-eight time and in the key of F major. The same melody is used for soprano solo transposed to the key of B flat, "Come unto Him." The first part ends with the chorus, "His yoke is easy, and His burthen is light," the elaborate motif is taken alternately by each part ending together fortissimo.

Part II

Part II opens with the chorus, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," followed by the moving alto air in E flat, "He was despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The low range of the melody is especially appropriate, the word "sorrows" is sung on a series of slowly descending eighths and sixteenths:



Then follow the choruses in F minor, "Surely He hath borne our griefs" with a rhythm of dotted eighths and sixteenths emphasizing the pathetic note, and "All we like sheep have gone astray" (F major) in which the skips downward in each part on the words, "we have turned" are suggestive. After this is the tenor recitative, "All they that see Him, laugh Him to scorn"; then follows the chorus in double time mocking, "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him," the theme taken first by basses, then taken up by each part. This is followed by the contrasting tenor recitative, "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart," and the air, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow" in E minor--a brief poetic phrase taken from Lamentations; then the recitative, "He was cut off out of the land of the living."

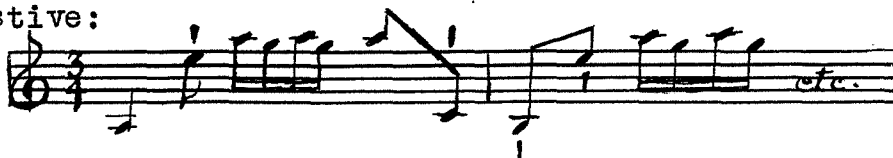
An unusual transition of thought is begun with the tenor air, "But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell neither didst suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption" (A major) which changes more unexpectedly with the chorus, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates...and the King of glory shall come in." In this chorus the questions and answers are sung antiphonally usually between men's and women's voices. Then a brief tenor recitative, "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee?", followed by the chorus, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" in the key of D major. Then comes the air for bass, "Thou art gone up on high" and the brief chorus, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of preachers," followed by the soprano

air in G minor, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace." This is followed by the chorus in E flat, "Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world."

A portion from the second Psalm is given in the tempestuous bass air in C major:

"Why do the nations so furiously rage together? and why do the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed."

The composer used descending eighths and a series of descending and ascending triplets against an accompaniment of sixteenths, giving a four against three rhythm. The chorus follows with, "Let us break their bonds asunder and cast away their yokes from us," followed by the tenor recitative, "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn," and the air, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The motif running through the accompaniment is extremely suggestive:



The second part is brought to a superb close with the famous chorus, "Hallelujah," the text of which is taken from the Revelation. One cannot escape the overwhelming power of this mighty work.

Part III

Part III opens with the well-known soprano air, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (E major). This is followed by the chorus, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Then comes the bass recitative:

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet."

The theme of the accompaniment is really a trumpet call and the introduction is scored for trumpet solo:



This is followed by the alto recitative, "Then shall be brought to pass, the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." The duet is sung by tenor and alto, "O death, where is thy sting?". Without interruption the chorus follows, "But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ." The soprano air, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" precedes the powerful, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" which ends the oratorio with five pages of "Amens" as if to affirm forever all that has passed. The passage is taken from Revelation 5:12, 13:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His blood, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing and honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever. Amen."

C. Principal Elements of the Oratorio

1. Message of the Composer

In The Messiah the composer is not concerned with a simple narrative but his subject is an exceedingly comprehensive one; selecting passages concerning the passion, and going on immediately to His final triumph, both over death and as Eternal Ruler--he has interpreted the significance of the death of Christ as having been essential to His ultimate victory over the kingdoms of the world. The composer has presented Christ as the Messiah.

2. Continuity of the Narrative

Part I deals largely with the advent of our Lord. The first half is made up of selections from prophecy; the second gives the story of His birth and something of His ministry. A transition is made from prophecy to the shepherd story in Luke by means of the instrumental interlude, "The Pastoral Symphony." Then follows more prophecy concerning the work of the Messiah with the addition of the invitation in Matthew 11 changed to "Come Unto Him." Part II begins with the Passion of our Lord but chiefly by use of passages from the Psalms changes the thought to His exaltation and triumph in his dominion of the universe. In Part III the emphasis is on the victory over death.

3. The Place of Climax.

From the standpoint of the music the chorus,

"Hallelujah," leaves no doubt in the consideration of the climax.

The words, "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever," really look forward in time even beyond Part III in the victory over death. The words of the last chorus occur in time in the Revelation before the words of "Hallelujah." In the oratorio the eternality of the Kingship of Christ precedes the section on immortality.

4. The Atmosphere of the Music

The music is as diversified in its effect as are the words, yet the very style of the composer, as in the contrapuntal treatment of the choruses, makes for unity.

The slow rhythm and descending melodic lines produce the underlying emotion of sorrow in the account of the passion, the lilting rhythm of the pastorale and ethereal effects in the treble give the proper setting for the shepherd story; the sturdy themes and invigorating rhythms provide the glorious setting for the exclamations of triumph.

5. The Use of Solo, Chorus and Instrumental Parts

The solo parts are not designated for characters but the particular quality of the voice is chosen that best fits into the atmosphere of the whole. The recitatives from prophecy are taken by bass or tenor except the one for alto, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son." The soprano is used in the recitatives dealing with the birth of

Christ. The rich quality of the alto is heard in "He shall feed His flock, " but the same melody is transposed for soprano in the invitation, "Come unto Him."

The alto and tenor are used in recitatives concerning the passion of Our Lord, "He was despised" (alto), and "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart" (tenor). The bass and soprano solos are used in the triumph sections.

The chorus is used for the great expressions of praise and when the feeling of a group is expressed, "For unto us a Child is born," "All we like sheep have gone astray," and "Surely He hath borne our griefs." The great hymns of praise call for use of full orchestra (organ) and chorus, "Hallelujah," and "Worthy is the Lamb."

The instrumental accompaniment gives the atmosphere and emphasis to the words. The "Pastoral Symphony" is the means of transition from prophecy to the gospel in Part I and provides an excellent setting for the shepherd story.

6. The Psychological-religious Value

In The Messiah the reality of Christ is consistent throughout with music that intensifies each experience. The nature of the work is not description but in this oratorio the believer's emotions are portrayed, as reactions, as it were, to the Messiah. This is especially apparent in the passion and triumph.

In the performance of this comprehensive yet concentrated work, the listener is presented with the great fundamentals of Christian truth in a short period of time.

At a presentation of this kind the hearer is too much taken up with what he is hearing to have room for doubts or controversial questions about Christology.

7. Theological Implications

The doctrine of original sin is evidenced in the contrast between Adam and Christ; sin is a basic assumption in the emphasis on the atonement. The dual nature of Christ is treated as a fundamental truth. His deity is clearly brought out in the angelic announcements of His birth, and in His eternal kingship; His humanity is seen in the passion.

CHAPTER VI
STUDY OF ST. PAUL

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A. Introduction

Mendelssohn's St. Paul was first performed in 1836. It is from the story of the life of Paul found in The Acts.

Part I opens with persecution against the Christians and deals primarily with the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. In Part II is presented something of the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles, something of his persecutions,--his farewell at Ephesus and his confidence in having fought a good fight.

B. Analysis of the Oratorio

Part I

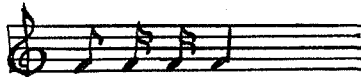
The oratorio opens with an overture followed by the chorus (Christians), "Lord Thou alone art God." In this prayer of the Christians, the fact of the persecution is presented and a petition for strength "that they may preach Thy word." An effective contrast follows in the peaceful choral, "To God on high be thanks and praise," an expression of calm faith in One able to "raise drooping souls" and keep them from harm.

In the soprano recitative, "And the many that believed" is narrated the appeal of and opposition to Stephen.

The two false witnesses (two basses) then accuse Stephen of blasphemy. The narrative is taken again by soprano telling that they brought him to the council. The chorus of the people is heard in the words, "Now this man ceaseth not to utter blasphemous words...." In this chorus the key is changed to minor (four-four time). The counterpoint is suggestive of the confusion of the people, while the effect is heightened later by an accompaniment of sixteenths stumbling over one another on their way down the scale. The accompaniment is again changed to a succession of descending eighth notes in thirds. The rhythm throughout is moving-- something is happening in one part of the accompaniment all the way through.

In the tenor recitative, Stephen delivers his rather long sermon, relating the history of the Jewish nation, telling how they persecuted prophets in the past and that the present generation is like unto them. As the accusation becomes stronger the time is doubled and the accompaniment by means of the tremolo, accented chords, descending eighths, played staccato, and the diminished seventh chord portrays the tension felt by the people. Without interruption and with rhythm marked "Presto," the chorus, first men's voices, then altos, then sopranos, exclaim, "Take him away"--the chorus ends on the words "he shall perish." Each syllable of "per-ish" receives four beats while the chords in the accompaniment are played sforzando.

A very brief tenor recitative follows with a subdued accompaniment as Stephen declares, "Lo! I see the heavens open'd, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." This is followed by the soprano air, "Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets," quoting from the words of Christ in Matthew 23. Following this plaintive melody, the narrative returns with the brief tenor recitative, "They ran upon him." Then we hear the animated chorus of the Hebrews in words from Leviticus, "Stone him to death! He blasphemes God! and who does so shall surely perish. Stone him to death!" The words "Stone him to death" are taken in turn by basses, tenors, altos, then these with the sopranos; this is repeated, then the tonality is changed. The treatment of these words is significant; the first time the note is the same (alto)

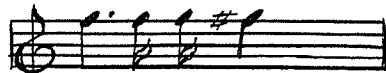


later in the soprano

with an octave skip downward



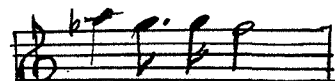
then raised one-half step



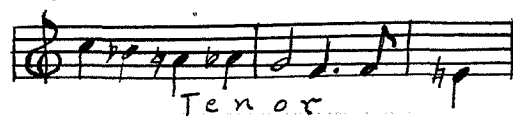
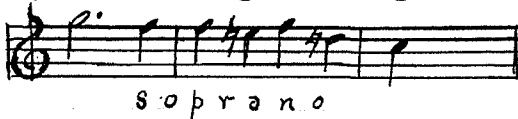
then with a skip of a fourth downward



also a series of descending half steps



(with a slight change of rhythm, then near the end



and finally closing with an octave skip downward repeated and in unison. The variations of upward and downward skips and the descending chromatics together with the perpetually moving accompaniment fill the words with the emotional element they must have had when they first came from the lips of the angered Hebrews in their demand for Stephen's death.

Another marked contrast is found in the tenor recitative,

"And they stoned him! and he kneeled down, and cried aloud: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

This is appropriately followed by the solemn choral,

"To Thee, O Lord I yield my spirit,
Who break'st in love, this mortal chain.
My life I but from Thee inherit,
And death becomes my chiefest gain.
In Thee I live, in Thee I die,
Content, for Thou art ever nigh."

A brief soprano recitative resumes the narrative with the words,

"And the witnesses had laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul, who was consenting unto his death. And devout men took Stephen, and carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

The words from James are introduced by the chorus, "Happy and blest are they who have endured, yea, blest and happy. For though the body dies, the soul shall live forever."

This music in the key of E flat and with a harp-like accompaniment of sixteenths has an ethereal quality of true blessedness.

Again the narrative returns in the tenor recitative, "And Saul made havock of the church; and breathing out threat'nings and slaughter against the disciples, he spake of them much evil, and said:". The words which follow in the bass aria are taken from the Psalms, "Consume them all, Lord Sabaoth, consume all these thine enemies." This aria is in B minor with a wide range of dynamics and many accented chords in the accompaniment, and with the rhythm kept moving by a constant succession of eighth notes, gives an impression of the fury with which this fanatic entered into his persecution of the Christians.

This is followed by a brief contralto recitative, "And he journey'd with companions toward Damascus, and had authority and command from the High Priest that he should bring them bound, men and women, unto Jerusalem." Then as though intended to be both a source of comfort to the Christians as well as preparing the listeners for that which follows, the contralto aria with words from the Psalms and some of the epistles continues, "But the Lord is mindful of His own, He remembers His children. Bow down before Him, ye might, for the Lord is near us." The melody of this solo is widely known among church-goers, and serves as a source of comfort for many today.

Immediately follows the conversion section. The narrative is taken up again in the tenor recitative,

"And as he journeyed he came near unto Damascus; when suddenly shone around him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth; and he heard a voice saying unto him:".

The "voice" is taken by the women's voices in four parts, the short narrative parts in tenor recitative, and voice of Paul, a bass. The words follow: "Saul, Saul, why persecut'st thou me?" (women); "And he said" (tenor); "Lord who art Thou?" (bass); "And the Lord said to him:" (tenor); "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest," (women); "And he said, trembling and astonish'd, (tenor); "Lord what wilt Thou have me do?" (bass); "the Lord said to him" (tenor); "Arise, and go into the city; and there thou shalt be told what thou must do." (women). The voice parts are kept piano throughout, while the accompaniment by means of tremolo and crescendi gives an undercurrent of the intense emotional element.

Immediately follows the chorus, the words of which are taken from Isaiah 9, "Rise up! arise! rise and shine! for thy light comes, and the glory of the Lord doth appear upon thee...." The music is marked "molto allegro con fuoco," and the time is doubled. There is an instrumental introduction which begins very softly and gradually continues to become louder for an entire page until the voices enter in contrapuntal style; there is again a steady repetition of eighths in the accompaniment. Then follows the choral, words adapted from Matthew 25, "Sleepers, wake, a voice is calling; It is the watchman on the walls, Thou city of Jerusalem. For lo, the Bridegroom come! Arise and take your lamps...."

The following tenor recitative tells of Saul being led to the city by his companions and of his being without sight for three days. The prayer put into Paul's mouth is taken from Psalm 51 in the bass solo, "O God, have mercy upon me, and blot out my transgressions according to Thy loving kindness....O cast me not away from Thy presence and take not Thy Spirit from me....Then open Thou my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall shew forth Thy glorious praise." The first part in slow rhythm and a pleading tone change to an allegro as he makes his vows to "teach transgressors"; the dotted eighths followed by sixteenths add to the vigor of this. The solo ends again with a plea for forgiveness and mercy.

The scene of Ananias is introduced by the tenor recitative, "And there was a disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; to him said the Lord:", followed by the soprano solo,

"Ananias, arise, and enquire thou for Saul of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth. He is a chosen vessel unto Me, the Lord; and I will shew him great things he must suffer for My Name's sake."

Immediately follows the solo in which Paul already has experienced forgiveness and has received joy,

"I praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, forever more. For great is Thy mercy toward me, and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

These words are taken from Psalm 86. The chorus then comes in with words from Revelation 21 and Matthew 24, "The Lord, He is good: He will dry your tears, and heal all your sorrows. For His word shall not decay."

Again the narrative is resumed with soprano recitative, "And Ananias went his way, and enter'd into the house, and laying his hands upon him, said:"; the words are taken by a tenor,

"Hear thou, brother Saul! The Lord hath sent me hither, even Jesus, that appear'd unto thee as thou camest, that thou might'st receive thy sight, and be likewise filled with the Holy Ghost."

An instrumental interlude builds up to a fortissimo as the soprano sings,

"And there fell from his eyes like as though it were scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues, and testified that He is very Christ."

Part I closes with the words from one of Paul's own letters, Romans 11, "O great is the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge of the Father....Sing His glory for evermore. Amen." This chorus in F major after a rather long series of minor keys is as refreshing as it is glorious.

PART II

Part II begins with the majestic chorus with words from Revelation,

"The nations are now the Lord's they are His Christ's. For all the Gentiles come before Thee, and shall worship Thy Name. Now are made manifest Thy glorious law and judgments."

These words are interesting and fitting as an introduction to the work of this Apostle to the Gentiles.

The soprano recitative, "And Paul came to the congregation" gives an account of the Holy Spirit directing the

congregation to send Barnabas and Paul to the work for which they had been called. This is followed by a tenor-bass duet (Paul and Barnabas) in "Now we are ambassadors in the Name of Christ"; these words are taken from II Corinthians. Then follows the lovely anthem, "How lovely are the messengers that preach the gospel of peace" in the key of G major. A brief narrative portion in soprano recitative, "So they, being filled with the Holy Ghost, departing thence delay'd not, and preached the word of God with joyfulness," precedes the soprano air, taken from the Psalms, which also expresses the joy of the new office, "I will sing of Thy great mercies. O Lord, my Saviour, and of Thy faithfulness evermore."

The opposition is immediately introduced with the tenor recitative, "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, how they assembled to hear what Paul delivered unto them, they were filled with envy..." The chorus (of the multitude) follows with, "Thus saith the Lord, I am the Lord, and beside Me is no Saviour." This chorus ending on the dominant proceeds to the tenor recitative, "And they laid wait for Paul, and consulted together that they might kill him, and spake one to another:". The excited chorus in G minor follows, "Is this he, who in Jerusalem destroyed all calling on that Name which here he preacheth? May all deceivers ever be confounded! Force him away!..." Again we have a decided contrast in the choral which follows,

"O Thou, the true and only Light,
Direct the souls that walk in night;
And bring them 'neath Thy shelt'ring care,
To find their blest redemption there..."

In the bass recitative that follows, Paul tells that they, the Jews, have been chosen first to have the word set before them, but that he and Barnabas now turn to the Gentiles.

Then Paul and Barnabas sing together, "For so hath the Lord Himself commanded: 'Behold, I have made thee a light to the Gentiles, and for salvation unto all the earth...'"

The soprano recitative following, tells the story of the healing of the lame man at Lystra. The excited chorus of Gentiles responds, "The gods themselves as mortals have descended. Behold them here, and adore them! Behold, and worship! Let us all adore them!" The soprano recitative explains that they called Barnabas, "Jupiter" and Paul, "Mercury," also that the priests came to offer sacrifices and worship them. The chorus then pleads "O be gracious, ye immortals, Heed our sacrifice with favor."

With a two-measure introduction of staccato chords (including the diminished seventh) the tenor in recitative tells how the Apostles when they heard it, "rent their garments, and ran in among the people." The bass takes up the words, "O wherefore do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with yourselves," then quoting Jeremiah, "All your idols are but falsehood, and there is no breath in them; they are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of trouble they shall perish!", and continues (Acts 17) "God dwelleth not

in temples made with hands." In the first part of the recitative the quick flashes of ascending sixteenths (double time) give the effect of "rending their garments." Accented chords also help the listener to understand better the situation by feeling something of the emotional qualities. Then in the air for bass, Paul addresses them in words from his first letter to the Corinthians, "For know ye not that ye are his temple, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth within you?" Paul is joined by the chorus (of Christians) in words from Psalm 115, "But our God abideth in Heaven, His will directeth all the world," and in the choral,

"In one true God we all believe,
Maker of earth and heaven;
Our Father who to all mankind
Hath the name of children given."

This chorus is a powerful one in five parts--a study in counterpoint.

The soprano recitative relates the stirring up of the multitude and the assault of the Jews and Gentiles. They cry against them in the chorus,

"This is Jehovah's temple. Ye children of Israel, help us! For this is the man who teacheth all men against the people, against this place and also our holy law. We have heard him speak against the law. He blasphemeth God. Stone him to death."

These words are taken from Acts and from Leviticus 24. The rhythm of this chorus is similar to that used earlier in the oratorio for the stoning of Stephen, with the addition of

two accented chords



A soprano recitative follows with words from II Timothy,

"And they all persecuted Paul on his way; but the Lord stood with him, and strengthen'd him, that by him, the word might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear."

Then follow the encouraging words taken from Revelation 2 and Jeremiah 1, sung by a tenor, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee a crown of life. Be not afraid, my help is nigh."

The latter part of the story is taken from Acts 20. The soprano recitative, "And Paul sent and called the elders of the Church of Ephesus...", introduces Paul's words of farewell to them,

"Ye know how at all seasons I have been with you, serving the Lord with all humility, and with many tears; testifying the faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold ye, I, bound in spirit, go my way to Jerusalem. Bonds and affliction abide me there, and ye shall see my face no more."

The soprano adds, "And they all wept sore, and prayed." The chorus of the congregation pleads in words from Matthew 26, "Far be it from thy path: these things shall not be unto thee." These words are first taken successively by a solo voice in each part, then the chorus joins (key of A minor). Paul responds in bass recitative,

"What mean ye thus to weep, and thus to break my heart? For I am prepar'd, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the Name of the Lord our Saviour Jesus Christ."

The tenor in recitative completes the relation of this scene, "And when he had thus spoken he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they accompanied him unto the ship, and saw his face no more." The chorus follows with the tender words from John's first epistle, "See what love hath the Father bestowed on us, in His goodness, that we should be called God's own children."

The story of Paul has ended and the soprano, in recitative, gives us his words from II Timothy,

"And tho' he be offered upon the sacrifice of our faith, yet he hath fought a good fight; he hath finished his course; he hath kept well the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him at the last great day."

It is interesting here that the composer continues as Paul does in II Timothy to say not only Paul may receive this blessing but that it is for all who truly love Him; the chorus sings these words, "Not only unto him, but to all them that love truly His appearing. The Lord careth for us, and blesseth us. The Lord saveth us." As this great truth is realized, the only true result of it can be praise on which note the oratorio comes to an end with the words of the Psalm (D major), "Bless thou the Lord, O my soul, and all within me bless and praise His most holy Name forever. All ye His angels, bless ye the Lord."

C. Principal Elements of the Oratorio

1. The Message of the Composer

The theme throughout is steadfastness and triumph

in the face of persecution as is true of The Acts. It is an inspiration to all Christians to fight a "good fight," to keep "the faith" and to receive the "crown of righteousness" awaiting them.

2. The Place of Climax

The intensity of the conversion scene near the beginning of the story has the effect of lessening somewhat the significance of the final realization by both Paul and Barnabas that they have been chosen by the Holy Spirit for a specific work and have been officially appointed by the Church under the direction of the Spirit to assume their duties. Their reaction finds expression in "Now we are ambassadors." After this, the composer makes the rest of the story seem as the natural outworking of their Spirit-filled lives.

3. The Continuity of the Narrative.

The story begins with the defense and the stoning of Stephen which serves as an introduction to the idea of the persecution of Christians and as introduction to Paul, himself.

The incidents of the story used are left intact and have an inner continuity, and the work is unified by its main theme of steadfastness in the face of persecution; but because of its narrow scope, the life of Paul is not presented in its entirety, neither is his character portrayed in a vivid way. The quotations inserted from Paul's letters do not carry the weight they would if more of the background of the author's

experiences were related. To those familiar with the story in Acts, the transfer from Lystra to the farewell to the Ephesian elders appears as a tremendous jump; ending the story in Jerusalem also seems very incomplete.

4. The Atmosphere of the Music

By means of agitated rhythms, chromatic harmonies, rapid ascending and descending passages, and the tremolo the accompaniment expressive of the envy and fury of the persecutors runs continuously through the oratorio.

This is balanced by solo parts of calm assurance and the choruses of glorious praise.

5. The Use of Solo and Chorus

For the narrative portions soprano recitative is used chiefly being supplemented, however, by tenor and contralto; characters designated as solo voices are: Stephen (tenor), Paul (bass), and Barnabas (tenor).

Mendelssohn used the chorus chiefly to represent the different groups; many of the choruses are labeled: "Chorus of Christians," "Chorus of People," "Chorus of Multitude," "Chorus of Gentiles," "Chorus of the Jews and Gentiles," "Chorus of the Congregation." The chorus is also used in the expression of praise.

The use of women's chorus in the conversion scene, for the words of Christ tends to reduce the experience to a vision which is not in accord with Paul's account. This is

one example of ineffectiveness as a result of slight deviation from the fundamental truth of the scriptural account.

6. The Psychological-religious Value

The listener does not have an opportunity to question as he hears, in the language of music, the story of Paul's conversion and of the difference his Spirit-filled life has made in the history of the Christian church.

As the listener triumphs with the hero of the faith, his own soul grows more noble and the great religious truths gain admittance to the hearing mind.

7. Theological Implications

In this oratorio are found the great doctrines of monotheism, the sovereignty of God, and immortality; the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is fundamental; the doctrine of sin, of repentance and the experience of conversion are central.

CHAPTER VII

THE SCRIPTURES AS INTERPRETED THROUGH MUSIC

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A. Summary

This study has been confined to a psychological approach to five selected sacred masterpieces: Haydn's Creation, Mendelssohn's Elijah, Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Handel's Messiah, and Mendelssohn's St. Paul. These compositions are placed in the above order to show the chronological sequence and progression of thought in the scriptures.

1. The Creation

The text of The Creation follows the scripture narrative in the six days of creation. After each announcement of creation a passage of descriptive poetry follows (sung by the same angel that makes the announcement). The wonders of each day of creation are sung by the chorus representative of the heavenly host. In Part III the text deviates from the scriptural account; Adam and Eve view the work of creation together, sing praises to their Creator and sing of love to each other. The one recitative by the angel has a forward look to ^{the} fall.

Each scriptural account is sung in recitative by one of the three angels. The music is highly descriptive. Solos are also used for Adam and Eve in Part III. The chorus is used sparingly but effectively as the vehicle for the expression of praise.

2. Elijah

The composer has kept close to the narrative (I Kings) in its progression. He has, however, often used other biblical material freely in the setting of the stage at the beginning of the oratorio, in the interpretative portions, and at the end of the work. There is no portion of the work for the mere narration of the story. The recitatives are direct words of the speaker and are charged with meaning. The story does not need to be carried along-- it moves rapidly.

The word for the music of Elijah is vivid description. The composer makes great use of the chorus to represent the fickle mob. The chorus is also a great contrast to the one outstanding voice of the prophet. The recitatives are the direct words of different characters. Solos, a few chorales, and choruses are used for interpretative portions.

3. The St. Matthew Passion

The text of the oratorio closely follows the scripture narrative. Interpretative passages are used consistently throughout the entire work. The great amount of reflective material is the chief characteristic of "The Passion." This interpretative material is chiefly in the form of chorales.

The narrative is given in tenor recitative by the evangelist. Some of the solos are words of characters in the story; the chief use of solos, however, is for interpretative material. Great use is made of the chorale for interpretation.

The music of "The Passion" is not primarily descriptive though there are elements of description in it. The music of the chorales gives a devotional atmosphere to the whole. The music of the solos brings out the emotional quality of the words.

4. The Messiah

The text is made up entirely of scriptural passages and although they range from Job, through Isaiah, Psalms, some of the minor prophets, three gospels, some Pauline epistles, and Hebrews to The Revelation they are well organized around the Messianic idea. The passages are fitted in at various stages in the story; the passage from Job is found in Part III, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and some of the prophecies are found in Part II concerning the Passion.

Some of the narrative is sung in recitative. Contrapuntal choruses and interpretative solos are characteristic of The Messiah. The choruses are used to express praise; the "Hallelujah Chorus" expresses the praise of all Christians.

The music unifies and emphasizes the underlying emotional qualities of each experience; this is shown especially in the "Pastoral Symphony," "Surely He hath borne our griefs," "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and "Hallelujah."

5. St. Paul

The text follows the narrative closely in the first part of the oratorio. In the second part there are many

omissions. Other biblical material is freely inserted; there are several passages from the Old Testament and some quotations from Paul's letters. Only three times is a chorale used the words of which are not taken directly from scripture.

The use of the chorus for many different groups of people is an outstanding characteristic of this work. The chorus is also used for great expressions of praise. There is contrast between the confusion and fury of the persecutors, the calm interpretative solos and chorales, and the triumphant choruses of praise.

B. Conclusions

This study has been made for the purpose of noting the most widely used and best known elements which aid the musical interpretation of the scriptures in its psychological appeal and for the discovery of concomitant religious values. These findings are listed in the following sections.

1. Dramatic Qualities

Specific voices for certain characters heightens the dramatic effect of the scriptures. When more direct conversation is used and less narration in recitatives the story seems to move at a much faster pace. This is shown by way of contrast in Elijah which has only direct conversation, and The St. Matthew Passion in which the words of the evangelist are given in tenor recitative throughout the work.

The contrast of solo voice with the chorus has

unusual dramatic force. This is brought out especially in Mendelssohn's Elijah in the contest on Mount Carmel and in Bach's St. Matthew Passion when the mob cries out their choice of "Barabbas."

2. Interpretative Elements

All libretti keep closely to the scriptural account of the narrative but all have some kind of interpretative material. For the interpretation of a selected portion of scripture other scriptural passages and poetry have been used.

The music used in the interpretation of scripture may be descriptive and imitative, or it may create atmosphere and reflect moods. The instrumental parts are especially important in creating atmosphere and in any attempt at description. Music not only expresses but intensifies the underlying emotional qualities inherent in the scriptures.

3. Musical Devices

Certain musical devices are used consistently for creating particular effects. For musical excitement and descriptive passages of earthquakes and fire, the following have been used: diminished seventh chord, tremolo, chromatics, accelerated rhythms, contrapuntal effects, rapid ascending and descending passages, and a constantly ascending melodic line.

For a general feeling of sorrow or sadness the effect is accomplished by means of minor tonality, a slowly descending melodic line, slow rhythms and plaintive melodies.

The leading character is represented in bass solo; the women are usually given soprano solos. The alto and tenor are especially effective in the expression of sorrow or sadness. All four voices are used in recitatives for the narration of a story but the tenor and soprano are preferred.

The chorus is used as a vehicle of expression for groups of people or for "the people." Full chorus with full orchestra is used in expressions of great praise.

4. Psychological-religious Value

Doctrinal elements have not been avoided in these works, but form the very basis of the message. The composer's message is not a new one, rather, the message of the scripture is elucidated. This fact may be pointed to in each work: The Creation--theism (God as Creator), Elijah--ethical monotheism, The St. Matthew Passion--the atonement, The Messiah--Christ as Redeemer and Triumphant King, St. Paul--the work of the Holy Spirit and the challenge of the Christian Church.

At the time of the presentation of a work the music so captivates the listener that any other approach is forgotten for the moment. There is no opportunity for argument; the listener simply follows. The rational and logical processes are minimized so that the scriptural truths gain admittance to the consciousness of the listener.

Music revitalizes and recharges the scriptures by its unusual ability in emotional expression. Its force

is so powerful that it is able to dissolve preconceived prejudices and natural scepticism.

In this study a cursory examination has been made of a varied group of five sacred choral works. Only the most outstanding common elements have been noted. In a historical approach, in a detailed musical analysis of each composition, or in a more thorough study of the scriptures many facts and explanations would be revealed which would be of value to a psychological approach.

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