

# I AM MEDITATION

AN OPERA IN SEVEN TABLEAUS

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Ishaya Jatau Yarison

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Juma and Jatau Yarison, my brother Elisha Yarison, my wife and son Peace and Emmanuel Yarison, and Dr. Paul Davidson.

## ABSTRACT

*I AM Meditation* is a musical drama in seven tableaux, which, to borrow John Milton's language, represents the loss of paradise and its reattainment. The meditation revolves around a central fulcrum (Tableau IV), where the story of origin, rebellion, the fall, and the plan for restoration is stated. While Tableaus I, II & III are about loss and misery, Tableau V, VI & VII are about restoration and glorification. The three fundamental ideas of metaphysics (God, in terms of whether or not he was responsible for the singularity that gave birth to being; the Soul, in regard to its resurrection and immortality; and the Cosmos vis-à-vis teleology) are examined in Tableaus IV & V. Here still, theodicy, soteriology, and eschatology are examined through accompanied monologues, interspersed with choral interjections.

Misery is represented through the loss of the mythic paradise, the first murder and the misery of the multitudes while hope and restoration are articulated in the I AM sayings from the Gospel of John, the resurrection of the I AM, the proclamation of the good news of this resurrection, and the recovery of paradise. In sum, this is a meditation on hope. But in one sense, *I AM Meditation* is a communal ritual of reenactment: the reenactment of a loss and a signification of how this loss is mitigated and restoration achieved.

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# PREFACE

## I. *Of the General Concept of Art and Its Purpose*

Creation of art cannot occur beyond foundations. Foundations are the limits and boundaries upon which intention and meaning are predicated, and predication is the question that precedes and follows any artistic creation. Like Jacques Derrida's *parergon*, predication frames the picture captured within the work of art.<sup>1</sup> The said foundations exist in its service. It is, in other words, multifaceted, so that no one view is sufficient as an all in all definition. To find it, one must look at the various pillars that prop it up.<sup>2</sup> Whenever critique or criticism of art occurs, a firm grasp or a subterranean assumption of the foundations and the space they segment is in play. This is precisely what informs the various schools of artistic tastes, which are defined by the assumed predicate. But what are these foundations, and what is this predicate that they undergird? The predicate itself varies according to context, time, and taste. But what form it assumes is dependent upon these said foundations, paramount among which is identity, closely followed by idea, form, and context.

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<sup>1</sup> Says he: *parergon* is “neither work (*ergon*) nor outside the work [*hors d'oeuvre*], neither inside nor outside, neither above or below, it disconcerts any opposition but does not remain indeterminate and it *gives rise* to the work. It is no longer merely around the work. That which it puts in place—the instances of the frame, the title, the signature, the legend, etc.—does not stop disturbing the *internal* order of discourse on painting, its works, its commerce, its evaluations, its surplus-value, its speculation, its laws and its hierarchies. Refer to his *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 9. But Derrida himself follows Emmanuel Kant who refers to *parerga* in §14 of the *Analytic of the Beautiful* in his *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), 24.

<sup>2</sup>These pillars might be parsed in the light of Rancière’s “historical regimes of identification.” See “The Janus-Face of Politicized Art,” trans. Gabriel Rockhill, in *Philosophers of Art from Kant to the Postmodernist*, ed. Christopher Kul-Want (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 295.

No worthy artistic creation can occur unless the artist has first had a well-formed idea of himself or herself. But whereas identity is paramount, it cannot be formed without the agency of context. The result of the agency of context is the so-called cultured person or artist. It was for this reason that Emmanuel Kant elevated culture above the utilitarian notion of happiness, positing that culture is the goal of the human race, insofar, perhaps, as this concerns the cohesive working of society.<sup>3</sup> The one who exists outside the boundaries of culture and its restraining force is displeasing to society; the same, society terms barbaric, and while Jean-Jacques Rousseau might idealize the state of nature, the imagined freedom this would produce would be nothing but chaotic to society;<sup>4</sup> for without the mitigation of such absolute freedom via the agency of culture, it is impossible for society to exist. This mitigation is, of course, the mean at which the intersection of law and liberty is located. This is to say that the artist possesses no absolute freedom, a state attainable only by the rejection of the agent that formed him or her, which is society. To create with absolute freedom would entail fleeing from meaning, and while this is the height genius would fly to, the intervention or the call of meaning necessitates the extenuation of such absolute freedom largely through form.

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<sup>3</sup> See chapter III of Kant's *On Education* at <  
[http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=356&chapter=40995&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=356&chapter=40995&layout=html&Itemid=27)> (accessed September 22, 2013). See also Jean-Francois Lyotard, "The Sign of History," trans. Geoff Benington, in *Postmodernism: Critical Concepts*, vol. 3. eds. Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist (New York: Routledge, 1988), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Part One of *A Discourse on Inequality*, trans. Maurice Cranston (New York: Penguin Books), 81-107.

Without de-formation, as Kant understood it, even genius itself would become as elusive as the reality which art pursues.<sup>5</sup>

The artist as a present member of society exists as a refracting point of society's image of itself. (Ezra Pound called him the antenna of the race.)<sup>6</sup> By this fact alone is the artist's work consumable by the society. By virtue of it his or her work is owned by the society, although there is a point at which mutual rejection and alienation occurs, when the artist's idea of what society is about clashes with the society's own conception of the same. In view of this fact, Theodor Adorno states that "by crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as 'socially useful,' [art] criticizes society by merely existing, [something] for which puritans of all stripes condemn it."<sup>7</sup> "Something unique to itself" affirms the refracting function of the artist's creation. Art fulfills its role by this, says Adorno, and thereby shows "respect [to] the masses by presenting itself to them as what they could be rather than by adapting itself to them in their degraded condition."<sup>8</sup> This, then, affirms the objective nature of art and declares it purposive. Aesthetic theorists (as we can see from Adorno's statement above) have no doubt about the purposive nature of art. Thus, art is not an end in and of itself. Through de-formation, says Kant, art brings

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to §49 & 50 of the Analytic of the Sublime in *Critique of Judgment* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), 114.

<sup>6</sup> Ezra Pound, "The Teacher's Mission," *The English Journal* 23, no. 8 (October 1934): 630-635.

<sup>7</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. and trans. Rolf Tiedemann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 225-26.

<sup>8</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 239-40

down to the realm of the sensible the elusive absolute. Through form (especially in Greek art), says Hegel, the image of the divine or the absolute spirit is glimpsed in art.<sup>9</sup> Although dispensing with the idea of "Otherness" as it related to the subject, that which both Kant and Hegel recognized and affirmed, Friedrich Nietzsche felt that art, especially its Dionysian impulse, represents the creative energy rising from the unconscious which serves to criticize or oppose ingrained values and forms.<sup>10</sup> For Sigmund Freud, art is the medium through which the fragmented subject or self gives form to fragmented experiences through the process of sublimation.<sup>11</sup> For Marxists, the mere existence of art is a strong voice of criticism in terms of social relations, precisely as it pertains to subjectivity and objectivity vis-à-vis the proper working of the so-called social contract; or, indeed, as it pertains to the autonomy of the subject under the aegis of modernity's socio-economic machine. The shadow that involved modernity at its dawn testifies to the negative estate of the subject. This, to Adorno, explains why modern art found space and voice for the ugly – that which, prior to the tragedy that accompanied the birth of modernity, had been excised from the boundaries of art, or at least from that which was considered properly art. Through the ugly, Adorno declared, art denounces "the world that creates and reproduces the ugly in its image; even [if] in this too the possibility persists that sympathy with the degraded will reverse into concurrence with

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<sup>9</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Inwood, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (London: Penguin Books, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1989).

degradation."<sup>12</sup> Or perhaps, art is the imaging of the self, of the subject, which explains the monuments man erects, expressive of his ostensible might. But these, as well, are indictments in themselves, as Jacques Lacan perceived, for they cannot but be distorted imaging of man's real state and status, mindful as we should be of man's tendency to be blind to his weaknesses.<sup>13</sup> Within the ambit of religion, art's purposiveness is naturally self-evident, being as it is ritualistic and symbolic by and large, as are dramatic forms of art, such as plays, for example.

If art is purposive, its point cannot but be to embody. Once it ceases to do so it either becomes mute or unintelligible. It would be like forming a sentence by a pastiche of words from disparate languages.<sup>14</sup> The "exhaustion of art" results from this. In music, Hegel's exasperation with the situation where process becomes the product means that art music is in the process of negotiating a shoal of self-destruction. Since the advent of atonality, when melody was declared dead, to the burgeoning years of serialism and onward to our days, when common practice is said to have ceased to exist, music has been preoccupied with concept and procedure to the detriment of the main essence of art, which is reaching forth to or reaching back to the absolute, though eternally elusive. The recurrence of the creative purpose, much like the returning cycles of days and

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<sup>12</sup> Adorno, 48-49.

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Écrits*. trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 75-81.

<sup>14</sup> The idea of intransivity in art leads inevitably to the dissolution of meaning. To say that it frees artists to engage language instead of subject matter (see Rancière, in Christopher Kul-Want, 297) is to be blind to the fact that language by its very nature is about meaning, meaning as it relates to the interaction of subjects.

seasons, testifies to the unending quest of this reaching forth to or reaching back to. It is the reawakening of the hope of rising nearer to the perfect.

This idealized notion does not lack a footing in the practical, sensible realm. What are science's "underlying principles," for example, but, in fact, the so-called *dasein*, insofar as this pertains to the thing searched or studied? What are axioms but the most fundamental principle of the *thing* or *being* revealed by layers and layers of excavations? Art's quest for the *thing* may be construed to be a quest for a state, the state of perfection, of play, and of joy. If a feeling of sublimity is evoked when the strains of the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth sound forth, is it not because both the music and the spirit of the listener rise and ascend closer to the imagined perfect?

Art, then, fulfills a triad of purposes: it points to or attempts to capture *that which should be*; it can be and is often a vehicle of idea; by its voice and accents it undergirds society. It does this regardless of whether or not it shows its approval openly or tacitly, or whether it chooses to criticize society. Naturally, art can degenerate as when, for example, it becomes mere commodity. Or when it loses the power or ceases to be "something unique to itself" and becomes merely an accompaniment to the whims and will of the masses. But even when art, having prostituted itself for whatever reason, reduces itself to the merely popular, it retains an inherent proclivity to rise to the level of autonomy. This can easily be seen in the realm of popular music where artists and the forms that define them begin to eschew entertainment as such, aiming for something more, something independent of what drives them.

The purposiveness of art is one of the latent assumptions that inform critique and criticism. Considerations such as whether or not it does service to beauty; whether it is unique to itself in terms of objectiveness; where it resides on the assumed chain of historical progression; whether it is affirmative or subversive; whether it touches, by whatever degree, genius or not; whether it speaks or is mute; whether it is coherent or unintelligible, arise from this assumption. When art is seen to have failed, other unspoken assumptions are inevitably at play. There is, of course, the failure of craft, but this is not often the reason for the declaration of failure. In many instances, the myopia of the critic overshadows everything. If the critic, like Milton's Mammon, that "least erected Spirit that fell/From heav'n..." does not see beyond procedure and concept but like that spirit, who "ev'n in heav'n his looks and thoughts/ Were always downward bent, admiring more/ The riches of Heav'ns pavement, trod'n Gold,/Than aught divine or holy else enjoy'd/ In vision beatific,"<sup>15</sup> then the essence of art — that enigma which at once is truth or untruth, vision of transcendence or the utopia, the ugly or the beautiful, the finger of judgment or of affirmation, the face of refinement or an example of what life can aspire to be<sup>16</sup>—suffers in the process, and what Hegel criticized becomes a reality. Critique should desire the following: to see the artwork "[perish] in its truth

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<sup>15</sup>John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Scott Elledge (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), Book 1, lines 679-684.

<sup>16</sup> Adorno, 79.

content,"<sup>17</sup> to see it "[sink] into irrelevance, something that is granted exclusively to the greatest artworks."<sup>18</sup>

The truth content of an artwork—the idea to which it is a medium—has a strong bearing on its fate in the hand of the critic. Does the idea of the artwork flow with the zeitgeist, or is it seen to peddle notions that are out of vogue or considered outmoded, ideas or philosophies disdained (or suppressed) by the mainstream? The artist's place in society, the community, or the school of thought he or she belongs to is another factor that exerts a huge influence upon his or her art. This can make or destroy an artist; it can do a great deal of harm to even the most gifted of artists, and there is a ready parable here in the lives of Felix Mendelssohn and his antagonist Richard Wagner.

## *II. Of Context and Identity*

If Idea in its diverse incarnations is the fundamental essence of art and the impulse that prompts the artist to create, identity wields a great deal of influence in matters of judgment. Who the artist is (or was) is a foremost question when an art object is contemplated. The attendant question of time reinforces the foregoing claim that context is chief among the factors that form who the artist is. Who was Giuseppe Verdi? Why did he write the operas he did and why in that particular style? All three questions are related to context and may be posed about any artist. Context can serve as a justification of sorts for the artist: Think of the various historical schools and the artists who were

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<sup>17</sup> Adorno, 132.

<sup>18</sup> Adorno, 132.

affiliated with them or of the various artistic centers and the artists who benefited from their patronage. The justification of context is what Wagner objected to as it pertained to Mendelssohn. Various artists confronted or were confronted with this issue: Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg, Arvo Pärt, Olivier Messiaen, Sofia Gubaidulina, etc.<sup>19</sup> Nor does this cease to be an issue that confronts the contemporary artist. This is even more so for the artist who crosses contextual boundaries. For such, an abstracted space opens up wherein issues of difference must be confronted and resolved if any headway is to be made in the artistic endeavor. Three titles in recent African literature grant entry into this issue; they highlight the dilemma of identity, which the alien wrestles with when contextual change occurs.

The blunt and suggestive title of Uwem Akpan's collection of short stories, *Say You're One of Them*,<sup>20</sup> underscores the dissonance in the abstracted space that results whenever there is the need to make a distinction between the "you" and the "them." To say you are one of them, as commanded, is to point to or expose this difference, and whereas one could say that one is "one of them," the command, "say," exposes the perfidious nature of this move or claim. As to the possible cause of this command or of the saying itself, three constraints could be posited: the need for survival; the need to genuinely belong, in which case the saying is merely a postlude to some series of actions to be undertaken to make belonging real; and the need compelled by the desire to secure

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<sup>19</sup> This relates to Modernism's notion of "exile," either in personal (that is, as it relates to gender or other identity issues), geographical, or linguistic terms.

<sup>20</sup> Uwem Akpan, *Say You're One of Them* (New York: Back Bay, 2008).

some favor, in which case the saying is merely a temporary camouflage to be discarded once the favor is secured.

But yet again, from either direction, whether theirs or his, the need to "say" it at once taints the intended result, regardless of whether or not it succeeds. The saying, therefore, is merely a front that papers over the harsh fact that one is not one of them. Thus, an underlying insecurity remains in spite of the move; for at the point that the person says, "I am one of you," a truer voice rings out: "you are not one of them"; or, "you are not one of us." Were the person one of them, the question and the saying would not arise. In fact, both would not be present to consciousness but would recede to the subconscious. The need for "you" and "them" indicates that both are not one. Where the reverse is the case, the qualifiers *you* and *them* vanish. The command, the question, and the saying all witness, then, to the presence of this dissonance of identity, and all three are attempts either to hide, expose, suppress, or resolve it. The saying is the ever-present reminder of difference to the alien. It is also the ever-present tool for resolving this problem.

The recalcitrant nature of this problem may explain why those shadowed by it cling to identity markers; or perhaps they do not so much cling as are rather compelled to do so by a question that refuses to go away. In the short story "Imitation," from the collection *The Thing Around Your Neck* by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, a Nigerian couple straddles two worlds.<sup>21</sup> Whereas their roots remain firmly fixed in their country, where the bulk of their livelihood is earned through the husband's business, their aspiration lies in the USA where they make their home. By the end of the story, it is clear

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<sup>21</sup>Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Imitation" in *The Thing Around Your Neck* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 22-42.

that "imitation" is a metaphor for a way of life no longer situated naturally. The calm voice of the narrator succeeds in conveying its tacit disapproval of a life now lived in imitation of two parallel cultures. The wife, from whose perspective the story is told, finds adjustment to the routine of American life difficult. The husband, who passes most of his time in the old country, makes a hobby of collecting imitation Nigerian carving. He buys and brings this along with him on every trip, tokens of his roots, identity, and background. But although the décor in the couple's US apartment is decidedly Nigerian by virtue of these identity markers, the subtle sense that this is just imitation cannot be banished from the atmosphere generated. Much like the life of this couple, the identity of the alien is similarly fragmented. The psychological impact this may have on his or her work may be tremendous indeed. The effect of this often necessitates the recalibration of the artist's image of himself or herself, an idea implied in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, a story that chronicles this struggle with identity and adjustment.<sup>22</sup>

A new name (which could be a metaphor for linguistic space), one that accounts for the duality that resides in the alien, may be the solution towards reformation, towards resolution, towards adjustment. Without this, the artist is bound to grow mute, and many an artist has experienced this. We have well-known examples in Arnold Schoenberg and Arvo Pärt. The impact of the divide between "you" and "them" has caused some to lose the innocent naïveté from which uninhibited works of genius can (and do) spring forth. We find a good example of this in Mendelssohn, whose recalibration of his own image led to his infamous historicity. For some, this is tied to the

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<sup>22</sup> NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names* (New York: Reagan Arthur Books, 2013).

fundamental questions of life, and the answer to these has led them to mysticism. Sofia Gubaidulina, Olivier Messiaen and Arvo Pärt come to mind. Schoenberg's later works are not unrelated to this nor is Wagner's resort to myth.

An African cannot but be compelled to tackle and wrestle with this issue of identity. First of all, a variety of questions arise when part of one's identity is said to be that of an art music composer. This gives rise to the contextual issues mentioned above. "So what kind of music do you write?" This, of course, means that the word "art" is insufficient as a qualifier for this artist's endeavor. The question, it must be granted, is not unjustified. Who really knows what is meant by art music these days, a form that runs the gamut of imagination? The question could be asked of anyone – say, a Frenchman. There is, in this case, a long history of French art music, with a long line of famous names available to sharpen the image. Even in the case of an American, various incipient images are available. An American could appeal to Jazz or even rock music as the entry point of what he fashions into his unique brand of art music. But an African? To what first image could she appeal to? Is her art music a dance form? Are we to imagine lively rhythm voiced by an ensemble of drums? Is she free to reject this limited image of what her ostensibly art music should be? Could she be a composer of choral music? If so, how authentic, in terms of her background and heritage, could this be? The issue here is not that there is no art music in Africa, for in fact there is; the problem is that the African composer does not possess the luxury of a long tradition such as is available to his western colleagues. On the contrary, the African must not only wrestle with issues of modernism, postmodernism, cosmopolitanism, and those that arise from nascent

globalization, he or she has also to deal with issues of tradition, heritage, and authenticity.

### *III. Of the Composer's Beliefs*

Heuristically, the composer is either a poet, a social critic, or a nationalist, else he or she is an entertainer. Some composers straddle all of these spaces. Symphonic music – unless it is overly nationalistic (and even so) – may be considered poetic, as is music that undergirds ritual, or music that is mythic or mystical. Verdi operas, such as *La Traviata* and *Don Carlos*, are social criticism. Court music and a great deal of chamber music, accompaniment to social events, fulfill the function of play and pleasure. These categories can help expose the composer's proclivity and foibles in terms of base beliefs. Nationalism can easily become reactionaryism, or a tributary of propagandism. Even social criticism, generally progressive, can degenerate into radicalism.

All these fester and blossom quite quickly at periods of upheaval such as those that preceded and followed the two great wars of the past century. Even composers who may fall under the first category are not immune to negative tendencies. The mythical world of Wagner's Ring Cycle is not without its negative political undertones, where social status and inclinations are rather stark. Within the last category, the tension between what is progressive art and kitsch festers. Here art can quickly become commodity. Whichever path the composer chooses to follow is not uninformed by his or her base beliefs. In other words, art does not grow out of a void of beliefs. The one who hymns the virtues of avant-gardism and creates art that ostensibly sharpens or bolsters

this belief is not apolitical by any stretch of the imagination. Abstract expressionism, to take another example, is its own political statement.

The core beliefs of a composer, whether social conservatism or liberal progressivism, inform and often become part and parcel of his or her artistic activities. Thus it is that various artists and composers at various times have quite deliberately drawn boundary lines that inform their art. For J.S. Bach, his intentions were no more than to create “well-regulated church music to the glory of God.”<sup>23</sup> G. F. Handel served the political and social institutions of his time, often producing music that accompanied and undergirded important cultural events. One cannot think of the music of Jean-Baptiste Lully and Claude Debussy without sensing French sensibilities in them. The same can be said of Ralph Vaughan-Williams and Benjamin Britten for the English. The following statement, given in a speech in Amsterdam, may be seen as the philosophy that informed Messiaen's artistic endeavor:

I've been asked to deliver a confession of my faith, that is, to talk about what I believe, what I love, what I hope for. What do I believe? That doesn't take long to say and in it everything is said at once: I believe in God. And because I believe in God, I believe likewise in the Holy Trinity and in the Holy Spirit (to whom I've dedicated my *Messe de la Pentecote*), and in the Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ (to whom I've dedicated a large part of my works.)<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, ed. Christoph Wolff (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1998), 57.

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Kavanaugh, *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 201.

The statement is very remarkable, given the fact that it is situated within a milieu that drastically swings away from the central belief herein articulated. Indeed, the post-Kantian and Hegelian philosophies have had—and pursued quite singularly—the project of negating those questions that inform this particular existential belief. Nietzsche's declaration of God's death is a summation of the invalidation of the so-called permanent ideas in terms of questions that should be engaged. In fact, such new-fangled philosophies as the so-called objectivism, make this very fact their point of departure. And Darwinism, having roiled the waters of traditional belief and having punched holes in some of its fundamental assumptions, cannot but sit back, smirk gleefully or laugh hysterically at the sorry lot who now are constrained to scamper rather disjointedly and disconcertedly to find means with which to plug these glaring holes. But as the writings of Thomas Kuhn,<sup>25</sup> Paul Feyerabend<sup>26</sup> and some aspects of the Chaos Theory show, those who built their belief on the foundation of the vaunted scientific method should not imagine that they ply a *Via Regia* devoid of potholes and shadowy tunnels. The invalidation of the so-called fundamental questions does not mean that they have been satisfactorily answered or that they have been answered at all, nor does it mean that they are not being asked still. The problem is that what does not fit empirical categorization is ignored as though it does not matter. But none can argue that the sum of life is merely empirical; as such, these questions are still pertinent. This is why this meditation is relevant not only as an artistic exploration but also as space within which

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: Verso, 2010).

at least one of these questions is engaged. In terms of the impulse behind it, it follows those who grapple with the three metaphysical ideas of the soul, the cosmos, and God. The fundamental impulse of the work is the question of origins, specifically of evil. This question is engaged at three levels of discourse: philosophical, theological, and representational.

#### *IV. Of the Idea of I AM Meditation*

Representation, what I would like to call *ritualis dramatica*, is the face or the manifestation of Idea. I understand drama to be a symbolic signifier of Idea. For example, the motions of *Macbeth*, to take random example, are a manifestation of something deeper, an idea the author wishes to represent to his audience. Similarly, the motions of *I AM Meditation* are the face and voice of the idea of the work. Representation has two movements in the work: The articulation of the problem of evil and the articulation of its solution.

The term *ritualis dramatica* suggests itself to me because the most transparent level of *I AM Meditation* shares the characteristics of Christian rituals, symbolic acts periodically or cyclically enacted as signifiers of particular ideas. It is a ritual because it enacts, through dramatic and symbolic actions, the fundamentals of the Christian gospel. It is transparent because it is rather obviously a recounting of the story of Jesus; or more theologically, it traces the soteriological steps of Jesus, the avowed Messiah of the Christian tradition, from his revelation via acclamation, proclamation, and ministry (Tableau III); his denial, rejection, betrayal, and death (Tableau IV); his resurrection

(Tableau V); his manifestations (Tableau VI); and his ascension and glorification (Tableau VII). In this reenactment, even the “acts of the believers” are included (Tableaus V, VI & VII). Thus, at the level of discourse alone, *I AM Meditation* follows the footsteps of sacred cantatas. But it is more than a cantata because of its dramatic aspect, where revelation is signified via a processional (a reinterpretation of the Triumphant Entry) with banners announcing the different offices of this manifesting messiah, consolidated through miraculous acts of mercy and confirmed through his reappearance after his death and through his eventual glorification.

At middle ground, *I AM Meditation* articulates three significant theological ideas: Theodicy, Soteriology, and Eschatology. Theologically, the eye of *I AM Meditation* is in Tableau IV, because here the thorny issue of the “being” of evil vis-à-vis God’s goodness (theodicy, in other words) is confronted. Evil is a simulacrum of being, birthed simultaneously with being, creating an aporia, since one cannot be without the other. Evil, according to *I AM Meditation*, was “sealed beyond the universe, God’s created order.” This suggests that originally there was a separation between being (or between things that were), and non-being or evil (the corruption of things), until a coming-together (a mixture) occurred. Implied, still, is the suggestion that a rupture occurred in the dividing wall between these two realities, causing corruption (non-being or evil) to begin acting on the forms of being. This is said to have happened “when that rebellious spirit, Lucifer, / Whom now we know as Satan, / Aspired to scale the stars, / To ascend to the throne of God/ And climb above all things.” This follows Isaiah 14:12-15, commonly understood to be a reference to Lucifer or Satan.

<sup>12</sup> How you have fallen from heaven,  
 morning star, son of the dawn!  
 You have been cast down to the earth,  
 you who once laid low the nations!  
<sup>13</sup> You said in your heart,  
 "I will ascend to the heavens;  
 I will raise my throne  
 above the stars of God;  
 I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly,  
 on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.  
<sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;  
 I will make myself like the Most High."  
<sup>15</sup> But you are brought down to the realm of the dead,  
 to the depths of the pit.

Whatever Lucifer did, symbolized in his desire to ascend to the heavens, must have caused the intermixing of being and evil (the corrupting agent of being). This did not only cause a problem in heaven (the very center of being); it would also create a big problem in the domain of humans. This, of course, is represented in the mythic idea of paradise and the fall. Man is driven out of paradise because of his gullibility in yielding to the deceit of this fallen angel from heaven.

In number 7 of Tableau IV, it is stated that "Before forms were made,/ Before the universe came to be,/ God had purposed a solution for evil – /This negating force." This solution is "the Perfect Man, the Great I am," that is, God himself. Logically, God's death, that is, the scattering abroad of his essence—being itself—has to negate non-being; because the multiplication or the flowering of God's essence is the demultiplication or negation of non-being. The flourishing of God's essence (or of the God-essence) within created order negates the corrupting force of evil.

Since God created the universe,  
God purposed,  
Even before its creation,  
To take responsibility for the antithesis of being,  
Which is evil.

This is the reason God died.  
A good shepherd dies for his sheep.  
God died for the universe He made.

This is the reason God is worthy of praise...  
God is worthy of praise.

The idea that God foreknew the problem of evil and preordained its solution is at once paradoxical, puzzling, and troubling, hence the thorny issue of theodicy. But if the idea of perfection (known as God) is true, this foreknowledge is not unimaginable. The big question that remains, which some people grapple with, and which becomes the stumbling block for most atheists, is why God would allow evil in the first place. The real question actually is why there was law in the first place. But one should consider whether there can be a differentiation in status without law, and also what the relationship of law and boundary is, and whether or not true freedom and perfection is possible without boundary or law.

*I AM Meditation* tackles theodicy by both confronting the idea of the origin of evil and positing its solution. If, then, Tableau IV is the center of work, it can be seen that from thence both the problem and solution branch out in terms of representation. Tableaus I, II, and III represent the effect (or the evidence of evil), while Tableaus V, VI, and VII represent the solution to evil in the resurrection of the I AM; the proclamation of this great and good news; the final triumph of believers and the restoration of all things.

The apostle Paul held up resurrection as the thing that makes or breaks the Christian worldview:

<sup>12</sup> But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup> More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. <sup>19</sup> If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied (*1 Corinthians 15:12-19, NIV*).

The relevance of *I AM Meditation*, or its foolishness and naiveté as a scholarly document and even otherwise, hinges upon this passage by Paul. If Christ was not raised, or if there was no Christ in the first place, then an exercise such as this is misplaced and wasted and deserves to be dismissed. But if there was a Christ, and if he was raised, then as it is proclaimed in this same Tableau IV, “How sad it is that humanity denies this. / How sad it is that the multitudes are blind to this.” Perhaps what is required in the end is Blaise Pascal’s wager or even Søren Kierkegaard’s “leap of faith,” even though possession of faith is anything but a leap.

Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, makes its first appearance in *I AM Meditation* when Satan is unable to complete his lines in the Tableau I, and when the metamorphosed Eve proclaims that “God came,” even before God (as the I AM) makes an appearance in the work. The I AM sayings are soteriological parallaxes. The focal point of this, though, is found in the “Homily of John” in Tableau V. Its cringe-

worthiness to the uninitiated ear is precisely because it expresses the fundamentals of the Christian doctrine of salvation. The core message sounds absolutist because if there is perfection it cannot but be absolute. It should be noted, though, that what John articulates is the essence of what the gospel message is, and this is what art represents.

Soteriology is inevitably teleological. Without belief in teleology, faith makes no sense. Eschatology, the Christian doctrine of the end of things, is articulated from Tableau V onward. The resurrection of the I AM is only the first-fruit of things to come. Those who are touched by God's essence will likewise resurrect at an appointed moment in time. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul proclaimed a mystery:

<sup>51</sup>Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup>In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup>For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup>So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. <sup>55</sup>O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? <sup>56</sup>The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup>But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 15: 51-57, KJV*).

At the background level of *I AM Meditation* is the metaphysical question of being. It might be fashionable to laugh off creationist notions, but to ask, "who put in place the first particle/ That flamed brilliantly/ When the forms of the universe began," as the metamorphosed Eve does in Tableau IV, is a question that remains unanswered and therefore remains relevant. As Robert M. Hazen writes in the *Story of Earth*, this birth-place of being, this singularity, is the place you would search "for the signs of a creator

god in the cosmos,"<sup>27</sup> and this is exactly where "Modern Woman" refers us to in *I AM Meditation*.

Philosophically it is not the domain of art to invent Idea. It is rather a conduit that conveys and sometimes attempts to shape Idea. Art takes Idea as a given and treats it as self-evident. Messiah in *Messiah* is treated as such, the reason why no argument or justification for this person is needed or necessary as far as this receptacle of idea is concerned. In the same vein, the sacred myth about the origin of evil is treated as self-evident in *I AM Meditation*. This allows art to represent, and this is what happens at the opening of *I AM Meditation*, where evil is represented through dramatic actions.

Musically, extended monologues (in Tableaus IV and V) articulate philosophical and doctrinal ideas. The I AM sayings and the cyclical "If Only They Would Listen" serve as unifying loci. Choral movements signify the work of the people and serve as relief and balance to the solos and the monologues. Drama articulates particular facets of the idea of the work. Refer, for example, to the prologue, where not only the first murder is enacted, but also the idea of work is portrayed through the figurative action of painting. The drama of Tableau III encapsulates in action what the entire *I AM Meditation* is about. Orchestral interludes serve the traditional purpose of signifying the passage of time. Finally, metamorphosis is very important in the work. First there is the underlining idea of transformation from the corruption of evil to restoration. In the *dramatis personae*, we find this happening in Eve, who becomes Mary, Mary Magdalene, and "Modern Woman." The messenger (a type of Elijah) is John the Baptist and John the Evangelist.

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<sup>27</sup> Robert M. Hazen, *The Story of Earth: The First 4.5 Billion Years, From Stardust to Living Planet* (New York: Penguin Group Inc. 2012), 7.

The I AM is presented in seven different lights, and finally he transforms to a resurrected being. Transformation is, of course, related to identity, and the music, in terms of what it is aesthetically, reflects this.

#### V. *Of the Service of Art*

Since art is purposeful, a receptacle of idea, a pointer to what could be, or an affirmative or a subversive object, in whose service does it exist? If art is a medium of idea, then it must serve that which idea exists for: the community, whether transnational, national, cultural, subcultural, or cultic. Of the many facets of idea, there is one that looms large in the imagination and vision of any society: hope or aspiration. Communal aspirations find expression in various forms, and art often assumes pride of place in the representation and articulation of these. National anthems, expressions of solidarity and the impression of a people of themselves, are an example of art disseminating a communal idea. Monuments, such as the statue of liberty and other architectural edifices around the world, represent the same. They are signifiers of a communal psyche, symbols that infuse pride and evoke patriotic sentiments. Certain books are elevated as representative of the sensibilities of a certain people, as tokens of what they stand for. Thus, there is such a thing as the quintessential American novel, collection of poetry, art object, composition, etc., and the same is true of other nations. *Things Fall Apart*, for example, is considered a quintessential African novel; *Wasteland*, a quintessential expression of modernity's disillusion; *Leaves of Grass*, expressive of the American free spirit and the diversity of its culture; Aaron Copland's ballets as

expressive of America's expansive vistas and its frontier spirit, etc. In fact, it can be said that certain artworks express the universal human spirit. Some would say that the monumental symphonies of Ludwig van Beethoven do exactly this. The works of J.S. Bach are treasured by the Christian community because they express and support the essence of what that community is. Handel's *Messiah* proclaims both overtly and covertly the central message of the same community and certain art objects do the same for specific communities.

*I AM Meditation* is an art object whose purpose, as a receptacle of Idea, is community specific. It is created to serve and support a certain tradition, to express certain historical and foundational ideas still treasured by a specific community even though the mainstream might find them outmoded and in some aspects rather delusional. But in an ethically fragmented terrain, where the portentous signs of the future are pessimistic indeed, perhaps a reaffirmation of traditional values is in order, as indeed Alasdair MacIntyre suggests we should do.<sup>28</sup> In the backdrop of postmodern dystopia where the subject becomes ever and ever a slave to manufactured needs, and where the individual becomes increasingly isolated because the communal fabric has been ripped away by the incessant and irresistible force of pluralism and relativism, the representation of misery in *Tableaus I, II & III* cannot objectively be said to be naive; neither can these lyrics by the popular artist Steve Green be said to be off the mark:

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<sup>28</sup> Refer to his *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

Every day they pass me by,  
 I can see it in their eye.  
 Empty people filled with care,  
 Headed who knows where?  
 On they go through private pain,  
 Living fear to fear.  
 Laughter hides their silent cries...

Green concludes that people need the Lord. Another might say what they need is hope. Yet another might suggest that what they need is to be liberated by and to live the American dream. Still another might suggest that the Four Freedoms might do the trick. But what is common to all these ideas is the assent to the fact that indeed many people go through "private pain." Is not this the fact that led Arthur Schopenhauer to conclude that the question of life should find resolution in suicide<sup>29</sup> and, likewise, Albert Camus to suggest that the fundamental question of life is the question of suicide?<sup>30</sup>

I am inclined to agree with these two philosophers; for if my personal existential beliefs were not founded upon the central idea of *I AM Meditation*. If I did not believe in the immortality of the soul; in the teleological goal of existence and of the universe; if I did not believe in a benevolent creators, who will restore all things in the end; if I did not believe in the ultimate victory of good over evil, it would make no sense for me to go through this Sisyphean tedium called life. What is the use of spending about a quarter of one's life (or for some half of it) laboring for education and the rest of it in cycles of frustrating labor and then in the end waste away in old age, or overtaken by some calamity? What is the point of it all? The central tenet of existentialism is false; for no one

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<sup>29</sup> See §69 of his *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publication Inc., 1969), 398-402.

<sup>30</sup> Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

possesses any power to determine his or her own life. First of all, no one individual possessed the choice to be born or not, and if the mind is blank at birth, no child decides what the incipient marks upon it should be. As adults our background and culture shape us. So we possess no real power, and the cyclical labor of life makes no sense if this present life is all that there is. So apart from the fact that *I AM Meditation* finds relevance in its measured affirmation of a community whose beliefs I assent to, it is also a statement of my personal existential beliefs, a statement of the philosophy that informs my life. Some make capitalism, Marxism, the scientific method, or even atheism the bedrock of their existence. Mine is the idea expressed in this art object, and this idea in a nutshell is the idea of hope.

#### *VI. Of the Structure of I AM Meditation*

There is an obscure line in the bassoon at the beginning of *I AM Meditation*. It is five measures long and is marked piano in a passage scored forte for the brass. Essentially this line cannot be heard and is not meant to be. It is a deformed version of what will later be heard as the first phrase of the melody that sustains the first part of "The Homily of John," the chorale tune, "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden." This musical foreshadowing mirrors what happens at the level of idea in the prologue, where Adam and Eve proclaim the hope of the messiah even in the face of the loss of their original estate and the necessity of labor that follows. This expression of hope is magnified in the following scene, where—starting with the messenger (John the Baptist) and continuing through the metamorphosed Eve and the chorus of mothers and children—the coming

of God "to save man, to save earth, to save the universe" is celebrated, even though this is anachronistic in the time frame of the work.

Expression of hope and faith in the context of despair characterizes the rest of *I AM Meditation*. Tableaus I & II, within which the loss of paradise and the first murder occur and a threnody about the effect of evil is sung, are followed by Tableau III, where the I AM is revealed to the suffering and disillusioned masses. In the midst of unforgiving and unrelenting want, he becomes the bread of life. This sort of parallelism continues throughout the work. In Tableau IV where questions of origins and theodicy are confronted, I AM is the good shepherd, who, responsible for evil, takes action to die in order to negate its power and effect. About the question of the afterlife in the same tableau, he is revealed as the door. The issue of death is confronted in Tableau V, and here, I AM becomes the prototype of what will one day happen to those who believe in God. In hope they can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory" (1 Corinthians 15:55, KJV)? For all the disillusioned masses of the world to whom the good news of life is proclaimed in Tableau VI, I AM is the way, the truth and the life. Ultimately, Tableau VII is a mirror of Tableau I, where vine is a metaphor of paradise and where everything is finally restored.

We have seen already that the seven tableaus are structured as a palindrome, with the force and effect of evil panning retrogressively from Tableau IV, and restoration—following the resurrection of the I AM—spanning forward from there, until the state of perfection (the absence of death, of evil, of want, etc.) is attained yet again, signified in the metaphor of the vine. Following from this, Tableaus I & VII are parallels, where loss is answered by restoration. The misery and the threnody that results in Tableau II are

answered by the good news of life, proclaimed by the followers of the I AM in Tableau VI. I AM as the answer to evil is the theme of both Tableaus III & V. This structure is laid out in the following figures and tables.

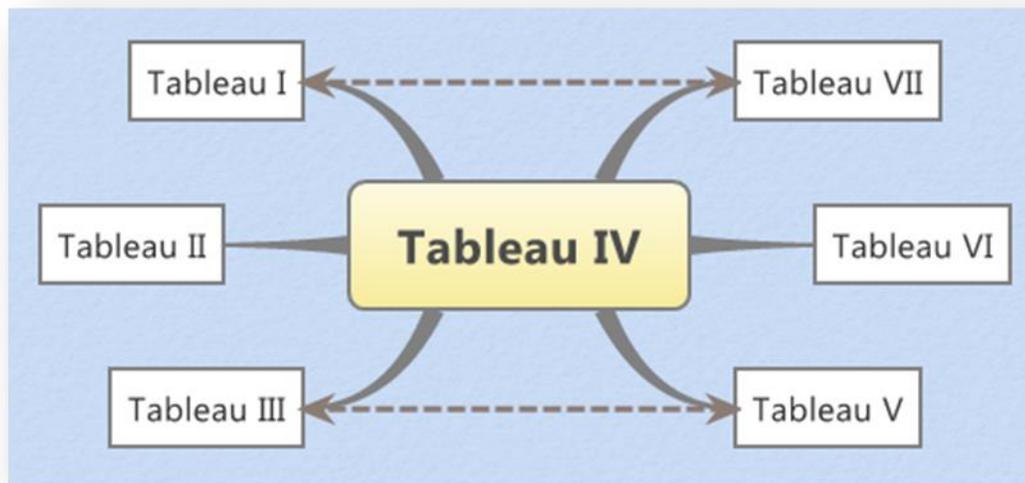


Figure 1: Palindromic Structure of *I AM Meditation*

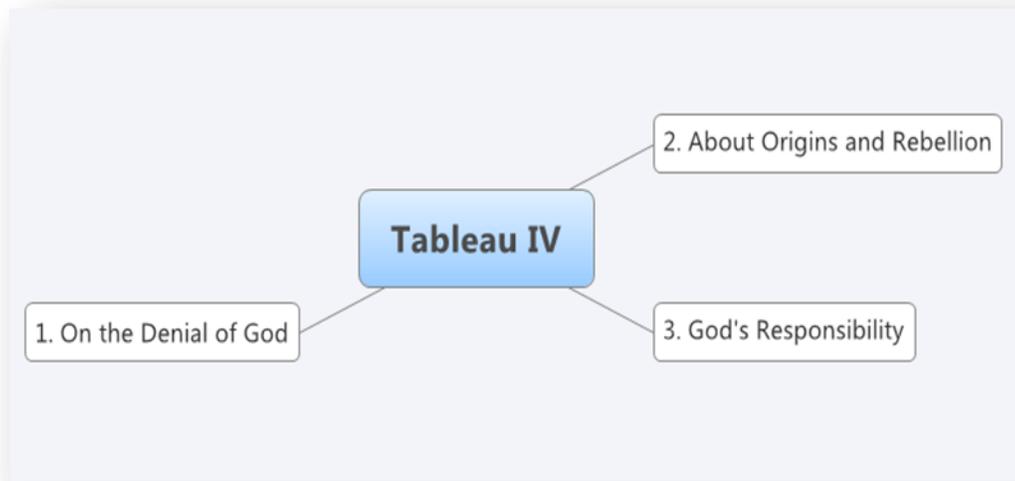


Figure 2: Central Tableau of I AM Meditation

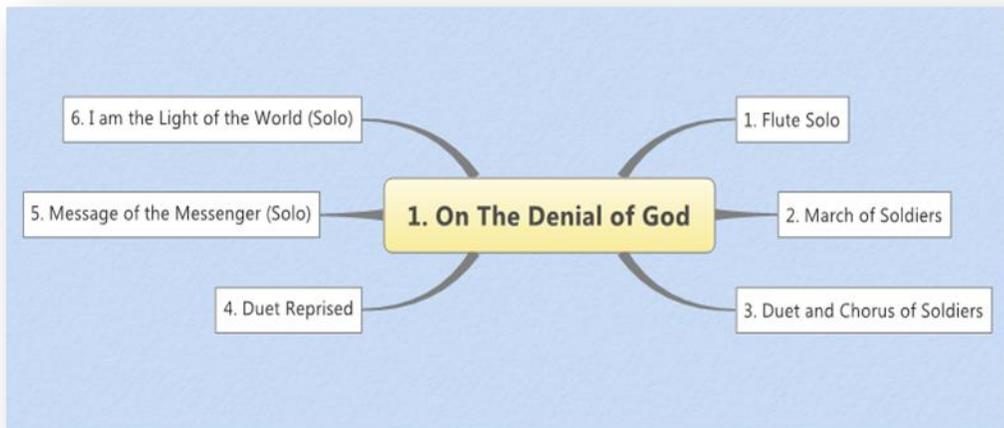


Figure 3: First Central Topic of Tableau IV

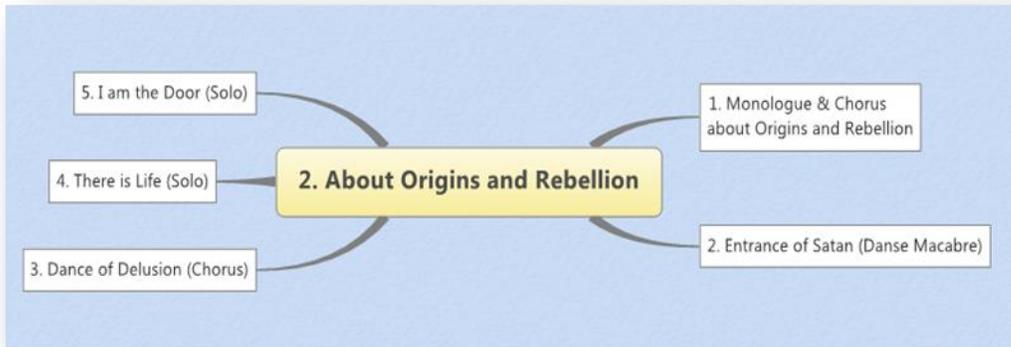


Figure 4: Second Central Topic of Tableau IV

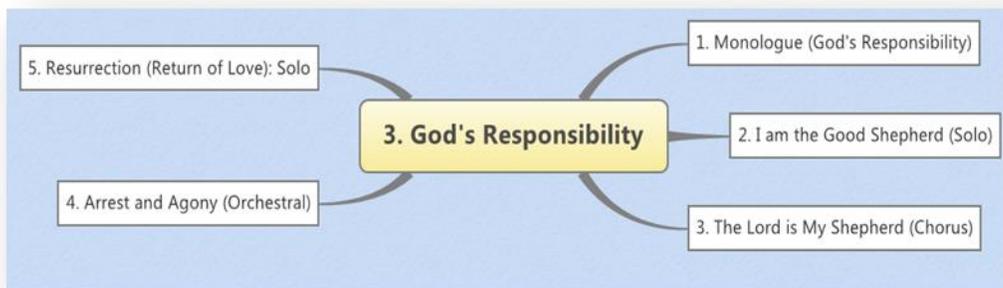


Figure 5: Third Central Topic of Tableau IV

<b>TABLEAU I</b>	<b>TABLEAU VII</b>
<b>Events</b>	<b>Events</b>
1. a. Orchestral Intro, Loss of Paradise b. The Lamb foreshadowed	1. a. Orchestral Intro (Recall of the music that introduced the Messenger: Event 3 of Tableau I) b. Beatification of the Apostles c. Warning of the Messenger
2. Song in Four Stanzas: a. Adam b. Eve c. Duet d. Satan	2. Song of Deceivers
3. Message of the Messenger a. Orchestra (Lament, Triumph [?]) b. Message	3. Warning of the Messenger
4. Solo (God Came): Mary	4. Solo (Mary)
5. Chorus (Mary, Mothers, Children): Celebration of God	5. a. God Revealed (I am the Vine) b. God worshiped (Worthy is the Lamb) c. God's Comfort d. Saints Glorified e. Hope Rekindled (Chorus)

**Table 1: Structural Parallelism between Tableaus I & VII**

<b>TABLEAU II</b>	<b>TABLEAU VI</b>
<b>Events</b>	<b>Events</b>
1. Orchestral (The First Murder)	
2. Threnody on the Effect and Evidence of Evil (Chorus)	1. Good News Proclaimed (Chorus)
3. Misery of the Multitudes (Hear Their Cry): Chorus	2. Their Voice is Gone Out (Chorus)
4. Solo: Message of the Messenger	3. Solo: Message of the Messenger
5. a. Cry for Help (Kyrie Eleison): Chorus b. Encouragement Given (solo)	4. I am the Way (Solo)

**Table 2: Structural Parallelism between Tableaus II & VI**

<b>TABLEAU III</b>	<b>TABLEAU V</b>
<b>Events</b>	<b>Events</b>
1. Advent of the Redeemer (Chorus)	
2. Solo: I am the Bread of Life	
3. Mercy of the Redeemer (Narration and Chorus)	1. Homily of John
4. Solo: I am the Bread of Life Reprise	2. Solo: I am the Resurrection
5. Solo: Break Thou the Bread of Life (Response)	3. The Commission (Response)
6. The Storm (Orchestral Interlude)	

**Table 3: Structural Parallelism between Tableaus III & V**

But besides this structural mirroring, are there specific musical relationships between the parallel Tableaus? There are. For example, the music that carries the messenger's proclamation in No. 2 of Tableau I is recalled at the beginning of Tableau VII even though the "spinning out" section of each is rather different—with the first exclamatory and celebratory and the second somewhat chaotic and rather spontaneous. Furthermore, the song of the deceivers in Tableau VII mirrors the song of Adam, Eve and Satan in Tableau I. In fact, the character of Satan's music in Tableau I (No. 1, measures 87- 119) is recalled when the messenger (John the Baptist) warns about deceivers and deception in Tableau VII (No. 2, measures 49- 98). A careful study of Tableaus II & VI shows how events in the former Tableau find their fulfillment in the latter, and there is of course, the cyclic return of the "Message of the Messenger." The complementary musical relationship found here is pervasive in the rest of *I AM Meditation*. Tableaus III & V employ similar communal tokens: Organ, scriptures, hymn and chorale tunes.

In terms of the procedure used in composing *I AM Meditation*, I would like to call it "a free play with colors." Naturally, there is first the imaging or the imagining of what a particular number or passage should be: is it to be lyrical or dramatic? Is it to be light and bright or dark and somber? What is to be its general tone? Who or what is to express it? This gives birth to the particular figuration chosen as the motivic impetus, and this, to me, is analogous to applying the first brush of paint on an empty canvas, then, following the image of the passage in the mind, see how this develops. How this develops is dependent, of course, upon the predetermined goal arrived at at the stage of imaging. "Free play with colors" also refers to my preference for employing the full spectrum of

the chromatic scale, not in the micro, technical harmonic sense, but in the macro, tonal sense.

In terms of the specific language or the aesthetic tone of the *I AM Meditation*, it is related to the issue of identity discussed above. For example, there are passages in the piece that are a direct result of my African background: Refer, for example, to "And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord" portion of Tableau IV, No. 8 and the "I am the Way," Tableau VI, No. 4. Others like "Kyrie Eleison," Tableau II, No, 4 and "Dance of Delusion," Tableau IV, No. 5 are products of my background in choral and liturgical music. Still others—like the threnody (evidence of evil) in Tableau II (the orchestral beginning), No. 1 (measures 157-264) and the storm at the end of Tableau III—lean towards more progressive aesthetics. And, perhaps, my predilection to choral music might not be unconnected to a cultural background tended towards the community rather than towards the individual as such. My conviction that language should be accessible (but is not this what language is by definition?) results in an aesthetic that rejects piquant avant-gardism for a style that, while still art, is friendly toward the common music lover, especially such as might be found in the community to which *I AM Meditation* has been primarily created in service of.

In terms of performance, *I AM Meditation* lends itself well to use as a liturgical piece. In this case, only the portions of the piece that incorporate the I AM sayings might be used; this begins from Tableau III. The addition of the organ to the orchestration is informed by this, beside the specific aesthetic demand of the given portions of the music within which it is used. The size of the orchestra is small. This should make the piece more accessible to church and other chamber ensembles. In general, a large of chorus

(part of it dramatic and part non-dramatic) is required for adequate execution of the choral numbers. Churches capable of engaging this work should not have problem raising such a group. But *I AM Meditation* is not merely a liturgical piece, it is first of all a sacred piece; as such, it should equally be a home on a college campus or in any secular space just like other sacred pieces. *I AM Meditation* is fundamentally an artistic discourse on a subject that is historically and culturally imbedded in our way of life – this pluralistic but western-influenced world. Culture may transform; the study of its history and of the stream of ideas that still uphold a major portion of it should remain relevant.

# REPRESENTATION OF THE DRAMA

## TABLEAU I

### Scene 1

*Adam, Eve, Satan*

#### 1. Prologue

In the background are massive gates, beyond and through which aspects of paradise are visible. To the first accents of the music the gates open and an archangel ushers Adam and Eve out.

The gates swing close as the couple tries to enter back in. They plead in vain with the resolute angel, who points beyond them to the foreground of the stage.

Lying on the foreground of the stage are two piles of objects. One is to the right and the other is to the left.

In each is an artist's canvas, an easel, a palette, and a few brushes. The couple proceeds dejectedly but curiously to the objects. Each mounts the canvas on the easel, facing away from the audience, and each begins to paint. (Adam is on stage left and Eve on the right.)

**Enter Satan** clandestinely from stage left, bearing with him chains.

Adam begins to sing.

**My God, I Thank Thee** (*Adelaide Anne Procter, 1858, alt.*)

ADAM

MY God, I thank Thee, Who hast made  
 The earth so bright;  
 So full of splendor and... joy,  
 Beauty and light;  
 So many glorious things are here,  
 Noble and right.

Satan exhibits curious behavior: *He is at once amused and irritated by what Adam sings. At the same time he is interested in what Adam and Eve are painting but is continuously distracted by the sights in paradise.*

Adam reveals his painting to the audience, on which:  
PARADISE LOST, PAIN GAINED.

Eve sings as she continues to paint.

EVE

I thank Thee too that all our joy  
Is touched with pain;  
That shadows fall on brightest hours,  
That thorns remain;  
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,  
And not our chain.

Satan's behavior continues. He sees Adam's painting, takes it away, rages at it and then destroys it.

Eve reveals her painting, on which:  
BLISS LOST, SORROWS BORN.

Satan is furious and proceeds as before.

Adam and Eve sing together, mocked by Satan.

ADAM & EVE

For Thou, (all-knowing, know'st) how soon  
Our weak heart clings,  
[Thou] hast given us joys, tender and true,  
Yet all with wings,  
So that we see, gleaming on high,  
Diviner things.

Satan sings his own version of the song:

SATAN

I'm glad too that these souls throughout,  
Their earthly quest,  
Can never find, although they seek,  
A perfect rest,—  
Nor ever shall, until... until... until...

He finds that he cannot complete the song because it prophesies his doom. Adam and Eve complete the sentiment of the verse.

ADAM & EVE

...Until we lean  
on Messiah's breast.

Satan is incensed; he shackles the couple and drags them away.

**(Exeunt** stage left)

## Scene 2

### 2. God Came

Background is Golgotha, silhouette of the cross. John the Baptist enters from stage right. He bears a staff, emblem of his prophetic office and authority. His costume reflects his office.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

After evil had entered the universe  
Through that rebellious spirit called Lucifer,  
Whom now we know as Satan...

**Exit John the Baptist, enter Eve**, now as Mary (her progeny).

MARY

God—the GREAT I AM—  
Having ordained to bring forth His image,  
Through whom the Perfect Man would come,  
By whom evil would be removed from the universe—  
Came—God came to earth.

Jubilant mothers bearing tambourines join Mary on the stage, singing and dancing, after which a group of children.

CHORUS OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

God came at the fullness of time.  
God came as the Perfect Man

To save earth,  
 To save man,  
 To save the universe.  
 God came.

*Children may march down the aisles, if performance is in a sanctuary, and then exit through stage doors. If performance space can accommodate only the stage, they may enter and form an outer circle around the singing and dancing mothers and then all may exit as marked in the score.*

When the celebratory music dies away, mothers and children hug, but then the portentous presence of Satan, who appears suddenly as the trombone sounds, causes them to exit hastily through stage door right.

## TABLEAU II

### Scene 1

#### 1. Evil: The Evidence

*Background is paradise as previously seen in Tableau I, Scene 1.*

**Enter Satan** surreptitiously from stage left, wielding an axe and dragging a rope. He surveys the audience, looks through the gates of paradise, and then seems to beckon someone from stage right.

**Enter Cain and Abel**, whom Satan seems to beckon, from stage right. Each bears an easel on which is mounted a canvas. Each person's painting materials are contained in a portable bag, slung on the shoulder.

They seem happy together. Cain sets up on the left of stage and Abel on the right. Each begins to paint as Satan hovers around.

Presently, Satan, who has been spying on the activity of both, approaches Cain, taps him on the shoulder, and whispers to him while pointing to Abel, who unsuspectingly continues to work. Cain leaves his post to survey Abel's

work and returns very frustrated. It appears Abel's work has been proceeding well while Cain's has not.

As Cain's frustration grows, he repeats this action, whereupon he and Satan confer in whispers. Then, taking a rope from Satan, Cain goes back to the unsuspecting Abel and strangles him. Satan helps Cain drag Abel's body away through stage door left.

### CHORUS

That evil is in the universe  
 Is evidenced by the countless miseries  
 That blight the world:  
 Death and dying,  
 Darkness, depression,  
 Disasters of every stripe;  
 Droughts and decay,  
 Conflict, violence, wars,  
 Corruption...

Corruption of all that is good:  
 Beauty deformed,  
 Peace turns to fear,  
 Joy yields to pain,  
 Health dies in sickness  
 Life gives way to death.

The problem of man is the evidence of evil.  
 When innocent lives die by blazing guns,  
 When innocent lives die in quakes and floods,  
 When sister murders sister,  
 Brother slays brother,  
 Husband kills wife,  
 Wife poisons the husband,  
 And daughter kills mother,  
 Or mother the daughter,  
 And father the son,  
 Even son the father.

This is the evidence of evil..  
 This is the evidence of evil.

## Scene 2

### 2. Evil: The Effect

As the chorus sings...

#### CHORUS

Hear their cry...

The hungry and the thirsty,  
The poor and destitute,  
Crushed by the cares of life,  
Crushed by the systems of man,  
Trapped by injustice and inequality.

Hear their cry....

They are slaves to evil.  
They are crushed by evil.  
They are victims of evil.

...stragglers of the destitute  
come on stage:

*Vagabonds, addicts, prostitutes, homeless children,  
traumatized ex-soldiers, the blind, the crippled, very sick  
persons borne on stretchers, hopeless mothers, race-rejects,  
&c.*

The effort of coming on stage seems to exhaust them and  
they scatter variously on the stage.

**Enter John the Baptist.**

### 3. If They Would Listen

#### JOHN THE BAPTIST

*But if only they would listen...*

*Listen with the inner ear of the heart,  
Listen with the discerning ear of the spirit,  
They would hear the voice of Him*

*Who has come—  
The Perfect Man  
THE GREAT I AM.*

## CHORUS

Hear their cry...

## 4. Kyrie Eleison

## Multitude

Kyrie eleison.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

Lift up your eyes to the hill;  
Behold, your redeemer comes.

## TABLEAU III

### Processional

## 1. Advent of the Redeemer

#### **Lift Up Your Heads, O Ye Gates** (*Psalms 24: 7-10 KJV*)

## CHORUS

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;  
And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?  
The LORD strong and mighty,  
The LORD mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;  
And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?  
The LORD of hosts,  
He is the King of glory.

Who is this King of glory?  
The Perfect Man,  
THE GREAT I AM,  
He is the King of glory.

Enter Jesus and his disciples, processing down the aisles (if the performance space allows it).

*Should the performance space not allow aisle-procession, Jesus should begin to interact with the destitute right away, comforting and ministering to them.*

*The destitute should variously gravitate to the banner (borne by each disciple) that best describes their need. The banners are of the indicated colors and display these Phrases.*

I AM:	Purple	Peter
THE BREAD OF LIFE	Orange	James
THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD	Yellow	John
THE DOOR	Grey	Matthew
THE GOOD SHEPHERD	Brown	Andrew
THE RESURRECTION	Green	Philip
THE WAY & THE TRUTH	Indigo	Nathanael
THE TRUE VINE	Burgundy	Simon the Zealot
THE DESCENDANT OF EVE	Violet	Jude
THE PERFECT MAN	Black	Thomas
THE FOUNT OF PEACE	White	James the Less
THE FIRST & LAST	Red	Judas

*The banners should be arrayed at the back of the stage, with the I AM banner in the center. The disciples may be costumed each in the color of his banner.*

## **2. I Am: The Bread Of Life** *(John 6:35 ESV)*

Jesus

**I am the bread of life;  
Whoever comes to me  
Shall not hunger,  
And whoever believes in me  
Shall not thirst.**

When Jesus reveals his title, the multitude surges toward him. When he begins to sing, the restive crowd becomes calm and listens in awe.

**(Orchestral Interlude)**

Jesus begins to heal the sick:

*A very sick person on a stretcher is healed. He celebrates with the friends who brought him. Others are amazed. Jesus touches the eyes of a blind man, who begins to see hazily and then clearly. He too rejoices as others are amazed.*

*A cripple is healed. He throws away his crutches and dances around.*

*Mothers bring their children to be blessed.*

*A traumatized person, restrained by friends, is touched and regains his senses.*

*The disciples bar a prostitute from approaching, but Jesus beckons her and blesses her; she weeps in gratitude, &c.*

### 3. Mercy of the Redeemer

**Enter Eve**, now as Mary Magdalene. She tells the audience about Jesus' deeds as Jesus continues his ministrations to the crowd.

#### MARY MAGDALENE

When Jesus was teaching these things,  
The multitude gathered to hear Him,  
And He took compassion on them  
And healed their sick.  
But the people became  
Hungry,  
Thirsty  
And famished.  
Then His helpers said to Him:

Jesus is interrupted by the disciples who are very concerned about the crowd grown weary from hunger and thirst.

## CHORUS OF DISCIPLES

Teacher, see  
The people are hungry, very hungry,  
But they have no food to eat.

A boy, bearing five loaves and two fish, approaches Mary. Mary takes the boy to Jesus, who receives the loaves and fish. Mary then resumes her narrative.

## MARY MAGDALENE

Then Jesus took five loaves of bread  
And two fish that a boy had brought.  
When he prayed and blessed the loaves of bread and fish  
A miracle happened:  
His helpers broke the bread,  
Broke the fish,  
Passed around the bread,  
Passed around the fish,  
And everyone received,  
And received again...  
And received again...  
And received again,  
Till everyone was full.  
Yet the bread remained,  
And the fish remained.

*(The miracle of the loaves is symbolic of the Eucharist. As the disciples pass the broken bread around, the music to "...and every one received and received again..." may repeat as many times as required. Members of the crowd may receive a second [and even a third] helping to illustrate the point.)*

In a liturgical setting, a full dramatization of Eucharist might be enacted here. For this, follow the description in the Gospel of Matthew 26:26-28 (NIV):

*"...Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'  
Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins...'"*

The contented crowd listens attentively and with awe as Jesus restates his title as the Bread of Life.

#### 4. I am the Bread of Life (Reprise)

JESUS

I am the bread of life;  
Whoever comes to me  
Shall not hunger,  
And whoever believes in me  
Shall not thirst.

The crowd, including Jesus and his disciples, disperses as Mary reflects devotionally on the event.

#### 5. Response

**Break Thou The Bread of Life** (*Mary Lathbury, 1877, alt.*)

MARY MAGDALENE

Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,  
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;  
Beyond the (cares of life) I seek Thee, Lord;  
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!

Bless Thou the (the word of truth), dear Lord, to me,  
As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;  
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;  
And I shall find my peace, my all in all.

#### **Exit Mary Magdalene.**

Background is the Sea of Galilee. Twilight, but shadows gather quickly. At first the sea is calm, but a storm builds and rages for a while and then dissipates.

#### 6. Interlude (The Storm)

*Curtain*

## TABLEAU IV

*Curtain rises*

### Scene 1

#### 1. The Denial

A gallery, displayed in which these works:

FREEDOM TO BELIEVE  
 FREEDOM TO CHOOSE  
 FREEDOM OF SPEECH  
 THE AFTER LIFE?  
 THE STRAIT GATE /|\ BROAD ROAD TO 4 FREEDOMS  
 THE GREAT DENIAL/|\GREAT CONSCIOUSNESS  
 THERE IS NO GOD /|\ THE META-TRUTH

The last is prominent and occupies the most eminent place.

**A man** surveys the gallery and seems to get drawn to the prominent painting.

**Enter Eve**, now as a **Modern Woman**, as the music begins.

She too surveys the gallery, and like the man, she is drawn to the prominent painting. It seems to make her uneasy.

**Enter a group of soldiers** from stage right, marching in the manner of a *stechmarsch*: The left arm of each is bent and held stationary at the chest while the right arm swings laterally leftward and rightward.

On reaching the far-side of the stage, a section of the soldiers peels away and lines up alongside the left end of the stage, marching in place while the remaining section about-turns and heads to the other end of the stage, lining up likewise. The soldiers freeze in place as marked in the music.

The Man-in-the-Gallery, an apparent agnostic, reflects on the subject of the prominent painting.

THE MAN-IN-THE-GALLERY

If God did create the universe...

Eve interjects,

MODERN WOMAN

But who put in place the first particle  
That flamed brilliantly  
When the forms of the universe began?

They join together in this reflection.

THE MAN-IN-THE-GALLERY

Is there God...  
Is there God?

MODERN WOMAN

There is God...  
There is God...  
God created the universe.

BOTH

And if God did create the universe,  
How sad it is that humanity denies this.  
How sad it is that the multitudes are blind to this.  
How sad it is.

The frozen soldiers come to life like automatons and, absent-mindedly, sing—right arms held straight forward and tending upward—of how creation is the handiwork of an "Almighty Hand."

CHORUS OF SOLDIERS (*Text, Joseph Addison, 1712*)

The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great Original proclaim.  
Th' unwearied Sun from day to day  
Does his Creator's power display;  
And publishes to every land  
The work of an Almighty hand.

What though in solemn silence all  
 Move round the dark terrestrial ball;  
 What though nor real voice nor sound  
 Amidst their radiant orbs be found?  
 In Reason's ear they all rejoice,  
 And utter forth a glorious voice;  
 For ever singing as they shine,  
 'The Hand that made us is divine.'

Eve and the man resume their reflection.

#### MODERN WOMAN & THE MAN-IN-THE-GALLERY

And if God did create the universe,  
     How sad it is that humanity denies this.  
     How sad it is that the multitudes are blind to this.  
     How sad it is.

**John the Baptist enters** the gallery as the soldiers again come to life, singing about how the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who deny God.

#### CHORUS OF SOLDIERS

The god of this age, that rebellious spirit, Lucifer,  
 Whom now we know as Satan,  
 Has blinded the minds of those who deny God—  
 The multitudes  
 Who refuse to give Him glory.

John the Baptist reflects on the effect of this.

#### JOHN THE BAPTIST

This is why they wallow in darkness,  
     And many of them, though brilliant,  
     Are very empty inside (*With Chorus*).  
     And many of them, though wealthy,  
     Lack inward peace (*With Chorus*).  
 Many are inwardly torn apart—they are depressed,  
 And they need help, but there is no help.

He admonishes all to listen for "the voice of him who has come."

## 2. If They Would Listen

JOHN THE BAPTIST

*But if only they would listen...*

*Listen with the inner ear of the heart,  
Listen with the discerning ear of the spirit,  
They would hear the voice of Him*

*Who has come—*

*The Perfect Man*

THE GREAT I AM.

*If they would listen,*

*They'd hear him say:*

**Enter Jesus** from stage left. He announces that he is the light of the world. The soldiers seem oblivious to this message.

## 3. I Am: the Light of the World (*John 8:12 ESV*)

JESUS

**I am the light of the world.**

**Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,**

**But will have the light of life.**

**Exit Jesus**

## Scene 2

*Sitting area of the gallery, foreground of the stage.*

**Eve and the Man-in-the-Gallery** sit together.

She tells him the story of the origin of evil.

## 4. Rebellion

MODERN WOMAN

There was a time,

Before the earth was made.

Evil, the force of negation,

Evil, the antithesis of goodness and life,

was sealed beyond the universe, God's created order.

*(With Chorus)*

But when that rebellious spirit, Lucifer,  
Whom now we know as Satan,  
Aspired to scale the stars,  
To ascend to the throne of God  
And climb above all things,

**Satan rushes in from stage right** as though being chased, as she tells the story of his fall from heaven. He joins the rank of soldiers on stage right, assuming a position of leadership.

### CHORUS

By this deed was the seed of evil sown  
In heaven, the city of God.

Then did God's judgment come,  
And Satan was thrown from heaven,  
Together with the spirits that rebelled with him.  
Down into darkness they were hurled,  
Down to the depth of hell,  
That place where evil makes its home.

She tells about the creation of man; **Jesus and his disciples enter** from stage left. Jesus holds a Crossier, the insignia of which is a lamb. The soldiers at this side of the stage cede their turf to join Satan and the other soldiers at the other end.

### MODERN WOMAN

And when God had brought forth  
The image of the Perfect Man,  
Together with his dwelling place,  
And all the things to attend to his needs;  
That crafty spirit,  
Coming from hell, his home,  
Brought deception and evil to man and his world.

When man was deceived,  
Evil entered our world—  
Death, toil, misery, disease, disaster.  
These came to this world by Satan  
Through the Door of Deception.

As she tells of how evil entered the world through Satan, the soldiers suddenly seem to lose control of their senses and begin a weird dance in the manner of *Danse Macabre*.

## 5. Dance of Delusion

### CHORUS OF WORSHIPPERS

Blindly the multitudes grope.

On the other end of the stage, Jesus and his disciples watch resolutely.

After a while soldiers begin to fall and lie supine, unconscious. Satan stands in the midst of them arms upraised.

Then gradually, one after another, they come to life. Some dance around Satan, some crawl, some drag themselves in different manners.

Other worshippers enter from stage right bearing ritual objects. They too dance around Satan. One of Jesus' disciples leaves his side and joins the dance.

### CHORUS OF WORSHIPPERS

Every soul, searching for meaning.

Every soul, asking why.

Every soul, hoping for life after death.

The worshippers grow increasingly wild and frustrated and begin to ask, "why?" They fall down dejected and hopeless while Satan urges them to continue.

### Modern Woman

"Is there life after death?"

### CHORUS OF WORSHIPPERS

Every soul asks.

### Modern Woman

Every soul hopes for life...

CHORUS OF WORSHIPPERS

...Hopes for life, life after death.  
Is there life after death?  
Blindly the multitudes grope.

Eve tells them that there is hope.

Modern Woman

But there is life.  
There is hope.  
For the door of life is already open.

Jesus approaches the worshippers, and Satan, apparently afraid, cowers back toward the wall of stage right.

**6. I AM: the Door of Life** (*John 10: 9 ESV*)

JESUS

**I am the door.  
If anyone enters by me,  
He will be saved,  
And will go in and out,  
And find pasture.**

When Jesus declares that he is the door, the worshippers fall down at his feet. He points to the door of stage left. His disciples help usher the relieved worshippers through this door.

The disciple who had joined the worshippers goes to Satan's side. A few of the soldiers refuse Jesus' offer and join Satan and the disloyal disciple.

Jesus and the disciples resume their place at the left end of the stage.

### Scene 3

*The gallery still.*

Eve resumes her narrative to the Man-in-the-Gallery about origins.

#### 7. Antipodes

##### MODERN WOMAN

When forms were made,  
They brought forth their antithesis.  
This is what we call evil—  
The force that seeks to destroy everything.

But before forms were made,  
Before the universe came to be,  
God had purposed a solution for evil—  
This negating force.

So, just as Lucifer is the face of evil,  
The agent of evil;  
Likewise, the Perfect Man, the GREAT I AM,  
Is the agent of salvation.

Through Him,  
Evil is removed from the heart,  
Removed from the mind,  
Removed from the spirit.

Through Him,  
Evil will be removed from the universe,  
At the end of time.

Since God created the universe,  
God purposed,  
Even before its creation,  
To take responsibility for the antithesis of being,  
Which is evil.

This is the reason God died.  
A good shepherd dies for his sheep.  
God died for the universe He made.  
This is the reason God is worthy of praise...  
God is worthy of praise.

**Enter a group of women (formerly Chorus of Mothers) and their children (formerly Chorus of Children)** from stage right and take up a station toward the middle of the stage but tending rightward.

For God died for the world he made.  
 God died for earth and heaven.  
 God died for you and me.

**Two musicians come on stage** (follow the cue in the score), a flautist and a violist. They affirm Eve's narrative through their music.

Just as a good shepherd dies for his sheep,  
 Likewise, God died for the universe He made,  
 So that evil might not rule for ever.  
 God is a good shepherd.  
 God is the good shepherd.

Jesus advances to the middle of the stage and declares that he is the Good Shepherd.

### **8. The Good Shepherd** (*John 10:11, 14 ESV*)

**I am the good shepherd.  
 The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.**

**I am the good shepherd.  
 I know my own and my own know me,  
 Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;  
 And I lay down my life for the sheep.**

The disciples take up a station parallel to the mothers and children. Both groups declare that The LORD is their shepherd.

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES, MOTHERS, CHILDREN (*Psalm 23, KJV*)

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul:

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through  
the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence  
of mine enemies:  
Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth  
over.

**A larger chorus** joins them to proclaim a benediction.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house  
of the LORD forever.

As the chorus sings the benediction, the disloyal disciple is seen conferring with Satan; he receives something in a pouch from the latter, after which he disappears through **exit right**.

The disloyal disciple returns with soldiers, who attack Jesus and his disciples. Jesus is captured; mothers and children run affrighted from the stage, pursued by soldiers. The disciples take flight as well.

**Eve and the Man-in-the-Gallery** surreptitiously leave the stage.

## 9. Interlude (Discipuli Agonistes)

As the music plays, a few disciples, who apparently have eluded the soldiers and yet are still running for their lives, cross the stage from one exit to the other, each to his own safety.

**Enter Peter**, who throws himself to the ground, greatly dejected and agitated. He weeps in agony until the appearance of The Evangelist.

**Enter John the Baptist, now as Evangelist**, announcing that the Lord has ascended on high.

JOHN THE EVANGELIST  
 God has ascended on high,  
 The LORD with the blasts of the trumpet.

When Peter hears this, he is revived and rejoices.

**A group of worshipers enter (formerly Chorus of Mothers and Chorus of Children).**

**Exit Peter**, who returns with the other disciples. **Eve, now as Mary**, is among them.

*(Each of these persons may bear his or her own folding chair for ease of transition. Stage hands may set up a lectern for the Evangelist in the center of the stage.)*

## TABLEAU V

### Scene

*A church service*

John the Baptist, now as Evangelist, delivers a homily, which is in two parts:

First, a précis of God's redemptive work: in short, concise soteriology.

Second, an outline of things to come: destruction of current forms and their rebirth; death of all and resurrection to life and judgment: in short, eschatology.

## 1. Homily of John

### JOHN THE EVANGELIST

At the fullness of time,  
God came and died for the universe,  
For the earth and man.

By His blood,  
Everything that ever was made  
Will be saved from evil.

God's blood is the answer to evil.  
God's death is the answer to evil.

But every soul  
Must receive the gift of His blood.  
Those who refuse this gift  
Will be destroyed by evil,  
At the end of time.

When the end will come,  
This order—this universe—  
Will be burnt by a mighty fire.

And from the ashes of the old things,  
A new heaven and earth will be born—  
A new place secured from evil,  
Where perfection shall reign forever.

This is why evil will have no place in this new order.  
Therefore,  
Only those sprinkled by God's blood  
Will enter this place.

When the end shall come,  
When the old order shall have been destroyed,  
A trumpet will sound,  
And those who received God's gift of His cleansing blood  
In the old order, they will arise.

Thus, it is written:

*The trumpet shall sound,  
And the dead shall be raised incorruptible.  
For this corruptible must put on incorruption.  
And this mortal must put on immortality  
(1 Corinthians 15: 52-35 KJV).*

Every soul on earth,  
Hear this call.  
Heed this message.

Receive God's gift,  
The gift of His blood,  
The gift of His cleansing.

When the new order shall come forth,  
And the dead shall arise,  
Only those cleansed by God's blood,  
Those who received his gift  
Shall enter the new world.

The rest shall sink down to hell,  
The place of imperfection,  
Of deformation,  
of agony, misery, pain.

Therefore,  
Hear God's voice saying:

As the worshippers pray in different postures of devotion,  
the risen Jesus appears in their midst and proclaims that  
he is "the resurrection and the life."

## **2. I AM: The Resurrection** (*John 11: 25 ESV*)

**I am the resurrection and the life.  
Whoever believes in me,  
Though he die,  
Yet shall he live,  
And everyone who lives and believes in me  
Shall never die.**

He withdraws, and the Evangelist urges the worshippers "to  
arise in the strength of Lord," to "go and make disciples of  
all nations...." He blesses and commissions them to leave.

## **3. Commission**

JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Arise, you blessed of the Lord.

Go forth in the strength of His might (*Ephesian 6:10 ASV*).

Declare the truth of His word, and with great joy  
proclaim the news of His resurrection.

Go to all nations; make disciples of all people.  
And teach them the Lord's commandments.  
Baptize them in the name of the Father and  
of the Son, and of the Spirit (*Matthew 28: 19*).

And the Lord will bless you; He will keep you;  
He will shine His countenance upon you and  
give you peace (*Numbers 6:24-26*).

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the Love of God, and the fellowship of the  
Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever.  
Amen (*2 Corinthians 13:14*).

## TABLEAU VI

### Scene 1

*As previous*

Worshippers (the disciples and John the Evangelist) recess  
from worship proclaiming God as the only way for salvation.

#### 1. Evangelium

##### CHORUS OF WORSHIPPERS

There is no other way for salvation,  
Except through God alone (*Acts 4:12*).

Prophets cannot save.  
Teachers cannot save.  
Mystics cannot save.  
Good works cannot save.

Only God can rescue man,  
Only God can rescue you from evil,

Through the blood he shed.

For without the shedding of God's blood,  
There is no salvation (*Hebrews 9:22*).

But God has already died.  
He is the way.  
He is the truth.  
He is the life (*John 14:6*).

They bear the banners brought to the stage in Tableau III, Scene 1. The Evangelist bears the one brought in by Judas, who no longer is among the disciples.

*Aisle recession is preferred where possible. If the performance space does not allow aisle recession, the disciples should go around the stage in step with the music, bearing the banners, and then exit at the end of the song.*

Mothers and children remain on stage singing the same song. They exit at the end of the song.

## **Scene 2**

Enter peoples of the nations, ordinary folk going about their daily work.

### **2. Their Voice Has Gone Out**

#### **CHORUS**

Their voice has gone out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world (*Psalms 19:4 KJV*).  
There is no other way for salvation,  
Except through God alone.

The disciples, Mary, a few of the mothers, and the Evangelist enter and begin to communicate their message to the peoples as the chorus sings. The manner of their communication is rather tête-à-tête than otherwise.

Enter Jesus in deep conversation with two people.

The disciples, Mary, mothers, and the Evangelist join together to urge the peoples of the nations to "listen with the inner ear of the heart" to "hear the voice of God who has come: The Perfect Man, The Great I AM."

### 3. If You Would Listen

#### CHORUS OF EVANGELISTS

*If you would listen,  
 Listen with the inner ear of the heart,  
 Listen with the discerning ear of the spirit,  
 You would hear the voice of God  
 Who has come—  
 The Perfect Man  
 The GREAT I AM.  
 If you would listen,  
 You would hear Him say:*

Jesus and the two men take a break from their journey. One of them produces a loaf of bread from his bag and hands it to Jesus. When Jesus breaks the bread after blessing it, the men appear to experience an epiphany, as likewise the peoples of the nations.

Jesus then explains to them that he is "the way, the truth and the life." The two men, the evangelists, and the peoples of the nations all listen attentively to Jesus.

#### 4. I AM: The Way *(John 14:6)*

**JESUS**  
**I am the way,**  
**And the truth,**  
**And the life.**  
**No one comes to the Father**  
**Except through me.**

## TABLEAU VII

### **Scene**

*As previous*

#### **1. Beatification (Interlude)**

As the people watch from previous, Jesus' countenance changes, and circummured by refulgent light, his form disappears. They are both awed and saddened.

Agitated, the people appeal to the disciples for both explanation and comfort. The disciples are seen making gestures of explanation, but they too look rather confused.

One after the other, the disciples experience what happened to Jesus, although with less intensity, until all the disciples are gone and the people are left forlorn. Even John the Evangelist is borne away by two officious-looking men.

**John returns again** as the Baptist and warns the people about days to come.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

In the end time,

Many people will come deceiving many,

Saying:

#### **2. Deceivers**

**Enter three people.**

The first from stage left conducts himself with a walking stick, but its use is rather to convey status. His gait is affected, and he carries himself with an exaggerated air of culture. There is a perpetual smirk on his face, while his general countenance bespeaks self-assured cleverness. He walks around the stage as he delivers his thesis.

The second from left is rather severe, and his manners are markedly curt and nominal. A general air of aloofness accompanies him. He fixes himself in the foreground of stage right and delivers his message with great force.

The third is a woman who enters from stage right. She is staid and somewhat mysterious. She sits in a quasi-lotus position and calmly declaims her line.

### DECEIVERS

There is no God.  
I know the way to life.  
I have the secret of life.

Their message attracts the people; some begin to follow the first man, copying his manners.

Others gravitate to the mysterious woman and pose like her.

Still others are curious about the second man and listen intently to him; some even fix their eyes to the distance, just like the man.

The three people begin to confer with the followers they have gained. But when John the Baptist begins to sing, a number of the deceived hesitate, forsake their deceivers, and come to John's side; a few exit with the three people.

### JOHN THE BAPTIST

Many will deceive  
And be deceived.

Therefore beware:

There is no life without God.  
Outside of God is evil and death.  
Only in God is life and perfection.  
In Him alone is goodness and life.  
He is the life by which you can live.  
He is the life through which you can flourish.

**Enter Mary, who** stands by John the Baptist's side, supporting his message with her own.

### MARY

*If you would listen,  
Listen with the inner ear of the heart,  
Listen with the discerning ear of the spirit,  
You would hear the voice of God  
Who has come—  
The Perfect Man  
The GREAT I AM.*

*If you would listen,  
You would hear Him say:*

**Jesus appears** at the door, stage left. As he sings, an angel appears from the other end of the stage, bearing crowns. The beatified disciples emerge one after the other, and each is adorned with a crown.

**3. I AM: The True Vine** (*John 15:1-6, ESV*)

JESUS  
I am the true vine,  
And my Father is the vinedresser.  
Abide in me.

If anyone does not abide in me,  
He is thrown away like a branch  
And withers;  
And the branches are gathered,  
Thrown into the fire,  
And burned.  
Abide in me.

Then all at once, heavenly creatures appear and, together with the disciples, fall down and worship the glorified Jesus. They enquire of him about the time of the end.

**4. Worthy Are You, O Lord**

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES AND HEAVENLY CREATURES

Worthy are you, o Lord, to receive  
Power, riches, wisdom, strength,  
Honor, glory and blessing (*Revelation 5:12, KJV*).

For you have redeemed unto God  
the saints from all peoples (*Revelation 5:9*).

But how long? How long, Lord,  
Until the end shall come? (*Revelation 6:10*)

Jesus pronounces blessings on those who mourn and on those "who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

## 5. Blessed Are Those...

JESUS

Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are those who are persecuted  
for righteousness' sake, for theirs is  
the kingdom of heaven. (*Matthew 5:4,10, ESV*)

## 6. Interlude (Triumph of the Saints)

Angels of commanding visage appear at the sound of the trumpet.

They form a guard of honor, and Jesus, with the triumphant disciples in his train, leads them through stage door right. The angels follow.

The people, as though recovering from a vision, pray that they would be kept by the love of the Lord until the end.

## 7. Keep Us By Your Love

CHORUS

Keep us by your love, o Lord, until the end.  
Keep us grafted firmly in the vine.  
For in the strength of this love divine  
We'll stand in the face of deadly forces that offend.

For those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion,  
Which cannot be shaken but endures forevermore.  
(*Psalms 125:1, NIV*).

THE END

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