

Preface

SCOTTISH CATHOLIC COMPOSER James MacMillan has argued that he regards it as his responsibility as an artist who hopes to remain true to a theological dimension in his music to explore and exhibit “the poetic tension between peace and violence” that he holds to be “the essence of the sacrificial narrative.”¹ His *St. John Passion*, which premiered at the Barbican in London on April 27, 2008, establishes this dramatic tension by employing a variety of contrasting musical styles. The vocal music ranges from the plainsong-based narration of the “Narrator chorus” to the melismatic solo baritone performing the part of Christus to the massive blocks of sound sometimes employed by the Large chorus that performs all other dramatic roles such as Peter and Pilate. A similar variety of musical styles is found in the orchestral writing that sometimes accompanies the singers and sometimes (as in the final movement) performs without the singers.²

MacMillan’s music expresses the drama inherent in the theological dimension of the Passion rather than illustrating the drama based in the action only. For instance, in the first movement the Narrator

chorus retains the even temper and rhythm of chant while singing the words “Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his right ear”—no musical expression is given to the act of violence in the text. Christ’s response, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the father has given me?” retains the quiet tone established by the Narrator chorus. But MacMillan at this point introduces a Latin motet to end the movement (and he ends each of the first seven movements in a similar way). MacMillan sets the Latin words from the Last Supper (and from the Eucharistic Prayer of the mass), “Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes” (“Take, eat this all of you”) in a manner that manifests the weight and human actuality of the sacrifice that is the origin of the Eucharist. The motet thus musically meditates on Christ’s awareness of the suffering and sacrifice he is about to endure, following the model of Bach’s chorales but here directly invoking the listener’s sense of liturgical participation. The chorus begins quietly singing but then breaks into an atonal, rhythmic, overlapping recitation of the words; the orchestra intervenes with horns and percussion building to a point of tension, before the chorus returns to a quiet tone yielding once more to rising tension marked by horns and the cymbal. At various points throughout the motet we hear a tinkling bell that sounds like the sanctuary bell one would hear during the prayer of consecration. A sighing motif played by the horn gives a sense of the personal suffering of Christ, carrying us back to Christ’s words expressed to Simon Peter in which Christ acknowledges that he must “drink the cup which the Father has given me.” The musical expression and the interposed Latin text link the listener (and the listener’s experience of the Eucharist) to the inner awareness experienced by Christ of the suffering he willingly accepts upon himself as the Passion begins.

Although Bach’s frequent use of chorales and arias in his *St. John Passion* provides recurrent personal reflections on the Passion narrative, I find that MacMillan’s setting in which the only solo voice is the baritone that performs the role of Christ highlights the sugges-

tion that the listener is engaged in seeking and encountering Christ as though positioned in the dramatically engaged chorus. MacMillan builds upon this suggestion by emphasizing Christ's appropriation of Yahweh's words addressed to Moses from the burning bush in Exodus, calling upon the listener to engage with Christ's claim to being the one true savior. In the opening movement, following the opening chantlike narration, the solo baritone voice performing the role of Christ sings a melodic inquiry, "Whom do you seek?" accompanied by a violin playing high glissando notes in a nimbus effect. The chorus, at first accompanied by loud percussion, proclaims fortissimo, "Jesus of Nazareth." But at this point, MacMillan momentarily departs from the Revised Standard English translation used in the oratorio as Christ, accompanied only this once in the oratorio by the Large chorus, replies in Greek: "Ego eimi" ("I am [he]"). The chorus joins the high violin with a descant that enhances the nimbus effect, with brass in the background building to a brief fanfare climax. John's Gospel in several places emphasizes Jesus's use of the words "I am" as an indication of the relationship between God the Father and the Son, and MacMillan captures that emphasis in his setting. MacMillan continues this emphasis by interpolating the words "Ego eimi" in the second movement after Christ proclaims "Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." He repeats "Ego eimi" five times, and the words are followed by a resounding cymbal crescendo. MacMillan clearly intends to invite the listener to directly encounter the divinity of Christ and the challenge to the listener's entire conception of the world inherent in Christ's divinity. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, in commenting upon this aspect of MacMillan's composition sees Jesus's proclamation of "I am" as "Jesus defining his own life as the measure of truth." He goes on to note the significance of our encounter with this claim: "For us to imagine this, even if only for the duration of this massive and challenging work, is for us to recognise that the world can—and we must—be changed."³

As I have mentioned, MacMillan concludes each of the first sev-

en movements with a Latin motet. The direct encounter with the divinity of Christ suggested by the musical setting of the words “Ego eimi” is extended, amplified, and given at least the atmosphere of a liturgical context through the use of these compositions setting Latin texts that have liturgical functions. At the end of the second movement, MacMillan follows the narrative of Peter’s denial of Christ with the papal hymn, “Tu es Petrus”—“You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church”—reminding listeners that the Holy Church is built upon Peter through divine grace and not on the basis of Peter’s own perfection. MacMillan thereby musically portrays the historical drama that inevitably follows from the holiness of the Church and the sinfulness of humanity. Other liturgical texts include a passage from the Credo of the Mass ending the fourth movement when Christ is condemned, “Cruxifixus etiam pro nobis; sub Pontil Pilato passus et sepultus est,” (“He was crucified for us; He suffered under Pontius Pilate and was buried”). Here again, the listener is reminded of the context of liturgy while engaged with the representation of the Passion through musical drama.

The entire eighth movement is devoted to a musical setting of “The Reproaches,” from the Good Friday liturgy. MacMillan had previously used this title for the second movement of his Cello Concerto (1996), a work that musically meditates on the Crucifixion of Christ. Here MacMillan sets the English translation for Christ’s role as he seemingly addresses the listeners. In singing heavily punctuated by drum and horns, Christ asks “My people, what have I done to you?” The Large Chorus intervenes three times with the Latin and Greek texts beginning “Hagios o Theos, Sanctus Deus” (“Holy is God, Holy is God”), and the movement concludes with Christ’s repetition of the opening words and his thrice-repeated demand: “Answer me!”—the first two times again with sharp horn and percussion punctuation, and the third time with the orchestra fading from a deep but quiet rumble to silence behind the voice. One critic has suggested that MacMillan is in danger of evoking anti-Semitism by the inclusion (and angry setting) of this text.⁴ But I think Mac-

Millan by this point in the oratorio has firmly established the sense of the listener's quasi-liturgical participation in response to the music, and Christ's words of reproach come across as addressed to a contemporary world that is often hostilely diffident toward Christ. We might even consider in this context the cultural controversy in Scotland apparently stirred up by a lecture that MacMillan gave in 1999 titled "Scotland's Shame: Anti-Catholicism as a barrier to genuine pluralism," and a comment made by MacMillan recently in an interview: "Someone said recently that 'anti-Catholicism is the new anti-Semitism of the liberal intellectual.'"⁵ MacMillan carries the theological drama of his oratorio to the heart of the listeners' encounter with Christ and the Church.

This use of liturgical texts in the work should not be surprising. Although MacMillan's *St. John Passion* is a work composed for the concert hall, we should note that he is in fact also a liturgical composer, a lay Dominican writing music for Mass at St. Columba Roman Catholic Church in Glasgow. There is deep and deliberate artfulness in the combination of musical modes employed in this work. Although we might at first think that the work seeks to emphasize the contrast between the force, dissonance, and tension of the modernist sound palette set against the quiet and traditional modes of plainsong and motet (although MacMillan's motets often include modernist modes as well), closer examination indicates that MacMillan is exploring the implicit religious possibilities of modernist music and connecting such music to the ongoing vitality of Catholic tradition. MacMillan has recently observed that "the development of contemporary music has been peopled by very religious men and women in one way or another, so much so that it has been part of the fabric of the story of contemporary 20th-century music."⁶ The religious possibilities of modernist music might not always be apparent, but MacMillan sets aside the conventional wisdom that modern music has been antithetical to Christian faith. In a comment on his composition of this oratorio, he draws attention to the rich possibilities inherent in the variety of musical styles he draws upon

in this work: “I was . . . aware of the paradoxical tension created between the two highly contrasted musical contexts—liturgical chant and music drama. Balancing, creating opposition sometimes, and at other times elisions and cross-fertilisations between the two, became the delight in composing this work.”⁷ There are, then, good reasons to support the assertion made by the headline of a review in *The Catholic Herald* of the premiere performance of this work: “At last—a truly Catholic Passion.”⁸

The dramatic theological tension inherent in the Passion as explored musically by MacMillan stands in close relationship to a deep Christian mystery: that suffering has the power to foster love. In the first article in this issue of *Logos*, **Peter J. Colosi** examines the writings of Max Scheler and Pope John Paul II as they illuminate this mystery. His article, “**John Paul II and Max Scheler on the Meaning of Suffering,**” points to the influence of Max Scheler’s account of suffering on John Paul, emphasizing the importance of Scheler’s insight into “the innermost union of suffering and love in Christian doctrine.” John Paul extended this insight profoundly by teaching that “man owes to suffering that unselfish love which stirs in his heart and actions,” and Colosi’s account examines this link between suffering and love in the interior life of persons, in our relationship to our neighbors, and in the broader cultural sphere. The article carefully notes that the suffering especially of the innocent remains an impenetrable mystery, but nonetheless we are called by Christian faith to encounter the suffering of others in a spirit of love. This openness to the suffering of others brings about what John Paul calls the “interior unleashing of love.” The article discusses Pope Benedict XVI’s development of the connection between suffering and love, and concludes with a moving observation by Colosi that John Paul at the end of his life offered the world a personal demonstration of the power of one’s own suffering to reveal the deep spiritual significance of suffering.

In “**Beholding the Logos: The Church, the Environment, and the Meaning of Man,**” **Christopher J. Thompson** examines the

important contribution to an understanding of ecological issues provided by the Catholic intellectual tradition. The article takes up the charges made by some critics that Christianity bears responsibility for the degradation of the natural environment by human beings derived from the biblical concept of our exercise of “dominion” over the natural world. Thompson provides a well-reasoned response to these charges and corrects popular misconceptions of Christian teaching concerning the relationship between the human person and the natural environment. He points out that there is a long Christian tradition of honoring the beauty and goodness of the created order, but nonetheless there is also a need to develop more fully the ecological implications of the Catholic intellectual tradition. He then proposes that the Christian understanding of the human person inhabiting a divinely created order, a cosmos, is much richer than the scientifically based concept of inhabiting an environment because the Christian understanding points to the spiritual and intellectual capacity of the human person to know and contemplate the cosmos: “Awe before the majesty of creation is less an experience of the environment and more of an invitation to ponder the personal dimension of one’s place in existence. Attending to the beauty of nature is to attend the inaugural lecture on self-knowledge.” Thompson goes on to develop the significance of the natural law tradition, but he also points to the importance of grace to supplement the natural virtues in our care for the environment: “Grace and the life of the sacraments supply the necessary complement for habits we need to develop to become more fully engaged in the kind of stewardship that we are being called on to exercise.”

Francis J. Beckwith examines the relationship between faith and reason in the Christian university from the perspective of the issue of anti-creedalism. In “**Faith, Reason, and the Christian University: What Pope John Paul II Can Teach Christian Academics**,” he examines the argument put forward in some Christian universities that to embrace a creed or a standard of orthodoxy in areas of Christian faith poses a threat to the spiritual freedom of individual

believers and stands in opposition to academic freedom. Beckwith argues that this position draws upon contemporary presuppositions concerning the nature of liberty and knowledge, and turns to some of the writings of John Paul to articulate a richer understanding of the relation between freedom and truth. “Our understanding of the meaning of freedom depends on what we know to be true about ourselves and our nature as given to us by God,” according to Beckwith’s account, and he argues that those who know the truth and order their lives in accord with that truth are more free than those who reject such knowledge out of fear that it might restrict their freedom. Because faith and reason are compatible and complementary, what we know through Christian revelation does not establish an obstacle or false limit to reason.

We are pleased to offer our readers the third article published in *Logos* by author **Alice von Hildebrand**. “**Problematic Self Love**” opens with reflections on Pascal’s observation that “the self is detestable,” a thought to which some have objected but which contains an important degree of truth, in Hildebrand’s account. She argues that to the extent that self-love manifests an instinctive protection of the self, it is indispensable to us but not deserving of moral praise. This instinct often tempts us to adopt an excessive concern for ourselves that might block our openness to the needs and the gifts of others, and this is the wrong kind of self love that more nearly resembles egoism. In search of a proper understanding of self love, Hildebrand offers an insightful account of the nature of love in order to show that self love differs from all other categories of love. In Christian self love, one should be conscious of one’s dignity as a bearer of the image of God but one must also hold steadfast to the recognition that my individual qualities and virtues are a gift from God and they ought not to become the theme of my self love. Hildebrand writes: “My great concern should be to eliminate the dark spots that I have made on my nuptial garment. The task confided to me, and which I alone can fulfill, is to wage war on my faults, sins, and imperfections, acknowledging that they are mine, whereas all the perfec-

tions found in me must be attributed to God. This is humility, and humility is truth.”

Robert Jared Staudt examines the thought of Christopher Dawson concerning the historical development of religion and offers an account of the indispensability of theology working together with the social sciences to provide a full and proper understanding of the role of religion in history and society. His article, “**Christopher Dawson on Theology and the Social Sciences**,” observes that a key strength of Dawson is his ability to draw upon the knowledge made available by the social sciences without restricting his thought to the limits inherent in them. Human life cannot be properly understood apart from the truths of religion and metaphysics, in Dawson’s view, and therefore theology must be integrated with the social sciences to produce a comprehensive view of history. Because religion plays an essential role in human culture, the study of culture will always be both incomplete and distorted if the claims of religion are not sufficiently recognized and incorporated into our understanding of the development of culture. Moreover, any account of the origin of religion must also take into account a proper anthropological vision that acknowledges the spiritual dimension of the human person. “To understand a religion is to see how it expressed itself, addressed man’s internal and external needs, and ultimately how it formed a culture, the goal of every religion.” Staudt rejects the criticism that Dawson imposes his Catholic convictions upon historiography, arguing instead that Dawson takes seriously the religious life of humanity and the uniqueness of Christianity’s role in that religious life: “Christianity stands in continuity with other religions insofar as it elevates rather than negates the human religious nature, but it also transcends them since it makes God’s grace and truth supernaturally present.”

Mary Karr has been a widely noted writer for at least the last fifteen years. She converted to Roman Catholicism in 1996, and her 2006 collection of poems brings her religious perspective to artful expression in her work. **Bruno M. Shah, OP**, examines the theol-

ogy of love in her most recent collection of poems. In **“Pathetic Sacrifice: Christian Love in the Poetry of Mary Karr, as Found in *Sinners Welcome*,”** Shah draws upon Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Deus caritas est* to illuminate the Christian view of love found within many of the key motifs Shah identifies as central to this collection of poems: “self-knowledge, conversion, love, mother-child relationship, communion, suffering, and death.” At first Shah takes up a possible problem: is Karr’s poetry at risk of being theologically problematic because of an apparent lack of reference “to the self-sacrificial aspect of *agape*?” In response to this problem, he finds that Karr’s poetry is essentially confessional and as such brings to expression a mode of self-sacrifice and therefore “bears the graced valence of Christian self-sacrifice.” Shah examines the understanding of the fundamental desire for love expressed in Karr’s work, considers the perspective on eros found within the poems, and then turns to the concept of *agape* expressed in Karr’s work. He concludes that Karr’s “utilization of poetic subjectivity illumines the Christian face of divine love, with its distinctive characteristics of mystical communion, supernatural hope, forgiveness, and mercy.”

Constance Woods in **“The Sign of Jonah”** recalls a visit to the Sistine Chapel and a question that she conjectures must be asked by many visitors as they gaze at *The Last Judgment* on the altar wall: why does Jonah have such a prominent position in the painting? After considering the usual explanation, which is that Jonah in Christian iconography is regarded as a symbol of the Resurrection because he spent three days in the belly of a whale before being cast back onto the shore, Woods concludes that this explanation is not wrong but is insufficient. The article develops the argument that Jonah is understood in the New Testament as a prefigurement of Christ as Judge at the Last Judgment. Just as Jonah was a sign of the destruction of the people of Nineveh if they did not repent, so is Christ understood for all other generations if they do not repent. Woods argues that the entire Sistine Chapel emphasizes prophecy and typology, both of which find fulfillment in Christ, along with the continuity of the

Old and New Covenants. The article offers a number of significant arguments to bolster the suggestion that the link between Jonah and Christ as Judge enables us to understand why Jonah plays such a prominent role in the Sistine Chapel paintings.

“Balthasar’s Eschatology on the Intermediate State: The Question of Knowability” by **Andrew Hofer, OP**, considers the perspective of Hans Urs von Balthasar on the status of the person during the period between death and resurrection termed “the intermediate state.” Hofer focuses on whether it is possible for there to be knowledge concerning the intermediate state in Balthasar’s view, arguing that pursuing this question will help readers of Balthasar “assess tensions of novelty and tradition, of coherence and confusion, of intelligibility and obscurity” in Balthasar’s writings. In addition, he argues that this question takes on added importance because “there are certain affinities between Pope Benedict XVI and Balthasar in their descriptions of purgatory, but divergences in their language about the intermediate state.” Hofer begins by noting the position of Joseph Ratzinger and the International Theological Commission’s “Some Current Questions in Eschatology,” and then examines the relevant biblical sources and the witness of the early Church, Balthasar’s view of the “one judgment” as related to anthropology and time, the contributions of Adrienne von Speyr to the question, and finally the mystery of Holy Saturday and Christ’s intermediate state. Hofer concludes that readers must carefully note that Balthasar writes about the intermediate state in a variety of ways and suggests that “this Balthasarian language at times jeopardizes the intelligibility of Christian doctrine,” but also acknowledges that for some readers Balthasar “conveys the paradox of Christian doctrine in its most dramatic terms.”

Notes

1. Mandy Hallam, "Conversation with James MacMillan." *Tempo* 62 (245), 2008, 24.
2. A recording of the live performance has been released in hybrid SACD-CD format: James Macmillan, *St. John Passion*, London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Colin Davis (LSO Live: LSo0671, 2009).
3. Rowan Williams, "A foreword by Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury," in the CD booklet accompanying the LSO CD, 2.
4. Benjamin Ivy, "MacMillan and Strife: A New *St. John Passion*," Forward.com, March 6, 2009 (<http://www.forward.com/articles/103343>).
5. Ivan Hewett, "James MacMillan Interview," Telegraph.co.uk, April 23, 2009 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/ivanhewett/5202098/James-MacMillan-interview>).
6. Hallam, "Conversation," 25.
7. James MacMillan, "About the Work," in London Symphony Orchestra: James MacMillan Premier (<http://lso.co.uk/macmillan>).
8. Damian Thompson, "At last—a truly Catholic Passion," *The Catholic Herald*, May 2, 2008 (<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/reviews/r0000287.shtml>).

About the Photographer

Caroline Yang grew up in Minnesota and was educated at Tufts University. Her work has appeared in the *New York Times* and *Sports Illustrated* as well as many popular magazines. She has three times photographed the Tour de France. She lives in St. Paul with her husband, Leon Wang, an architect, and their son, Isaiah.