

The Tale of Two Credos: Bach and Mozart

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[0 : 00] I have noticed two things while we were reciting the Creed. Yes, one, most of us can easily recite it by memory. Why? Because we are Anglicans.

And two, the Latin version is on the screen. Now, since today's talk is to do with the musical setting of the Nicene Creed, which is almost always based on the Latin text, I will be referring to the official language of the Roman Church in many occasions.

So if anyone needs to have the English version in front of them for reference, please feel free to grab a copy of last week's bulletin there. Don't be ashamed. It's okay.

We welcome guests. Don't worry, I got plenty.

I figured our church would print out too many bulletins that I'd only use for one service. Just extend that lifetime by one week. Thank you. You have lots.

[1 : 31] Lots. And I collected a whole bunch of homes. Okay.

So, today's presentation is a critical comparative analysis of two different musical settings of the Nicene Creed.

One, the cradle from Mozart's Coronation Mass. And two, the cradle from Bach's B Minor Mass. So, two pieces of music.

Okay. Now, before we enter the discussion about the music, let us first review the basics of the Creed that we recite every week. Or every other week, depending on which service you go to, of course.

And by the way, for information, I am all for communion every Sunday. Is there any clergy around?

[2 : 34] First recorded, right? Okay. The Nicene Creed was formulated during the Council of Nicaea 325 AD, the first of seven ecumenical councils, to resolve the Arian controversy, which claimed that Jesus, the Son of God, Son of God, was a creature, made from nothing, and that He was God's first production before all ages.

So, it's sort of like today's Jehovah Witnesses. Now, this claim, of course, undermines the nature of the Triune God. So, the result of this Council is the denunciation of the Arian heresy, and the formulation of the most important statement of Christian doctrine, which is the Creed that we recite. So, as a Trinitarian statement, this Creed has three parts. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Okay? So, since no one in the Christian world ever at that time had a problem recognizing the divinity of the Father, we only have one line, one line dedicated to the first person of the Trinity. Now, since the biggest concept, controversy during Nicaea, is concerning whether the Son is the same substance as the Father. The word is homoousios.

Now, pardon my Greek, it's not that great. Is that right? Did I pronounce it right? Homoousios? No? It doesn't matter, Dr. Packer's not here.

[4 : 15] It's a matter of convenience. Yeah. But you see, I was expecting Dr. Packer to be here. And he would rectify me right away. And I'm a good student.

Anyways, homoousios. So, the most important line in the Creed, reading literally, God, from God, not God, not of, as in the process, it's of, the place from.

Okay? God, from God, light, from light. True God, from true God, begotten, non factum, not made, being of one substance with the Father.

Here's the word, homoousios, in Latin, consubstantionem, consubstantionis, the nominative. I did, took two years in Latin. And from whom, if all was made.

So, this was the most important line in the entire Nicene Creed, followed by a statement in Sautology, about the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, followed by a statement of eschatology, the second coming, or the return of Christ.

[5 : 31] Then finally, we have a section of the Holy Spirit, concerning his, the person of the Spirit. Now, we can bypass, we can not discuss this italics word for the moment, or actually for now, we're not going to talk about that.

Who knows what I'm referring to? And, of course, the second thing is the work of the Spirit, namely the church, and baptism, followed by a strong Amen.

Okay. Is that good? It's all basic. Rudimentary. Do you mean water baptism? Huh? Do I mean water baptism? Belief in the baptism?

Hmm. Good question. Ah, gosh. Can it be, does it have to be either or both and? Hmm. Am I the expert?

Where's Dr. Packer? England. Go get the shroud. England, yes. Okay. So, let us modulate our discussion onto music.

[6 : 44] Mozart's Misa Brevis in C, also known as the Coronation Mass, post-humorously dubbed. Curse zone 317, and of course, those of you who are music nerds, this is a catalog number.

Mozart may have written more than one short mass in C, and we don't know which one is which. This is a nickname that is later tagged on, so they need a catalog number.

Okay, so it's a cursor number. But anyways, that's not important. But, thing is, this mass is the first of four major sacred works composed during his final year in Salzburg, 1779, and it was composed for the ceremonial crowning of Virgin Mary on the plain on the fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

That's the first Sunday after it. So we're a little off on that. Now, like writing an essay, a musical composition, in a musical composition, musical material are organized in a certain way.

We call that form. Okay? So here we are going into our first technical detour. Seat doubts tight, everyone. Not too tight this time.

[8 : 07] The analysis of how a piece of music is organized, we call that formal analysis. Okay? Don't be confused with an analysis done formally.

Okay? Okay? Formal analysis is the analysis of form. Okay? So, a formal group is any self-containing chunk of music.

So you can think that, think of it as analogous to a clause, a sentence, a paragraph, or a chapter in a thesis. So there could be many levels, multiple hierarchic levels.

Okay? But it's a self-containing chunk of music. It's what we call formal group. Okay? It's not good. It's not too bad, right? No. So, so we look at the overall structure of Mozart's cradle.

middle. We see that this movement is organized in three large sections. Organization, three large sections, we call it ternary form. Okay? Ternary form.

[9 : 18] Turn, turd, three. Okay? Which opens with a fast section, um, a slow middle, and a, and close with the reiteration of the opening section.

Or what we call an exposition, contrasting middle, and recapitulation. Okay? Now, I can think of these formal group as, like, three chapters in a book, or three acts of a drama.

So good? Act one, act two, act three. Okay? Now, within the exposition, we see another ternary built intrinsically. We have the main theme, A, the subordinate theme, B, and back to main theme, A, with transition section in between, um, and a closing section that caps everything off.

Is that good? Okay? So you can think of these, uh, paragraphs in a chapter or scenes in an act. Okay?

Recapitulation is organized the same way, um, uh, other than the substitute with the, with an interior theme. Okay?

[10 : 33] But due to time constraints, um, we will only, um, discuss about the exposition and the contrasting middle. So we'll not look at the recapitulation.

It's just repeat. Okay? So, now let us look more closely into the exposition. And here, I think, is when your bulletin may be useful.

First line, English translation, translation, by God, Latin up there. And the music is in Latin, so, depends on how well you know your creed. Okay. But before we do so, um, we do look more closely, I think it's good for us to listen to the entire exposition once.

It's okay? Okay? Amen.

Fin? Transition.

[11 : 54] A little unstable. Recognize the beginning coming back.

Here we go. A little flourish.

A little flourish. A little flourish. You can tell us the end. A little flourish. A little flourish. You can tell us the end.

A little flourish. A little flourish. You can tell us the end. A little flourish. A little flourish. A little flourish.

A little flourish. A little flourish. A little flourish. A little flourish. A little flourish. A little flourish. Okay. So here's... Well, what was... I mean, it's lovely music, but as we can see right now, just by correlating between the the formal groups, formal section, and the text, we can see very little theological relationship.

[13:33] What do I mean? Okay. Strong openings on I believe in one God, the Father Almighty. Good. Well, transition, weak, unstable section starts the second person.

Right. So, a little mismatch there. I mean, why if he's thinking about the theology, this statement should go down here in a subordinate theme.

That would make more sense. Okay. It's almost like tagging the next important subject in sort of, I don't know, a transitory between scene one and scene two of an act.

Right. I mean, there's just a misalignment between the text and how the music is organized. And of course, we've got the very important statement, consubstantion and patrie, in the return to main theme.

And then, there's no break here on the part talking about salvation. So, not really much theological reflection in terms of how the form is arranged.

[14:50] Okay. Now, let us move on to a contrasting middle. Okay. Now, Mozart, we can see that the slow dramatic music is reserved for the incarnation and crucifixion.

So, I reserve that music, the dramatic music for the rather dramatic text. And instead of listen, have a little taste of it.

The direction of music is of theSí classic.

This will be very fast. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS Mozart, with the text here. Crucifixers do sound very dramatic, right? So it did make that association. So, although we only looked at the first half of the movement, recapitulation pretty much follows the same form as the exposition, pretty much the same thing.

[16:57] It's indicative that there is very little or even nothing in terms of theological reflection in the setting of this creed. In fact, I can almost hypothesize that Mozart, having drafted this ternary layout, this ternary layout, you can imagine this part of it being a cut and paste to down there, drafted this layout, then he anchored the text about the incarnation and crucifixion in the contrasting middle.

That's where he wants the drama. And then he put everything before the incarnation, on the exposition, everything after the crucifixion, in the recap, in the recapitulation.

Imagine him do that. Then he would go, okay, the first phrase put in the main theme, second phrase put in the first transition, third theme put in subordinate, and then the next phrase put in the second transition.

Then when he runs up to genitum non-factum, begotten not made, he found out he only had one of the material remaining. So what does he do? He jammed everything in there.

Now, note that I am not saying, imperatively, that this is Mozart's thought process in creating the music.

[18:19] I certainly will be seriously challenged if I present this in an academic conference. At least I haven't checked the manuscripts. Okay?

But, this is still my argument, that Mozart and his music is certainly not interested in theology. So, and here, we can see the purpose of the words of the Nicene Creed is to serve the music's end. Okay? You can challenge me on that, if you want to. But anyways, Bach took a, have a completely different mentality.

As we know of Bach. The cradle from the mass in B minor, BW, BWV 232. Again, one of those catalog numbers.

It's actually a multi-movement setting. So you can think of it as a compendium of shorter pieces strung together for this cradle section.

[19:27] Okay? Now, the creed is laid out in a chiasmic form. And what do I mean by chiasmic form? It looks like A, B, C, B' A'.

So it almost looks like an arrow. Or half of the X. Okay? In which movement 1 and 2 is complemented by movement 8 and 9, what we call the first chiasmic pair.

Movement 3, movement 3 is complemented by movement 7, the second chiastic pair. The movement 4 to 6 is what we call the chiastic center.

And most, the point, the main point of the message is usually in here.

Chiastic center. Okay? That's how, that's how this literary form works. Okay? And yes, by the way, it's not a musical form, it's a literary form. Okay.

[20 : 30] So, I think now, the most logical way to approach discussing this music is to work our way from the outside going in. Okay? So we'll look at the first chiastic pair.

Right from the beginning of the cradle, Bach makes it very clear that he wants to send a message by just opposing two musically antithetical movements that are, that both, um, that are both are set to the big opening statement of the creed and are joined together without any pause between the movements.

Oh, I guess one. What is that? Um, totally different movements set on the same text and both joined together in the opening. That's what I just said. Okay?

Um, while the second movement, which is set to the text, credo in unum deum patrem omnipotentum, da-di-da-da-da-da-da, the entire opening sentence about the father, um, it uses the stylistic convention contemporary to Bach, what we call still moderno.

Okay? Now, contrary, the first movement only draws on the text, credo in unum deum. That's it. I believe in one, one God.

[21 : 53] Okay? And it draws, and it's, and it uses the stylistic feature of the medieval and the renaissance. What we call where's my, okay, still antico.

Okay? So there are two different musical styles alluding to different, um, practices, historical practices. Uh, contemporary to Bach's time and back in the ages, back in the days.

Okay? Renaissance and medieval. Um, anachronistic. Okay? This is. So, what make me say that this is back in the old, back in the days?

Because Bach used three renaissance slash medieval um, musical devices. Three of them. Allabreef, it's modal, and it uses, uses chant melody.

Now, let me quickly unpack them. Okay? So, this is the harder detour to take. Simply put, but perhaps overly simplified, ellabreef is a way to notate the temporal aspect of music.

[23 : 14] Now, music, after all, is sound in time. Okay? So, there must be an aspect of time notated in music. And, ellabreef is just one form of notation.

And, with this form of notation, if we transcribe it into modern score, we'll see a lot of white notes.

Okay? Versus, like, black and dark notes. has more white notes in there.

So, we can see by just looking at the score, we are, we are looking at something that is notated using ellabreef.

Okay? It's a visual thing. So, Bach, first of all, he made a visual marker, visual cue that this movement is old.

Okay? Second is modality. Hey, Dave Boone! Second is modality. Now, this is even harder.

[24 : 17] Now, before I understand modality, I understand tonality. And, this is a large musical lesson here. But, anyways, we have all heard this before, right? Right?

So, an air, an female air, a ray, and the sun, and we want to use, we want to compose a music that sounds happy, we use this set of notes.

Okay? We call it the major key. Okay? The major key set of notes. We don't like it, we can call it apple. Okay? Apple set of key makes you happy. Okay? It's like a painter's paint palette.

You use this set of palettes to paint something happy. Because why? Because there's, on the contrary, there's something that makes music sound sad. It's called a minor key. I wish to play my key on this.

Okay, anyways, this is called a minor key, okay? We call it oranges. Oranges make you sad, which is not too true. Now, these are two painter's towels you can think about.

[25 : 37] But the thing is, we don't always had two. We actually have, in the beginning, theoretically, seven sets. Practically, we're going to use six.

Okay? But, from, as time goes on, composer tends to choose one over the other, flavor one over the other, and eventually, from the six or seven that we have, we limit them down to two.

Okay? So, it's a historical development that we have true today. One sound. Another sound. Okay? Okay?

Now, so, tonality is the post-1600 thing is to do with major and minor. Okay? Modality is one of the first, the six that we have from the beginning.

So, what does Spock do? For his first movement, he uses a modal thing. He uses a mode instead of a key. Is that good?

[26 : 45] Okay? Okay. And the third thing is, he used, the melody is based on the chant melody.

And here's a chant. it's actually based on the source that chants from, the chant for the first movement, credo in unum deum, is based on for Polias, the source, which is a variation of rubro, usuralis.

Okay? Dave, do you mind chanting this? I'm a horrible chanter. The bottom one. Okay. So you got this?

Okay? This is how the chant sounds like. And now, let's listen to the first movement and see if we can pick out the chant, at least. Okay? Okay.

You can hear that chant. Okay. How Bach uses that chant. And that does compare to the second movement, which is said to be using the modern style in Bach's context.

[28 : 25] Okay. Much nicer.

He doesn't like chant. Thank you. That was a good piece. Yes. Well, I mean, the entire thing is excellent. But anyways, so the opening pair presents a contrast between the old and the new style. Okay? Old and the new. Not the style. Old and the new. Okay. Now, complementing the opening two movements is the eighth and the ninth movement.

Confitator and et expecto, respectively. Okay. Which is another, what? Still antico, still moderno pair.

Does that come to any surprise? No. Because it's a chiasm, right? First two and the last two are supposed to complement. Okay? So, and how do we know it's a chiasm? Because we got this. So, a chris or apple first.

[29 : 36] Anyways. Now, similar to the opening, the opening cradle in Unum Deum, the confitator movement is also alegrae. But, it also features a cantus firmus, what we call a cantus firmus.

Also, based on the chant melody, but instead of using the chant as a part of that imitation line. You hear imitation, right? Okay? It uses the chant in the cantus firmus.

What is it? It's the elongation of the chant note sung by the tenor and other forces decorated with fast-moving notes above or below.

Okay? So, this is the chant. Hey man, Dave, could you help me out again? I don't play all these round notes.

Yeah. You couldn't print it as square notes? I can't. Sorry, I didn't look at the source. I don't have time to. Thank you.

[31 : 02] Thank you, Dave. Our canto. Excellent. Yeah. Anyways. Okay. Let's listen to this effect, okay?

Hear the long note? Hear the long note?gin' Thank you.

Oh, you just noticed that. The music slows, the grinding almost halts, and dissolves towards the end of the movement.

And the atmosphere became dark and slow and dramatic. Now perhaps the biggest difference between the first two movements and the last two is that the latter has a slow transitory section that alludes back to the crucifix suits.

We'll get to that. We haven't gotten to that yet. And this section bridges between computator and et expector. Now the question is, why does Bach bridge, I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, with, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, using musical material that is associated with death?

[33 : 15] The most persuasive answer I can find, most sensible one, is in Romans chapter 6. Here's a bridge.

Romans chapter 6. We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death. In order that, just as Christ was risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. So Bach painting that picture in Romans 6.

Interesting, huh? Yeah. So now, oops, wrong side. Anyways, we'll leave it there. Now reaching back to the old style of composition, and just opposing it with the modern style, Bach is communicating to his audience that the message, that this message that he wants to present,

remember it's the opening pair, right?

Okay? This message that he wants to present, transcends through time. It is as if almost Bach is saying, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

[34 : 34] Amen. Hence, the first two statements, the first two movements, is a statement of faith that is true in all ages.

And the two closing statements express God's mysterious redemptive grace. That transcends through time. So, together we can see the first chaotic pair, is a declaration of the authority and Catholicity of our faith in God, and his redemptive grace.

Is that good? Okay. Let us look at the second pair. The third movement, et unum dominum, and the seventh movement, et in spiritu sanctum.

Now the former, the first one here, is an alto, soprano and alto duet, singing the text above the sun, using imitative counterpoint, which is just imitations, separated by beat.

So, what do I mean? By, um, meaning, soprano and alto sings the same material, but the alto enters one beat late. So, you can almost think of it as singing in rounds.

[35 : 50] Everyone knows how to sing in rounds. Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream, then the next big rock starts. Right? But, except, um, it's, when we sing rounds, it's almost like one phrase after the other, but in this case, it is like one beat after the other.

It's very close rounds. Okay? Is that good? Let's listen to it. Okay? Okay? Okay.

Hear that? Actually, it comes back together near the end.

So, there's almost a separateness and togetherness. Now, I mean, I think you're pretty smart people and we wouldn't know why this Bach went to set, and I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, with two forces that has a separateness that is also togetherness, right?

So, you can almost guess why. It's because the Word was God, was with God, and the Word was God. It's because the Son is begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, who all things were made.

[37 : 35] It's to express homeosis. Okay. Second. Okay. So now, the seventh movement, um, Etting Spiritum Sanctu, bass, with oboe, um, Damare duet, a compliment.

So, basically, a bass voice and two oboes. So, how many, um, things are there? Three. So, um, four of the oboes, Father and the Son.

What's the bass? Spirit. Spirit. There you go. You can see the Trinity. Yeah. You can see the Trinity. And let's listen to it. So, here are, this is the oboe duet.

God, dragon, haura, leg, Let me be God.

Okay. So undoubtedly, our second characteristic pair expounds the nature of our Triune God. So you see how that works in, right?

[39 : 12] We've got the opening, that thing, saying this message about God, about our faith, transcends through time, is timeless, and then you've got the Trinity. And guess what? Then we finally reach the heart of Bach's cradle.

Now, musically, there are many things I can talk about. After all, two of the most interesting movements here, Et Incarnatus and Crucifixus, are found here.

But at the same time, the interesting that I can supposedly talk about are a little too involved. Not a little, but very involved. I'm not, I don't think I'm allowed to talk about augmented six chords in just ten minutes, explaining all that.

So I will not, it will be too much music, too much analysis to unpack. Okay? So instead, what I'm going to do, I'm going to attempt to expound, outline, the simplest yet most salient points.

Okay? I'm going for a simple common denominator, but there are the important stuff. Okay? So, the incarnation.

[40 : 27] Bach treats the incarnation as the anticipation to the cross. By using just two, by using two musical elements in this movement.

First one, is the jagged, is the pulsing bass. And the second is the jagged, falling a compliment. So in here, so there are two things, these are the two things that anticipates into the cross.

Now, pulsing bass, what do that remind us of? The opening of the two passions that Bach wrote earlier. St. John and St. Matthew. If you remember them, or I doubt you do.

Both, opening of both of these two oratorical, these two are passion oratorical, begins, have pulsing basses. Basses that goes, something like that.

Okay? Bases that pulses. Of course, both movements anticipates or prepares the listener for the passion narrative that does to follow.

[41 : 37] So here, in the incarnation movement, we have pulsing bass. Okay? There's the association, he's writing for the same church, right? Actually, this is not for his church.

It's not a secret. Okay, second, the violent gesture, jagged figures, according to 18th century German Baroque musical rhetorics, they're associated with the cross.

So we got anticipation to suffering on the cross. So what that amounts, and there are many other things in there, but this is what we have time for, so just listen for it, okay?

Hear the bass, hear the violin. Yeah.

Amen. Okay. Amen. Thank you. Okay.

[43 : 01] Okay. It's a little darker. It's not what you expect Christmas to be like. But that's Christmas. Okay. So in the crucifixion, which is the most central movement in Bach's cradle, Bach intensifies the sense of death and suffering using the stepwise descending gesture in the bass.

I think I need to illustrate this. Okay. That sounds like... This is a descending gesture.

Okay. This is a descending gesture. You sort of feel the music just sinks right down. So this is traditionally the motif for death and lament.

Okay. I mean, listen. Let's listen to it. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay.

Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Thank you.

[44 : 58] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'm not talking to a bunch of teenagers. Teenagers? Who's died? Is that the door next door? No. No. Okay. But without further ado, immediately after this dark scene of crucifixion, the music burst into a jubilant, help me out here with the French, rejuissance.

Sorry? Rejuissance. Sorry, my French is worse than my German. I butchered my German last year. Okay?

It's with a dance. Okay? Resurrection movement is a dance. It's a French dance, rejoicing dance.

Okay? Listen to it. In Cuiro land Conden me to raise you And grow your Lebanese In Cuiro pastor Okay?

[47 : 00] Good feeling of it. Dance. Okay. So even with such superficial overview, it is indicative that the focal point of the cradle in Bach's B minor Mass is the cross of Christ.

Which is anticipated in the incarnation movement. And the result of it is expressed in the resurrection movement.

So everything just surrounds the cross. Remember, this is right at the center, right? Okay. So let's bring everything back together. Okay? Looking at the chiastic movement of the cradle again, we can see a three-stage thought, a three-stage progression.

Right? First, it's the proclamation of our faith, which is authoritative and transcends through time.

Two, the one triune God.

And three, the cross, which is what our faith is about. Now, unlike Mozart, whose cradle text serves the ends of his music.

[48 : 13] I mean, it's great music, but he's not interested in theology at all. I think everyone can agree with that. Bach's cradle is saturated with theological reflection.

The cradle of Bach's B minor Mass, therefore, is a statement of the Catholic Christian faith. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.