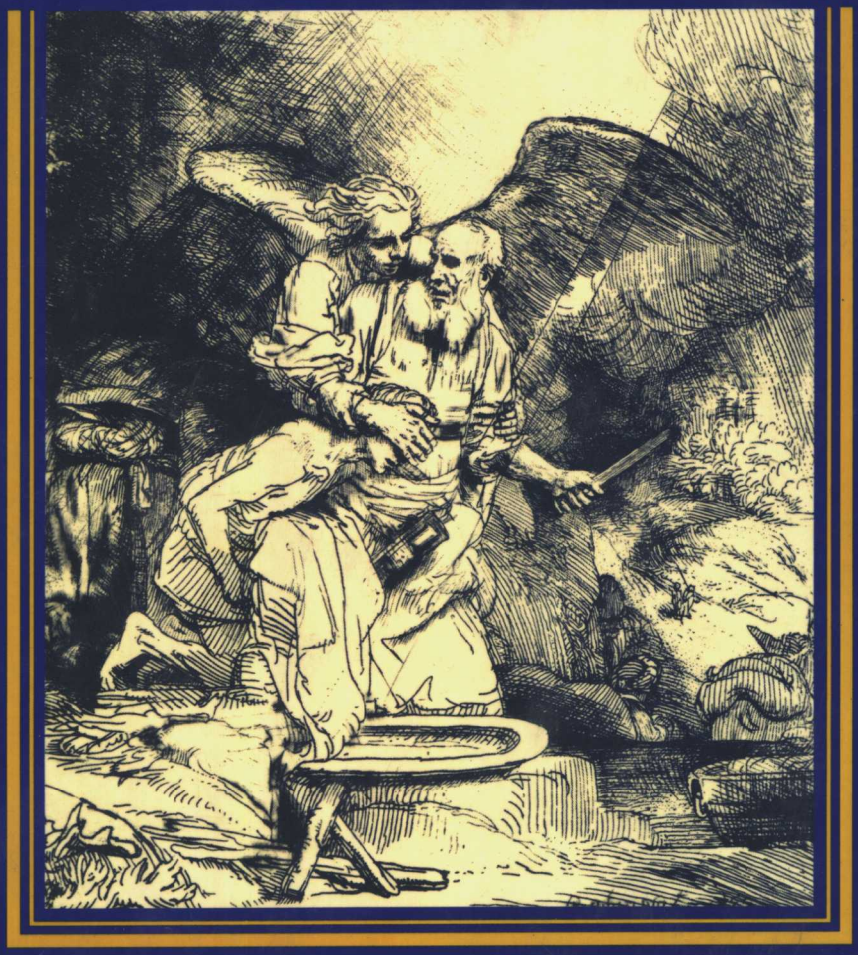
FRITS NOSKE

SAINTS & SINNERS

The Latin Musical Dialogue in the Seventeenth Century



Saints and Sinners

The Latin Musical Dialogue in the Seventeenth Century

FRITS NOSKE

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For Michael Talbot
in friendship and gratitude

PREFACE

This book deals with a musical genre that has never been the object of comprehensive scholarly treatment. When, about eight years ago, I was doing research on Latin sacred music in the Dutch Republic, I came across a dozen pieces entitled *Dialogus* which aroused my interest. Consequently, I looked for literature on this type of composition. To my great astonishment, I found only a single, pioneering, article written by Howard Smither in 1967. This discussed the Latin dialogue in Italy during the first three decades of the seventeenth century. As for the dialogue repertory after 1630, this was completely *terra incognita*.

My project to write a study about this apparently neglected musical genre entailed extensive research, in particular in Italy, the country which produced about 90 per cent of the entire repertory. Since only relatively few dialogues exist in a modern edition, the greater part of the works discussed in this book had to be transcribed from the original sources, a tiresome but also rewarding business. A transcriber follows the compositional process closely and quite often discovers details which would remain concealed to anyone studying a score ready for use. The total number of dialogues that were available to me runs to more than 250—quite sufficient for a comprehensive description of the genre. While it is possible that important individual works have escaped my attention, it seems unlikely that these would affect the overall historical picture.

The division of the material offered some problems. The more I became familiar with the genre, the less the obvious chronological treatment, stressing the purely musical development at the expense of other characteristics, proved satisfactory. After considerable deliberation, I decided to divide the Italian repertory on the basis of subject-matter (biblical and non-biblical, with subdivisions). This created the need to write an introductory chapter about the genre's general aspects, musical as well as extra-musical. Because of the relatively small number of dialogues written outside Italy, these have been grouped according to their country of origin. Finally, a detailed analysis of six dialogues dealing with the subject of the Sacrifice of Abraham is given in Chapter 5. Taken together, these works reflect more or less the genre's development during the seventeenth century.

An interesting by-product of this study was the discovery of the remarkable compositional qualities of a few so-called minor masters such as Chiara Margarita Cozzolani, Alessandro Della Ciaia, and Giovanni Antonio Grossi. In addition, little-known aspects of the output of more famous figures are brought to light. For instance: while Giovanni Legrenzi's high reputation in the fields of opera and instrumental music is common knowledge, it now appears that as a

young man he excelled in the writings of sacred works. These four composers, together with six others, are represented with transcribed dialogues in Part Two of this volume, an indispensable complement to the discussion of the repertory in Part One.

The following list of friends, colleagues, and other persons to whom I am indebted for information and help is of considerable length even though incomplete. Although I have limited myself to a rather dry enumeration, I recognize with gratitude that in many cases the simple mention of a name hides generous assistance in solving problems of various kinds.

As with my previous books on Sweelinck and the Dutch motet I owe a great debt to the dedicatee of this study, Michael Talbot (Liverpool). His correction of my English was as usual accompanied by valuable critical remarks. Graham Dixon (London), Jerome Roche (Durham), and Jonathan Wainwright (Oxford) most graciously gave me extensive bibliographical information. The same is true of Gunther Morche (Heidelberg) and Barbara Przybyszewska-Jarmińska (Warsaw), both of whom sent me in addition photocopies of their transcriptions of several works. Among other colleagues who furnished data and documents are Zygmunt Szweykowsky (Cracow), Iginio Ettore (Lecce), Andrew Jones (Cambridge), Robert Kendrick (New York), and Günther Massenkeil (Bonn). My sojourn in the Collegio Internazionale dei Sacerdoti del Sacro Cuore, both in Bologna and in Rome, was made possible by the late Monsignore Raffaele Forni (Lugano). Nor did I lack help in my local neighbourhood: Padre Ugo Orelli (Convento Capuccini, Faido) most kindly lent me for a long time a much-needed seventeenth-century *Concordantia bibliorum*, and I owe to Palma Forni (Villa Bedretto) precious information about locally venerated saints in Ticino and northern Lombardy. The number of librarians, archivists, and other scholars who gave me assistance far beyond what may reasonably be expected includes Giorgio Piombini (Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna), Lieuwe Tamminga (Archivio di San Petronio, Bologna), David Bryant (Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice), Alessandro Picchi (Archivio del Duomo, Como), Norbert Dubowy (Istituto Storico Germanico, Rome), Gertraut Haberkamp (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich), and the assistant archivist of the Fabbrica del Duomo in Milan, who wishes to remain anonymous. Finally I must mention with special gratitude the undeniable expert in the field of the sacred dialogue, Howard Smither (Chapel Hill, NC), who read part of the manuscript and offered critical observations.

This book is but a first step towards a broader knowledge about an important aspect of seventeenth-century sacred music. Much remains to be done, particularly in regard to the paraliturgical, religious, and social functions of the Latin dialogue. I cherish the hope that my effort will result in further studies answering questions that are still unresolved.

Frits R. Noske

Airolo (Ticino)
May 1991

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PART ONE

Historical and Analytical Observations

1

General Aspects

The Role Dialogue

The musical genre discussed in this book is that of the Latin role dialogue, a sung conversation on a sacred subject involving two or more characters, each of whom is represented by a single voice. Within this concept ensembles are employed—at least in principle—in a strictly realistic manner to convey the utterances of groups of characters. Role dialogues should be distinguished from other types, such as the merely verbal dialogue set to music in a manner which does not differentiate between the individual characters, or the instrumental dialogue, which, although presenting 'roles', lacks the characters. These genres are excluded from the present study, and the same is true of the 'solo' dialogue, a composition in which a single voice switches from one character to another.[1]

Thus, the role dialogue (henceforth simply called 'dialogue') is written, verbally as well as musically, in direct speech. The characters exchange statements or questions and answers, and eventually arrive at an understanding or at least a clarification of the situation. However, since the subject-matter is often based on a scriptural story or episode, the text may also contain portions written in indirect speech, sometimes indispensable for the comprehension of the sequence of events. These fragments are assigned either to a solo voice, which adopts a narrative role, detached from those of the characters involved in the scene, or to an ensemble, ranging in size from two to eight voices and representing an individual narrator. Both procedures can be applied within a single work.[2] A feature common to the greater part of this repertory is the moralizing statement or 'Alleluia' that forms the concluding section of the composition. Here the characters step out of their roles and address themselves directly to the listener. As with the set words of a group of persons and the ensembles representing the narrator, such a *conclusio* can provide a welcome contrast to the previous unrelieved alternation of solo passages, which is inherent in the genre. Moreover, it supplied a musical climax to the composition, the full complement of voices and instruments being involved.

[1] See, for instance, G. Carissimi, 'Lucifer caelestis olim'.

[2] The application of this procedure is found in several dialogues by L. Ratti, *Sacrae modulationes* (Venice, 1628), and P. Quagliati, *Motetti e dialoghi concertati, libro secondo* (Rome, 1627). Three of Ratti's dialogues are available in a modern edition.

A small number of dialogues do not conform to the stated criteria. They belong to two different types. First, there is the non-conversational dialogue, in which the characters abstain from reacting to each other's words; instead, they express alternately their views and feelings about the subject-matter, either individually or collectively. This kind of composition represents, so to speak, the musical counterpart of a *tableau vivant*, lacking any narrative or dramatic development.[3] The second type is that of the 'aborted' dialogue, a piece which opens with a conversational section but subsequently turns into a motet, the words being common to all the voices. It may be assumed that such anticlimactic texts were penned by authors who were prepared to sacrifice a balanced form for the sake of the content.[4]

Like opera, the dialogue owes its existence to the birth of monody in the last years of the sixteenth century. Although as a whole a dialogue cannot be a monodic composition, the alternation of solo voices presupposes the use of this new medium. Another precondition was the emergence of the *stile concertato*. Unlike the motet, which in principle could also be set in the *stile antico*, the dialogue was invariably written as a *concertato*, a term that implies some or all of the following characteristics: the interplay of voices with or without instruments; non-overlapping cadences; the polarity of the outer voices; the affective representation of words; a wide melodic range (especially in the vocal bass parts); free declamation alternating with dance-like rhythms; and the use of the thorough-bass as a *fondamento*. The application of these devices not only heightened the dramatic impact but also prevented the dialogue from adopting stereotyped schemes such as one encounters in opera, cantata, and various instrumental genres from the mid-century onwards.

The Religious Function

Why did composers write dialogues? There may be more than one answer to this question, but I believe that the main driving force was their endeavour to replace the past by the present. The textual subjects are either precisely fixed in time but very remote (stories and episodes from the Bible; hagiography) or timeless (abstract moralizing texts). In either case, a merely descriptive mode of presentation would fail to draw the listener into the scene; the temporal distance or the abstract content forms a psychological barrier. If, however, the scene is 'enacted' instead of related, remoteness and abstractness are transcended and

[3] An example of this type is Domenico Mazzocchi's *Dialogo del'Apocalisse*.

[4] An example of an aborted dialogue is found in the motet collection *Encomia sacra musice decantanda*, Op. 6, by the Dutch Carmelite friar Benedictus a Sancto Josepho (Utrecht, 1683). This is 'Audite virgines', which opens with an arresting exchange of speech between Jesus and two virgins, but then turns into a lyrical description by all three voices of the joyful unification with Christ, including an allusion to St Barbara. Unlike Mazzocchi (see n. 3), Benedictus did not call his composition a dialogue.

the desired effect is produced more easily. An analogous procedure is found in eighteenth-century epistolary fiction. In the novels of Richardson, Fanny Burney, and Laclos it is not only the addressee who receives the letter but also the reader; he or she gains the impression that the events are taking place here and now. In more or less the same way, the person listening to a dialogue feels that somehow the 'actors' are addressing him or her as well as each other.

Throughout the ages dialogued texts have served instructional and educational purposes. Philosophers from Plato onwards presented their ideas in the form of arguments and counter-arguments assigned to different persons. The same is true of instruction on a lower level. As late as the seventeenth century, schoolbooks were often styled as extended dialogues between master and pupil. Since the Latin musical dialogue deals with sacred subjects, the Church and various religious orders accepted the cultivation of the genre, not least because of its educational and edifying character. This raises another question: what, exactly, was the function of the dialogue within the ambit of the Church?

Textbooks dealing with the history of music rarely mention the seventeenth-century dialogue. This may be the reason why an unhappily phrased statement by Manfred Bukofzer has carried more weight than it deserves. His assertion that 'Latin dialogues . . . are strictly liturgical' is misleading indeed, especially because of the inclusion of the word 'strictly'.[5] The (perhaps unintended) implication is that dialogue texts belong to the official and universal Roman liturgy. In this sense Bukofzer's statement is decidedly wrong. Practically no dialogue was set to a purely liturgical text, and even scriptural fragments involving verbal interchange were only rarely presented without variation, abbreviation, or amplification. If, however, we read the term 'liturgical' as 'used within the liturgy' or, by extension, 'during the service', then Bukofzer is right. Although Latin dialogues may have served private or public devotions, they were written primarily for performance in church. Many of them are explicitly assigned to specific feast-days; this is particularly true of compositions celebrating saints.

So far, it has been possible to determine a position within the church service for only a few dialogues. This is the case with four pieces by Lorenzo Ratti whose titles mention their use as substitutes for the Offertory in the Mass on specified days.[6] To these I can add two more examples: Carlo Milanuzzi wrote dialogues for the feasts of St Charles Borromeo (4 November) and St Stephen (26 December). Both these works ('Deus qui vides' and 'Exaudi, Domine') are entitled 'Introductio ad Vesperas'.

Unfortunately, this is where our knowledge ends. Therefore most of the

[5] M. Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era* (New York, 1947), 124.

[6] See Ratti, *Sacrae modulationes*. The four dialogues are 'Cum descendisset Jesus', 'Erat quidam regulus', 'Homo quidam fecit caenam magnam', and 'Simile est regnum caelorum'. Regina Chauvin's assertion that these pieces 'are the only 17th-century dialogues to have served a liturgical function' is, of course, untenable (*New Grove* (London, 1980), xv. 600).

following observations are necessarily undocumented. Yet they are supported by significant circumstantial evidence.

In the seventeenth century it was customary to use motets or instrumental pieces as substitutes for items from the Proper of the Mass and Vespers. In addition, motets or *sonate da chiesa* could be employed as introductory music. The functional indications heading the above-mentioned compositions by Ratti and Milanuzzi show that dialogues were included in this practice. Apart from the Offertory, the Gradual could be replaced by a motet or a dialogue, and the same is true of the repeats of antiphons after the psalms and the Magnificat at Vespers. This freedom was frowned upon by the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome and even formally condemned during the pontificate of Alexander VII. Two papal decrees, issued in 1657 and 1665, stated that only texts contained in the Missal and Breviary should be sung in the Mass and Divine Office. Moreover, it was strictly forbidden to set texts from liturgical books, the Scriptures, and the church fathers in any way other than their original form.[7] However, despite the fact that the *maestri di cappella* who overstepped these rules were threatened with ignominious dismissal, the decrees were virtually ignored all over Italy. This was even true of a composer who lived and worked in close proximity to the Vatican: Giacomo Carissimi.

Yet in other respects the Church adopted a liberal attitude. It allowed the celebration of local saints, some of whom were hardly known outside their respective cities. This practice, sanctioned by the Council of Trent, weakened to a certain extent the dogma of universality that was strongly favoured during the Age of Absolutism, the more so as these local feasts often assumed greater importance than the feasts celebrated universally in Roman Catholic christendom. Gasparo Casati, a composer working in the north Italian city of Novara, clearly exemplifies this parochial attitude. His dialogue 'Quam laetam hodie videbo hanc civitatem' (1640) was written in honour of the local patron, San Gaudenzio. In this piece a stranger marvels at the festive atmosphere, the joy of the people, and the crowd hurrying to church. Another character, obviously a citizen, explains the reason to him and, at the stranger's request, enumerates all the benefits the saint has conferred on the city. The text includes words like 'Novarienses cives' and 'urbs nostra', stressing the local ambience of the scene.

In addition to works written for services in cathedrals, collegiate churches, and small parish churches, some dialogues were composed for institutions on the periphery of the church, such as seminaries, convents, secondary schools run by religious orders, academies specializing in sacred music, and conservatories or *ospedali*. Very little is known about these practices, but we may safely assume that the extant dialogues by Lorenzo Ratti and Giacomo Carissimi, successive *maestri di cappella* at the famous Roman seminary, the Collegium

[7] See A. V. Jones, *The Motets of Carissimi* (2 vols.; Ann Arbor, Mich., 1982), i. 143 ff.

Germanicum, were intended for the associated and adjacent San Apollinare. The predecessors of these two composers—Agostino Agazzari, Antonio Cifra, Ottavio Catalani, and Annibale Orgas—may also have contributed dialogued music for the rites in this church.

Since a number of composers were monks or nuns, their dialogues may well have served monastic practice. In the case of Chiara Margarita Cozzolani, a Benedictine nun from the Milan convent of Santa Radegonda, this is more than likely. One of her printed collections of sacred music includes a Vesper psalm 'Beatus vir' transformed into a dialogue (1650). This work would have been quite unacceptable for the celebration of Divine Office in church.

In view of the genre's educational character, it is hardly mere speculation to imagine that the dialogue was used for religious instruction in schools within Italy and elsewhere. Details are as yet unknown, but the fact that Carlo Donato Cossoni left his unpublished manuscripts, including two dialogues, to the Collegio in the Swiss town of Bellinzona, may be significant. This school was run by the Benedictines; today the manuscripts are in the library of the Einsiedeln monastery.

Among the numerous academies in Italy a few specialized in sacred music: for instance, the Accademia della Morte and the Accademia dello Santa Spirito in Ferrara. These institutions possessed small musical establishments of their own, directed by renowned musicians such as Alessandro Grandi, Maurizio Cazzati, and Giovanni Legrenzi. Grandi and Legrenzi especially wrote a number of motets and dialogues for these charitable confraternities. However, none of this removes the possibility that these pieces were sung during church services.

Unlike schools managed by members of religious orders, Italian conservatories and *ospedali* were mostly administrated and controlled by laymen, that is, nobles in Venice and confraternities in Naples. Yet in both cities the participation of the students in church ceremonies was virtually taken for granted. As with monasteries and schools, specific knowledge about the function of our genre in these institutions is lacking. The Venetian composer Natale Monferrato, who was not only *maestro di cappella* at St Mark's but also musical director of the Ospedale dei Mendicanti, may have written his motets and dialogues for this institution rather than the ducal church, for whose rites he favoured music in the *stile antico*.[8]

It seems that in Italy music explicitly intended for private devotions was practically confined to collections of solo motets. Examples can be found in Orazio Tarditi's *Celesti fiori musicali*, op. 8, and similar books by him (opp. 23 and 26), all of which mention, alongside other instruments, the harpsichord as the bearer of the continuo part. However, it is quite possible that individual small-scale motets and dialogues taken from the numerous collections printed during the

[8] See D. Arnold, 'Monferrato, N.', *New Grove* (London, 1980), xii. 481–2.

seventeenth century also served this purpose. Although written primarily for the church, they may have been performed domestically as well.

The term 'domestic' may be expanded to include the private musical establishments of princes and cardinals. One of the largest bodies of this kind was that of Marie de Lorraine, the duchess of Guise, in Paris. Her *maître de chapelle*, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, wrote several dialogues during the years of his employment by this distinguished noblewoman. Leaving aside the chapels of reigning princes, similar establishments were rare or non-existent in Protestant regions of Europe. On the other hand, the practice of observing private devotions in the houses of individual citizens seems to have been more widespread than in Catholic countries. In the previous century both Luther and Calvin had strongly recommended this kind of religious activity, terming it 'häusliche Andacht' and 'exercice spirituelle' respectively. While it is true that the dialogues and motets by the Dutch composers Jan-Baptist Verrijt and Benedictus a Sancto Josepho were intended for the service in Catholic churches, these same pieces were actually performed in Protestant domestic circles, as well as during the sessions of the local *collegia musica*.[9]

Since the Lutheran Church lacked a central authority, its mode of worship was pluriform and flexible; during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it changed constantly. This permitted a wide musical scope. Although dialogued texts in the vernacular became ever more predominant (as, for example, in the scriptural ***historia***), the use of Latin was never abolished. Latin motets and dialogues may have replaced items from the Proper of the Mass (removed by Luther on dogmatic grounds) or served as illustrations to sermons. Kaspar Förster, the most prolific German composer of Latin dialogues, was a Catholic. Having studied with Marco Scacchi in Warsaw and Carissimi in Rome, he nevertheless became employed as royal *Kapellmeister* at the court of the Danish king Frederick III, serving in this capacity from 1652 to 1655 and 1661 to 1667. Although none of his dialogues is dated, there are indications that they were written for Lutheran services during the composer's second stay in Copenhagen. In any case the copious use of instruments points to Denmark rather than to Italy, where, at least in the mid-century, the inclusion of instrumental parts in the dialogue was exceptional.

From the above observations it appears that the religious functions of the dialogue paralleled those of the motet. For the rest, many questions have been raised and only a few answered. Much research has still to be done to clarify and complete the picture.[10]

[9] S. Spellers, 'Collegium Musicum te Groningen', in *Bouwsteenen: Derde jaarboek der Vereeniging voor Noord-Nederlands Muziekgeschiedenis* (n.p., 1881), 22–9; F. R. Noske, *Music Bridging Divided Religions: The Motet in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (2 vols.; Wilhelmshaven, 1989), i. 22–5.

[10] The function of the dialogue in the oratory will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Delimitation

If we take the dialogue as a separate kind of composition, it should be delimited from neighbouring genres, synchronically as well as diachronically. To draw a line between polyphonic dialogue motets from the late Renaissance and role dialogues from the early Baroque is rather easy. In the first genre the dialogue is almost exclusively verbal, whereas in the second both text and music convey the exchange of speech between individual characters or groups. This can be demonstrated clearly by comparing a number of Renaissance motets with a Baroque dialogue written on the same words. The paraphrased Annunciation text 'Missus est Gabriel Angelus' was set twice by Josquin des Prez (a 4 and a 5), later by Orlandus Lassus (a 6), and after the turn of the century by the Florentine Severo Bonini (for two solo voices, a five-part 'choro', and continuo). Josquin does not make any attempt to differentiate between the characters involved, that is, the archangel, the Virgin, and the narrator. The same is true of Lassus, although in his piece the narrator is slightly profiled by the use of non-overlapping cadences. In each of the three sixteenth-century motets the characters speak by means of all available voices, singing in a polyphonic style. Bonini's scoring, on the other hand, clearly distinguishes between the different roles: a countertenor part is assigned to the archangel, a soprano part to the Virgin, and a chorus (probably meant to be an ensemble of solo voices) to the narrator. The fact that the voices of Gabriel and Mary are both absorbed by the chorus does not disturb the listener, since these characters lose their identity in the narrative sections.[11]

Thus the compositional technique of the Renaissance appears to be quite incompatible with the concept of the role dialogue. This is even true of a piece that is termed 'concerto'. The motet 'Adam, ubi es?' by the Lucca organist Jacopo Corfini, included in his *Concerti continenti musica da chiesa* (Venice, 1591), deals with the expulsion from Paradise. God and Adam each speak by means of a separate four-part ensemble. However, in the course of the composition the voices previously representing Adam shift to Eve, and finally all eight parts sing God's verdict addressed to the serpent.

The first steps towards the assignment of a role to a single voice were taken by Gabriele Fattorini in a dialogue about the Resurrection involving Mary Magdalene and Peter. This work dates from 1600. Two years later Lodovico Grossi da Viadana made a similar effort in a piece dealing with the Finding of Jesus in the Temple. Although neither Fattorini nor Viadana was yet wholly consistent in coupling special voices to individual speakers, we may consider these two works as the beginning of the era of the role dialogue.

[11] This comparative description is borrowed from John Whenham's article 'Dialogue, Sacred', *New Grove*, v. 419–20.