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Aural Iconography: A Pärtian Study of James MacMillan

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TWENTY YEARS AGO, SCOTTISH composer James MacMillan published an article in the *New Blackfriars* journal entitled "God, Theology, and Music" laying out his own compositional philosophy.[1] In it, he discusses a rise of spirituality and the sacred in classical music that was a reaction against the modernism of the twentieth century. He notes composers such as Arvo Pärt, John Tavener, or Henrik Górecki whose music was an antidote and an answer to a sense of spiritual "hunger." Yet despite his own admission that for him "music is the most spiritual of the arts" and that his faith is majorly influential in his own conception of musical narrative and inspiration, he distances himself from and criticizes these other "spiritual" composers. While beautiful, MacMillan finds the music of these composers to be unreflective of human experience, as it "deliberately, aesthetically, and technically avoid[s] the whole notion of conflict." For MacMillan, "to avoid the darkness and tragedy is to refuse to face up to the abyss, which is our human experience." Such spirituality is a "flight from reality" and a mere "feel-good factor."[2] At least in this article, MacMillan seeks to identify himself as distinct from composers like Pärt or Tavener.

Yet MacMillan's career since the publication of this article tells a different story. Indeed, while there is still that underlying emphasis on conflict and narrative, there is also an increased focus on more "spiritual" themes and texts. Partly this is the nature of the composer economy, with commissions often determining the nature of a composer's work. In recent years, the Genesis Foundation (a noted arts commissioning body in the UK) has frequently partnered with MacMillan to create sacred choral works,[3] and thus his focus on choral music is at least partly financially motivated. Yet his "return" to choral writing also marks a genre shift that is as much philosophical as it is practical, noting that the increase in his choral writing since his younger years is indicative of a conscious rejection of the modernist focus on instrumental and virtuosic writing.[4] MacMillan spoke about the partnership with The Sixteen and its influence on his compositional style: "I did not foresee the intense imaginative relationship I would eventually build with the likes of Harry Christophers … and I did not see just how much the brilliant British choral ensembles would feature in the work of the modern composer."[5] Additionally, even a cursory examination of MacMillan's recent oeuvre outside of this partnership reveals an overwhelming number of sacred or religious

[1] James MacMillan, "God, Theology and Music," *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 947 (January 2000): 16–26.
[2] Ibid, 20.
[3] Genesis Foundation, "Sir James MacMillan CBE," accessed October 13, 2021, https://genesisfoundation.org.uk/james-macmillan/.
[4] James MacMillan, "A Master Class with Sir James MacMillan," Benedict XVI Institute. May 15, 2021. Video presentation, 2:13:02, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxKSRUuCNeU.
[5] Idem.

works. Most of his recent compositions are choral, but even the textless instrumental works often touch on a religious themes, such as MacMillan's fifth symphony (published 2019), which "contemplates the mysteries of the Holy Spirit."[6] MacMillan's own vocabulary also betrays a change; he speaks of his *Strathclyde Motets* in language such as "suspended animation," "introspective," or "numinous,"[7] terms closely resembling his earlier criticisms of transcendence.

MacMillan's treatment of these "spiritual" composers is potentially unfair, especially with regard to Arvo Pärt, and misses out on a key component in his own music. In particular, our understanding and appreciation of Pärt's music has benefited much from viewing it through the lens of Orthodox iconography, which was first argued by Paul Hillier, the Pärt scholar and conductor. I hope to explore this connection and ask whether there are ways in which a Pärtian, iconographic framework might be applied to and benefit our understanding of MacMillan's work as well. I believe such an application can be made, and to elucidate that I will first briefly discuss Pärt and MacMillan's contexts and characteristics. Then, I will give an account of iconography, and examine how it applies to Pärt. Finally, I will turn to MacMillan and consider such a Pärtian iconographic framework for his music.

It is helpful to understand Pärt and MacMillan as part of the re-emergence of sacred or spiritual music in the latter half of the twentieth century. The carnage of two world wars played a large role in the development of the musical and cultural psyche of the century, and we see an increase in religious or sacred musics particularly in response to this suffering.[8] Out of this we can trace a spirituality evident in composers as varied as Britten (*War Requiem*), Poulenc (*Mass*) or Penderecki (*St. Luke Passion*), to name just a few examples. Yet the dominant force of the serialist Second Viennese School continued as the primary expression of serious music well into the 1960s.[9] During this time, we first begin to see the emergence of "holy minimalism"[10] as a reaction against modernism. Largely without influence from popular minimalist composers in the United States such as Steve Reich, Philip Glass, or Terry Riley several European composers began to give voice to a simplified aesthetic with a "more overtly spiritual approach."[11] Of these, the music of Arvo Pärt makes up a

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[6] Genesis Foundation, "Sir James MacMillan CBE," https://genesisfoundation.org.uk/james-macmillan/. This symphony is admittedly commissioned by the Genesis Foundation, but is still paradigmatic of the larger pattern.

[7] MacMillan, "A Master Class with Sir James MacMillan."

[8] C. John Sommerville, "The Religious Music of the 20th and 21st Centuries," *Religion*, 1984.

[9] Leon Botstein, "Modernism," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001). Botstein points to a disconnect between the political radicalism of the era and a decreasingly populist modernism, as well as a rise in technology enabling the dissemination of a largely anti-modernist music via audio recordings that resulted in the music of the late twentieth century no longer being dominated by a modernist aesthetic.

[10] A term that is neither accepted by the composers themselves who have described it as pejorative (see Peter Bouteneff, *Arvo Pärt: Out of Silence* (Yonkers, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2015), 57.), nor is it fully accurate to their own stylistic elements. Nevertheless, it has entered popular musicological parlance to informally categorize the expression of spirituality through a reduced or minimalist aesthetic in the latter decades of the twentieth century by composers such as Pärt, Górecki, or Tavener.

[11] Keith Potter, "Minimalism (USA)," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, December 30, 2019).

large portion of the spirituality reflected in twentieth century music.

Pärt was born in Paide, Estonia in 1935 under Soviet occupation, and until emigrating to Germany in the 1980's he lived and composed under the repressive measures of that government, suffering frequent censorship of his music due to his experimentation with modernist techniques of serialism and collage.[12] The conflict came to a head in 1968 with the premiere of Pärt's *Credo*. Despite not using the traditional "Credo" text, the explicitly religious nature of the work prompted harsh condemnation. Pärt quickly found his music banned from radio and the concert hall.[13]

Facing an increasingly critical stance from the Soviet authorities, and reaching a crisis point musically, Pärt felt that his modernist techniques no longer served for his own expression, and he withdrew from the public sphere.[14] The years between 1968 and 1976 marked a period of musical silence. He later wrote that "Those years of study were no conscious break, but…agonizing inner conflict. I had lost my inner compass and I didn't know anymore, what an interval or a key meant."[15] This conflict centered around a need to reduce music down to its essence. Pärt stripped away "all that was alien,"[16] and turned to early music to craft a "simple musical line that lived and breathed inwardly."[17] Pärt studied Gregorian chant, filling thousands of pages with simple melodic lines as he searched for a "new way of hearing."[18] Inspired by the monody of early music, he emerged out of these eight years of compositional silence with *Für Alina*, written in his original musical language self-described as tintinnabuli.

For Pärt, tintinnabuli is simultaneously a technique, style, and ideology. In contrast to his previous modern musical language, Pärt's tintinnabuli is an expression of tonality, yet without the functional harmony of Western Classical systems. It arises from his hours studying chant with its modal scaler patterns, paired with a bell-like triadic structure.[19] The melodic, or "M" voice, moves stepwise toward or away from a central pitch, and is often based on an existing text or pre-determined structure.[20] The triadic tintinnabuli (or "T") voice is then fitted to the M-voice and holds the M-voice in place harmonically[21] while offering

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[12] Immo Mihkelson, "A Narrow Path to the Truth: Arvo Pärt and the 1960s and 1970s in Soviet Estonia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arvo Pärt*, ed. Andrew Shenton, Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17, 23. According to Russian authorities, Pärt's music undervalued "the national-folkloric music" and inclined dangerously "toward certain 'modern' tendencies."

[13] Ibid, 26.

[14] Enzo Restagno et al., eds., *Arvo Pärt in Conversation*, Estonian Literature Series (Champaign, Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2012), 27. Pärt noted that his serial and collage style no longer felt "alive," and that he "could not go on with the compositional means at [his] disposal."

[15] "Arvo Pärt Biography," Arvo Pärt Centre, accessed December 7, 2021, https://www.arvopart.ee/en/arvo-part/biography/.

[16] Paul Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, Oxford Studies of Composers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 74.

[17] Restagno et al., *Arvo Pärt in Conversation*, 28.

[18] Ibid, 29.

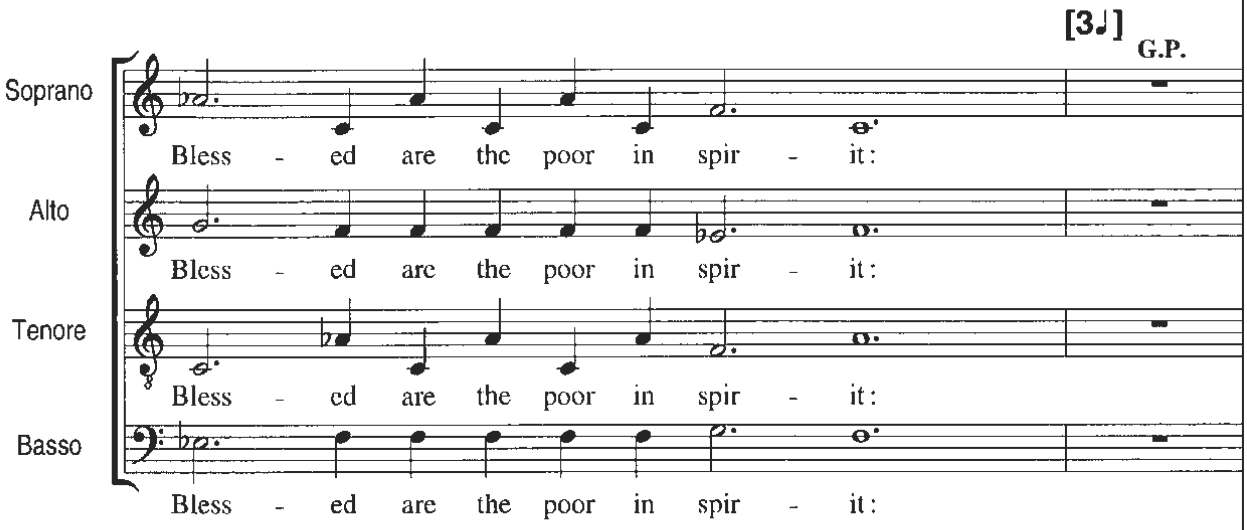
[19] Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 90-91. This bell-like nature is where the term tintinnabuli gets its name, from the Latin "tintinnabulum," or "tinkling bell." Additionally, though the scaler pattern is often modal, Hillier is careful to note that this does not connote a "neo-medieval" nature to Pärt's music. Rather, it is a "new blend of tonal and modal forces."

[20] Ibid, 92.

[21] Ibid, 92-97. Pärt's tintinnabuli style is deceptively simple and much discussed. For a fuller explanation and analysis that goes beyond the scope and purposes of this paper, see Kongwattananon, "Arvo Pärt and Three Types of His Tintinnabuli Technique," Langager, "The Tintinnabuli Compositional Style of Arvo Part," or Hillier, "Missa Syllabica," in *Arvo Pärt*.

structure for tension and release.[22] In his *Beatitudes*, for example, Pärt puts the M-voice in the altos and basses, and the T-voice in the sopranos and tenors. In the first measure shown in example 1, the M voice moves from a G and an Eb in the alto and bass to an F, while the T voices outline the rest of an F minor triad.

Example 1.



Arvo Pärt, The Beatitudes: Für Chor (SATB) Und Orgel (Vienna: Universal Edition A.G., 1990), m.1. All rights reserved.

[22] Robert Sholl, "Arvo Pärt and Spirituality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arvo Pärt*, ed. Andrew Shenton, Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 142-143.

This simple two-part structure and the repetition of material has resulted in the identification of Pärt's style as minimalist, even though this is a "misleading" term.[23] Rather than minimalist in style, Pärt's tintinnabulation is its own "coherent form of musical architecture," with a "musical narrative" of short and long-term tension and release. Pärt's tintinnabulation stylistically unfolds this narrative through its simplicity and repeated blocks of sound produced by the interwoven M and T-voices, and though sparse in texture and harmony, Pärt's music is not "minimalist" in its purposes or methodologies.

For Pärt, tintinnabuli is also a philosophy deeply connected to his Orthodox faith.[24] One manifestation of this is Pärt's identification of the two tintinnabuli voices with spiritual symbolism: the M-voice signifies the human plight of "the subjective world, the daily egoistic life of sin and suffering," while the T-voice is "the objective realm of forgiveness."[25] This vision of a wandering humanity held firmly by the hand of a sublime divine order is not dualistic though; his music reflects a larger unity between the two voices such that tintinnabuli is a "single entity," as in the following equation used by Pärt to describe the tintinnabuli style: 1+1=1.[26]

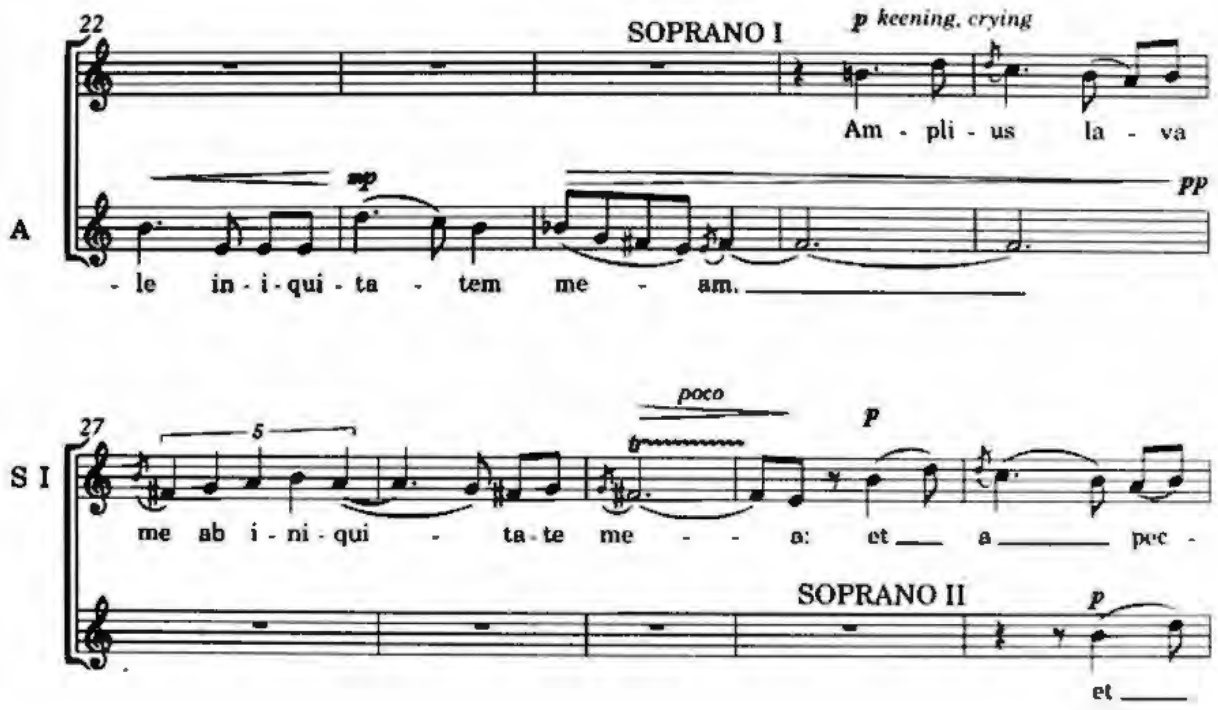
Like Pärt, James MacMillan's historical context is similarly important to understanding the composer's oeuvre. MacMillan was born in a small mining town in the west of Scotland in 1959 to a poor but devout and musical family. From an early age these family influences formed and shaped his identity. His maternal grandfather played a role in MacMillan's early musical development, taking him to brass band rehearsals and encouraging his musical aspirations. MacMillan was also shaped by his Roman Catholic parents' faith, and after his education in local Catholic and secondary schools, MacMillan attended the University of Edinburgh and Durham University to study composition.[27] Looking back in 2019, MacMillan reflected on these early influences, noting "an inescapable search for the sacred, the role of religious practice, tradition and identity, the influence of political motivation, for good or for ill, and the importance of music in the communities I hold dear" that comes out of his childhood experiences.[28] These influences – Scottish history and musical traditions, social and political issues, his Catholic faith, and the way they are all bound together – are key to MacMillan's music and identity.

In many ways, MacMillan finds his identity and musical language from Scottish musical traditions. This hearkens back to MacMillan's early adulthood playing in local Scottish and Irish pub bands and his interest in the "vernacular" music of his native land despite the attitude of the time, which maintained that anything outside of "serious" and complex music was not worth pursuing.[29] MacMillan's music seeks to bridge this gap, and he fuses the vernacular and the art musics together in a distinctly Scottish or "Celtic" way.[30] For MacMillan,

[23] Sholl, "Arvo Pärt and Spirituality," 143. Robert Sholl notes that Pärt procedurally and even more so aesthetically differs from American minimalist composers such as Steve Reich or Philip Glass.
[24] Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 68.
[25] Ibid, 96.
[26] Idem.
[27] For a full biography, see Phillip A. Cooke, *The Music of James MacMillan* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2019).
[28] James MacMillan, *A Scots Song: A Life of Music* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2019), 9.
[29] MacMillan, "God, Theology and Music," 17.
[30] Richard McGregor, "'A Metaphor for the Deeper Wintriness': Exploring James MacMillan's Musical Identity," *Tempo* 65, no. 257 (2011), 28. As McGregor points out, "Celtic" is a rather "dubious" term with a variety of contested meanings, but is one that MacMillan has nevertheless adopted in

this Scottish identity is reflected most obviously in his highly melismatic ornamentation reminiscent of the performance practice of Gaelic psalm singing or folk tin-whistle playing.[31] It is also found in MacMillan's use of a drone, and his musical references to the Gaelic funereal practice of keening,[32] a part of traditional Gaelic funerals where keeners would publicly mourn to pay respect to the deceased and express grief for the family of the deceased. The oral tradition of keening has been lost, but MacMillan's music reflects the lament of it stylistically and sometimes overtly, such as in his final Ph.D. work *Keening*, which uses a traditional Scottish lament tune "Great is the Cause of my Sorrow,"[33] or in musical directions, as in his *Miserere*, where one of the main themes is marked "keening", seen in example 2:

Example 2.
"Keening" theme, mm. 22-31 soprano 1 and alto parts.

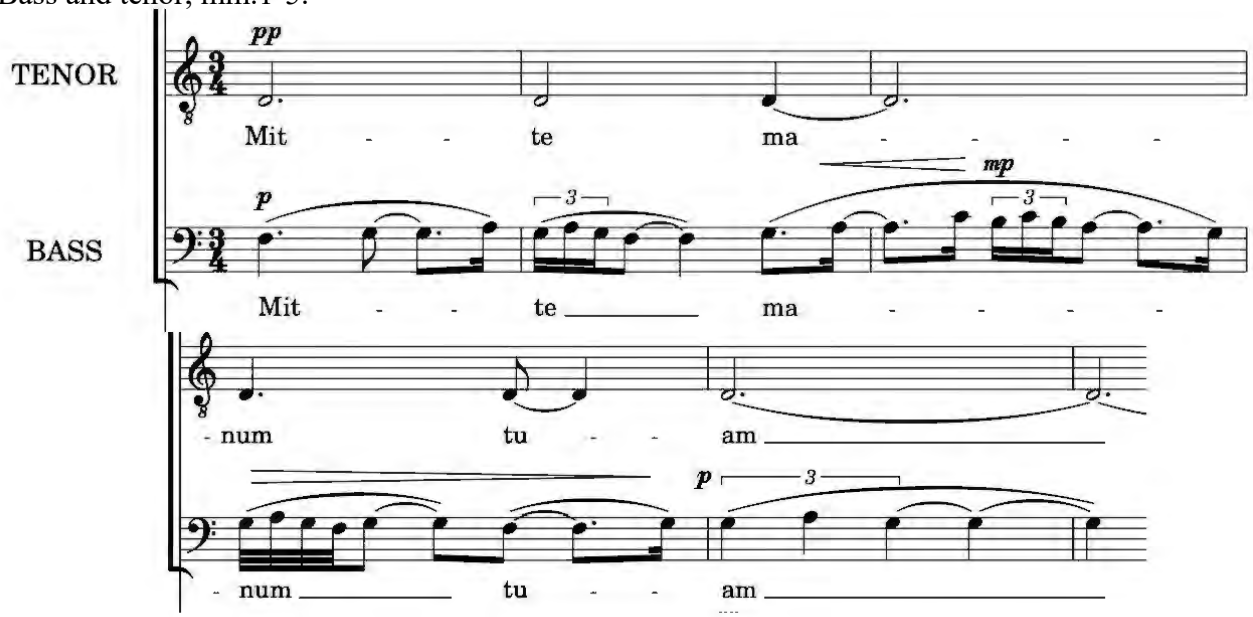


"Miserere" By James MacMillan

describing his own work and its relationship to Scotland.
[31] Idem.
[32] Ibid, 29-30.
[33] Cooke, *The Music of James MacMillan*, 16.

This keening melody also features some of MacMillan's characteristic ornamentation, and a further example of this ornamentation is seen in his *Mitte Manum Tuam*, from *The Strathclyde Motets* (example 3). Here, MacMillan's Scottish influences are on full display in the ornamented bass line is paired with a drone in the tenor during the opening measures:

Example 3
Bass and tenor, mm.1-5.



"Mitte manum tuam" By James MacMillan

MacMillan's Scottish identity is also bound up in his political stances. In his teens and early twenties MacMillan was involved with Scottish socialist movements, and though he later abandoned this politically, his early compositions often reflect a political stance against injustice, especially in his native Scottish context.[34] Shortly after making a celebrated critical debut with *Busqueda*, a vocal-orchestral setting of lament texts by the Argentinian "Mothers of the Disappeared," MacMillan turned his eyes toward Scotland with his 1990 work, *The Confessions of Isabel Gowdie*. This work reflects on the 1662 trial and burning of a Scottish witch, who confessed under torture and who MacMillan suggests was part of the larger Catholic witch-hunt taking place in Scotland during this time.[35] MacMillan suggests too that this piece attempts to "capture the soul of Scotland in music,"[36] using folk melodies and traditional mass settings,[37] and *Isobel Gowdie* is reflective of the socio-political critique in much of MacMillan's music of the 80's and 90's.

More than anything else, though, MacMillan's Catholic faith has a profound impact on him, expressed in his selection of religious thematic and textual subject matter which is tied to his own musical philosophy. Even in the early political works such as *Isobel Gowdie*, religious overtones are highly evident, and MacMillan's corpus increasingly uses religious texts or recurring themes. One of these is a fixation on the Passion narrative ever since his 1993 percussion concerto *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*.[38] In a moment of self-reflection, MacMillan writes that he is "pre-occupied with the crucified Christ, that I seem to be drawn again and again to the Passion… I'm drawn back obsessively to these three days. I can't help it; I know that the answer might be there."[39] This statement underscores the influence of MacMillan's faith on his own music, a music he describes as a "search for the sacred."[40] He writes: "Far from being isolated, restricted or peripheralized in the world of music because of religion, I have felt central in it and dynamically engaged…with the world around us."[41] For MacMillan, his faith is not compositionally limiting, but rather is central to understanding his philosophy and his technique. In addition to the Gaelic psalm singing connection, another major influence for MacMillan that we will examine momentarily is Gregorian chant, both as a wealth of melodic material and for the liturgy and theology associated with it.[42]

MacMillan somehow draws these disparate elements into an organic whole, and his music displays his own unique style, but like Pärt, this makes him difficult to categorize. Overall MacMillan seems to defy labels[43] and draw from many different sources and traditions,[44] prompting

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[34] MacMillan, *A Scots Song*, 32-34. This is reflected in MacMillan's focus on liberation theology and frequent written and musical reflections on anti-Catholic sentiments.

[35] Cooke, *The Music of James MacMillan*, 48.

[36] James MacMillan, "Programme Note to The Confession of Isobel Gowdie," accessed November 9, 2021, https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-The-Confession-of-Isobel-Gowdie/3115.

[37] Cooke, *The Music of James MacMillan*, 49.

[38] This work is seen by Cooke as a "public declaration of faith" that "opened the door for MacMillan's Catholicism." Cooke 70. It is also MacMillan's most performed work.

[39] MacMillan, "God, Theology and Music," 19-20. The Passion narrative has provided MacMillan with an archetypal lens that he applies to many "secular" works such as *Isobel Gowdie*, where he sees her history as a mirror of Christ's death.

[40] MacMillan, *A Scots Song*, 9.

[41] Ibid, 75.

[42] MacMillan, "God, Theology and Music," 17.

[43] Dominic Wells suggests MacMillan as a "retrospective modernist." Dominic Wells, "James MacMillan: Retrospective Modernist" (Durham, England, University of Durham, 2012).

[44] MacMillan has cited Bach, Messiaen, Palestrina, Wagner, and of course chant as all significant in his

questions of identity particularly along "sacred" versus "secular" lines. MacMillan for his part sees the two as inextricably linked,[45] and he places himself with an increasingly large number of serious composers concerned with spirituality in their music.[46] At the same time, he sees his primary musical sphere being the concert hall rather than the church.[47] This dichotomy is salient: is a fundamentally religious framework (iconography) applicable to a composer that takes influence from his faith but refuses to be identified as a "sacred" composer? This question of validity, at least regarding performance practice and received meaning, is one that must be addressed. Turning to an account of iconography generally, and then as historically applied to Pärt, I will seek to make clear the various ways in which MacMillan's music could be construed as iconographic.

Christian iconography goes back at least to the fourth century after the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine, influenced by the art of the catacombs as well as pre-Christian Jewish and Hellenistic art. Yet it was not until iconoclastic division in the church during the eighth century that a robust theology of Christian art began to develop. The bases of these divisions were Christological: disagreement lay in the understanding of the nature of Christ and representation of that in human-made images. The concern was with the very possibility of portraying the indescribable divine nature of Christ, and iconoclasts argued that such portrayal amounted to idolatry following Old Testament prohibition against images of God.[48] Yet this issue of depiction was the very basis of arguments in favor of icons. St. John of Damascus argued that through the Christian incarnation God had shown himself in human flesh. Christ the human became the perfect image of God, redeeming that image and thus allowing for depiction of God, the prototype. Creation and veneration of icons was permissible because of this relationship between the image and the prototype:

> Of old, God the incorporeal and formless was never depicted, but now that God has been sent in the flesh and has associated with human kind, I depict what I have seen of God. I do not venerate matter, I venerate the fashioner of matter, who became matter for my sake and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation.[49]

John emphasized that veneration of an icon was not worship of it. Rather, it showed honor to the one depicted.[50] Yet even with the incarnational arguments, iconoclasts feared the heresies of either Nestorianism (an icon of Christ depicts his humanity and separates it from his divinity) or Monophysitism (an icon of Christ that depicts Christ mixes his humanity and divinity and thus denies the two distinct natures of Christ).[51] The Orthodox answer came down to a theological distinction between the two natures (human and divine) and one hypostasis, or person, of Christ. Reflecting on the incarnation, St. Theodore the Studite argued that Christ in his humanity took on individual human traits, and these traits reflect the person of Christ

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musical development. See MacMillan, *A Scot's Song*, or "God, Theology, and Music."

[45] MacMillan, *A Scots Song*, 11.

[46] Ibid, 66.

[47] MacMillan, "A Master Class with Sir James MacMillan."

[48] Egon Sendler, *The Icon, Image of the Invisible: Elements of Theology, Aesthetics, and Technique* (Redondo Beach, Calif: Oakwood Publications, 1988), 40.

[49] John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 29.

[50] Ibid, 35.

[51] Sendler, *The Icon, Image of the Invisible*, 41.

rather than either of his two natures.[52] An icon of Christ is an icon of this hypostasis, or person, made visible through the incarnation.

This incarnational paradox of the invisible made visible is central to a theology of iconography, and from it we get the final element of the iconoclast disagreement: the presence of God in theological praxis. For Theodore, while the prototype and image are essentially not the same, nevertheless the "prototype is in the image by the similarity of hypostasis."[53] Theodore did not see iconography as sacramental (i.e. it did not allow direct participation in Christ, as in the Orthodox view of the Eucharist), yet the icon "allowed the participation in Christ by its relation to the hypostasis (person) of Christ, and this participation was of an intentional nature…The icon was an intentional, deliberate communion with the person it represented."[54] Veneration of an icon, in the Orthodox view, allows the viewer a transcendent experience with the presence of God where the honor shown the image as a liturgical object within a worshipful context is shown to the prototype: God himself.[55] Thus, Hillier claims that "an icon asserts the interpenetration of God and the world", wherein an image of the perfect, incarnate image of God could be created by adhering to strict artistic traditions which maintained the authenticity of the icon.[56]

This presencing aspect of icons is related to their liturgical function as pedagogical tools. To speak about iconography in Greek or Slavonic is to speak of "writing" an icon rather than painting one, and for the Orthodox faithful an icon transmits and teaches Christian truth in imagery just as the written word of scripture does.[57] One can think of the role of stained glass in cathedral windows during the Middle Ages as an analogue of teaching doctrine to the largely illiterate poor. Similarly, scripture itself is a type of icon according to the Orthodox view of divine revelation. Both icons and scripture guide the reader or viewer toward truth.[58] Accordingly, icons as "words in painting" are seen as a "visible gospel."[59] As both a location for divine veneration and as a transmitter of divine truth, the icon as image becomes a concrete symbol and embodiment of a transcendent reality made possible through the incarnation.

Turning to Pärt, we can see some of the ways that this iconographic transcendence might be applied to his work by examining the roles of silence, liturgy, technique, and symbolism in his music. We see this iconography first in Pärt's philosophical and stylistic use of silence. Pärt's music implicitly references the Orthodox *hesychast* tradition, where through silent prayer and contemplation the believer may come to "share in the divine nature" through *theosis*. This contemplation and kenotic receptivity to God's will is central to the iconic understanding of Pärt's music.[60] Pärt writes that "My music has emerged only after I have been silent for quite some time,

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[52] Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, trans. Catharine P Roth, On the Holy Icons (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 87.
[53] Ibid, 102.
[54] Sendler, *The Icon, Image of the Invisible*, 47.
[55] Constantine Scouteris, "'Never as Gods': Icons and Their Veneration," *Sobornost* 6, no. 1 (1984), 17.
[56] Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 3-4. The Orthodox belief is that the iconographic tradition is unbroken from eyewitness or miraculous artistic renderings of Christ and the saints, and thus an icon of Christ is a true rendering of his appearance if it was a direct copy, hence the strong artistic stylization.
[57] Sendler, *The Icon, Image of the Invisible*, 67. Sendler discusses this in depth, relating different categories and forms of icons that are as much literary as they are artistic.
[58] Scouteris, "'Never as Gods': Icons and Their Veneration," 12.
[59] Ibid, 11.
[60] Shenton, *Arvo Pärt's Resonant Texts*, 100-102.

literally silent. For me, 'silent' means the nothing from which God created the world. Ideally, a silent pause is something sacred."[61] Thus, Pärt's frequent use of silence in his music gestures towards this prayerful contemplation, either of the music itself or of something beyond the music, and it is this beyond that is iconographic. Through contemplation of the aural icon, the listener seeks to experience a sense of the divine.

Pärt's music is distinctly non-liturgical, and most of it is written for a concert hall setting. Nonetheless, we can see iconic parallels between it and Medieval Orthodox liturgy, namely in the bell-like structure of tintinnabuli. One of the most significant correlations exists between Russian bells and icons, one writer going so far as calling them "aural icons of past and future trumpeting."[62] In medieval Russia, the bell was a call to prayer and the herald of angel trumpets, signaling and embodying a direct interaction between God and humanity.[63] Pärt's music is reminiscent of this, with its bell-like triadic structure in the T-voice and minimalist chant-like suspension and contemplation. Hillier writes of the effect of a bell: "it rings out and reaches towards us, yet at the same time pulls us in towards it, so that soon we realize we are on the inside of it, that its inside and outside are one and the same,"[64] and although Pärt's tintinnabuli music does not seek to programmatically emulate the sound of Russian bells, like the bells of medieval Russia, it seeks to be an aural icon that encourages contemplation and a symbolic reminder of divine presence.[65]

Pärt's music can also be analyzed iconographically regarding its technique. As discussed, Pärt's tintinnabuli is heavily influenced by his study of Gregorian chant. Hillier points to the similarities between chant and iconographic painting. Like the heavily stylized traditional aesthetics of iconography, chant was the result of centuries of slow development and the conscious decision to adhere to strict traditions. Changes, if they occurred, did so "within the canonized style, rather than as a passage from one style to another."[66] Chant, and by extension tintinnabuli, follows this tradition. For musicologist Benjamin Skipp, the experience of Pärt's music is "to partake in the reenactment of medieval music and to become part of a catholic community which has existed throughout history."[67]

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[61] Leo Normet, "The Beginning Is Silence," *Teater*, 1988, 22. Quoted in Shenton Resonant Texts, 101. Pärt also describes his musical inspiration in these terms: "If someone approaches silence with love, then this might give birth to music. A composer must often wait a long time for his music. This kind of sublime anticipation is exactly the kind of pause that I value so greatly."

[62] Edward V. Williams, "Aural Icons of Orthodoxy," in *Christianity and the Arts in Russia*, ed. William Craft Brumfield and Miloš Velimirović (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 3.

[63] Idem.

[64] Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 20.

[65] See Marguerite Bostonia, "Bells as Inspiration for Tintinnabulation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arvo Pärt*, ed. Andrew Shenton, Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15. Similarly, Medieval Russian chant has numerous parallels with Russian iconography. Both embody theological ideas, conveying meaning through either seen or heard means. Additionally, chant was often used as accompaniment to the icon itself, either as the total liturgical soundscape of a Byzantine church and the atmosphere within which iconography was viewed, or as congregants were encouraged to sing along with the angels depicted in the icons themselves.

[66] Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 5. Some have even suggested that some stylistic aspects of Gregorian chant have passed down virtually unchanged from their origins in 2nd Temple Jewish chant practices. See Willi Apel, *Gregorian Chant* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1958).

[67] Benjamin Skipp, "The Minimalism of Arvo Pärt: An 'Antidote' to Modernism and Multiplicity?," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arvo Pärt*, ed. Andrew Shenton, Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 170. Skipp's use of the term "reenactment" is

Even more than the techniques of chant and early music, Pärt's tintinnabuli was inspired by the "spirit" of it, which is heavily influenced by the text it conveys.[68] Pärt has said that "I have always allowed myself to be guided by texts that mean a lot to me and that for me are of existential significance."[69] Like iconography, Pärt's music "writes" the text in unwritten form. To listen to Pärt's music and to be profoundly moved does not require ideological agreement with his faith, as his popularity across religious background shows, but at the same time it is important to recognize that for him, the sacred text is paramount and inseparable from his music. This is precisely because it serves this iconographic function in his music. The chant-like text brings with it associations of liturgical space, proclaiming divine presence in the sacred words and as part of a stylized musical tradition.

In addition to the symbolism inherent in the M- and T-voices, Pärt's iconography can also be seen in the formal symbolism of some pieces. In Carol Matthew-Whiteman's doctoral dissertation on Pärt's setting of the St. John Passion, she examines this key work from this lens and discovers that Pärt structurally depicts an icon of the crucifixion of Christ within the hour-long work. The work is heavily symbolic at all levels of the composition; from the relationships of specific pitches and harmonies, to texture choices, to the macro levels of timing within the piece, Pärt's score is formally reflective of typical visual iconography of the crucifixion.[70] Pärt's *Passio* aurally depicts the crucifixion icon, and though this work is more intricate than many of Pärt's pieces, it is evidence that he is not primarily concerned with aesthetics as much as he is with making the invisible heard.

Pärt's work from 1987, *The Beatitudes*, is an example of his tintinnabuli style and aesthetic, and while not as complex as *Passio*, still displays an intentionality and narrative.[71] Like visual iconography, this piece is approached in silent contemplation. It begins and ends in silence and is punctuated by silences throughout that are as necessary to the musical experience as the sounding notes. The chant-like sung text, taken from Matthew 5:3-12, teaches the words of scripture not in written but aural form. From Pärt's Orthodox perspective, the work embodies Christ's presence as both the original speaker of the words and as the singers embody the image of God according to Genesis 1, enfleshing the text as they sing it. The bell-like T-voice with its connections to Russian liturgical practice reinforce the textual associations. We are reminded too of Pärt's original description of tintinnabuli where the M-voice (representing humanity) wanders, but the divine, forgiving T-voice holds the structure firmly in place. Together, they make a single entity of contemplation and stillness, and, at least for Pärt, offer an opportunity to glimpse and participate in the divine.[72]

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interesting here. Cf Gadamer's concept of the festival to reveal truth and establish meaning, in Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

[68] Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 78-79. This is true even though Pärt's music is almost entirely non-liturgical. See also Restagno et al., *Arvo Pärt in Conversation*, 57.

[69] Restagno et al., *Arvo Pärt in Conversation*, 54.

[70] Carol Leonore Matthews Whiteman, "'Passio': The Iconography of Arvo Part" (Ph.D., United States -- New York, City University of New York), accessed September 8, 2021. Matthews Whiteman shows this in reference to a myriad of details, for example in the way that Pärt changes timbre or texture at specific moments in the piece that correspond to the ratio of the arms of the cross, setting crucial parts of the text at this moment and thus aurally depicting formal cruciformity.

[71] This is most clearly seen in the analysis of harmonic movement. See theorist Milton Mermikides's tonnetz diagram printed in Shenton, *Arvo Pärt's Resonant Texts*.

[72] Robert Sholl is helpful here, defining Pärt's music "as an agent in this complex negotiation of searching

Allowing for Pärt's music to be construed thusly, we turn to MacMillan now and seek to apply this Pärtian framework to his music. Revisiting his initial dislike of such a comparison, we again must ask the question of validity in both composerly intent and performance practice. As it is articulated in his "God, Theology, and Music" article, MacMillan's criticism of Pärt is based on his understanding of an ideological difference reflected in their respective musics. MacMillan's depiction of "the abyss" of human experience comes out of his search for divine encounter in the crucifixion narrative, and he views Pärt as avoiding the reality of suffering. However, Pärt's music does not wholly do this, and there is a sense of lament and desolation inherent in the statis of Part's music that is meant to be contemplated.[73] Indeed, Pärt's tintinnabuli music is reflective of a holistic spiritual vision encapsulating the human-divine experience in one musical outlet.[74] Pärt himself denies that his spirituality is "mystical," instead describing it as "concrete."[75] Addressing criticisms of Pärt as disembodied similar to MacMillan's, Robert Sholl notes that even the unnuanced account of Pärt's music as vaguely simple and spiritual and therefore escapist locates Pärt's music as an "external agent that do[es] something to a person…[it] invites the listener to…active, somatic participation."[76] For Sholl, this participation is rooted in Pärt's faith:

> One of the purposes of Pärt's music would be to show humanity, in a Christian sense, what it would be like to live as though it were possible to be resurrected. Through the imagination, humanity is required to realize something of and beyond itself. This is the essence of the music's enchantment.[77]

And Sholl notes that this feeling of transcendence is not limited to the Christian. Until recently, Pärt was the most listened-to contemporary composer (followed closely by MacMillan), and his enduring popularity points to this "enchantment" across faith backgrounds. The experience of this sublime enchantment in Pärt's music is embodied, life-enhancing, and concerned with the present.[78] Pärt's philosophy and music is therefore perhaps closer to MacMillan's than "God, Theology, and Music" admits, and as MacMillan stylistically shifts towards the sense of transcendence he criticized in Pärt, the iconographic lens seems more and more applicable.[79]

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and of realization…As much as it espouses a unity with God, [his music is] symptomatic of humanity's search for God…[it] points to an excruciating gap between humanity and God that, in unexpected ways, is an exhortation to participate in and even bridge this liminal space." Sholl, "Arvo Pärt and Spirituality," 140.

[73] Sholl, "Arvo Pärt and Spirituality," 153.

[74] Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 96.

[75] Restagno et al., *Arvo Pärt in Conversation*, 34.

[76] Sholl, "Arvo Pärt and Spirituality," 154.

[77] Ibid, 156.

[78] Ibid 156-157.

[79] It is worth noting that MacMillan is no stranger to a visual analysis of his own work. Robert Sholl analyzes MacMillan according to such a framework, comparing his music to paintings by Caravaggio and discussing MacMillan's musical imagery, embodiment, and transformation. Sholl is the to first suggest that MacMillan might share Pärt's interest in image-making or iconography, but largely dismisses the staticism of Orthodox iconography so prevalent in Pärt as applicable to MacMillan. He instead describes MacMillan's image-making as vivid and arresting, and thus transformative. Sholl largely dismisses viewing MacMillan iconographically due to a lack of contemplative stasis, but as we've seen, Pärt's music is not wholly static, and MacMillan's music is increasingly contemplative. Thus, while Sholl's discussion of the Caravaggio connection is astute and sheds light on aspects of MacMillan's work, its brief argument against such an iconographic framework is unconvincing. Robert Sholl, "Exquisite Violence: Imagery, Embodiment and Transformation in MacMillan," in *James MacMillan Studies*, ed. George Parsons and Robert Sholl, Cambridge Composer Studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 95.

Indeed, MacMillan himself implicitly makes the connection between his music and iconography in a discussion of silence and the composer's relationship with it. MacMillan poignantly describes silently staring into his young granddaughter Sara's eyes shortly before she died from Dandy-Walker syndrome and other developmental disabilities. He writes:

> Looking at Sara was perhaps like gazing silently into the eyes of an icon. Doing so is meant to let us see into the beauty of the divine presence; the icon's eyes become windows into the soul of God. And God looks back…It was like rapture gazing at rapture, tenderness gazing at tenderness, devotion gazing upon devotion, worship gazing at worship, the cherisher cherishing the cherished, the enchanter enchanting the enchanted, heart lost to heart. Silence listening to silence.[80]

For MacMillan, silence, which he elsewhere describes as divine presence rather than absence, calls out to the composer and it is from this silence that his music comes.[81] It is important to note this, as he elsewhere describes the same process of musical inspiration in terms of kenotic receptivity in imitation of the Virgin Mary at the Christian Annunciation.[82] Taken together, MacMillan seems to suggest that like Pärt, his music arises from a place of silence and divine contemplation, and this silence functions iconographically as a window into the divine.

This iconographic composerly philosophy is revealed in the technique of the music itself. Here we again see the influence of Gregorian chant as a stylized tradition. Like Pärt, MacMillan's music heavily relies on chant, not just for melodic material but also as a tradition to plug into.[83] This tradition that is passed down is one of ritual experience where the text is "almost secondary" to the sacred sound-world of the space it was performed in.[84] Like the Byzantine liturgical space of the icon, Gregorian chant contributed to an atmosphere of sensory religious experience in tandem with architecture, stained glass, incense, and even the icon itself. Although this liturgical experience may be foreign to many non-Catholics, for MacMillan it is a formational reality from his earliest memories. He writes of his childhood experience of chant in the Catholic Mass as a sensory totality, describing it as a:

> Ghostly, distant and affecting sonic concoction that gripped my childish attention…Stylized movements of adults and children in robes, clouds of smoke and actions of devotion that I didn't yet comprehend. The sound was accompanying, facilitating. Looking back on it, and knowing now what liturgy is, I must have been hearing polyphony and Gregorian chant.[85]

For MacMillan, chant has iconic associations. It draws the listener in to a religious space, "accompanying" and "facilitating" a connection to the sacred.

MacMillan's use of chant also mirrors the icon as an embodied pedagogical tool. Before and even after the development of Western musical notation, Gregorian chant was an oral tradition sung from memory,

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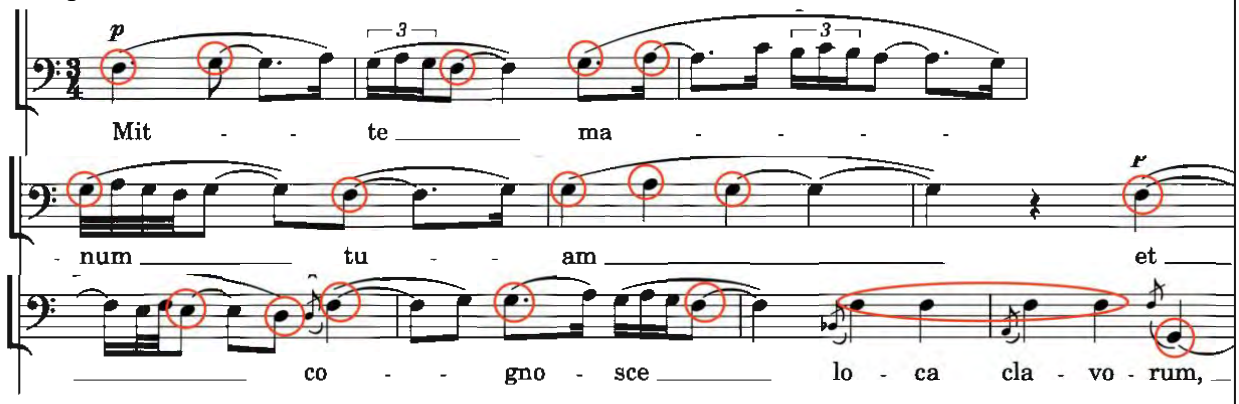
[80] MacMillan, *A Scots Song*, 92-93.
[81] Ibid, 76-93. MacMillan's concept of his own musical inspiration is also closely linked to this kenotic and iconic silence. He sees his music as resulting from a posture of receptivity and coming out of an experience with God.
[82] MacMillan, "God, Theology and Music," 21-22.
[83] Ibid, 17. C.f. Lisa Colton, "Containing Chaos? Aspects of Medieval Liturgy in James MacMillan's 'Visitatio Sepulchri,'" in *James MacMillan Studies*, ed. George Parsons and Robert Sholl, Cambridge Composer Studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[84] David Hiley, *Gregorian Chant*, Cambridge Introductions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.
[85] MacMillan, *A Scots Song*, 7-8, italics mine.

with individual chants occurring frequently according to the daily office and liturgical calendar. As such, chant was a transmitter of sacred text, a "reference point for a religious musical experience, for a reaching out to the deity, who is no more to be comprehended in words than in music itself."[86] Chant is thus a medium through which the participants proclaim truth and search for divine presence and is therefore essentially iconic. This physical proclamation of sung text renders the participants iconic as well as the sacred text which is put into embodied sound. MacMillan's style is heavily influenced by this tradition, and often specific chants are used as primary melodic motives. In the same ornamented example from earlier, MacMillan's bass melody line (example 4.1) is lifted straight from a liturgical communion chant (example 4.2). You can see the corresponding main pitches circled, and MacMillan even keeps it in the same modal area of F hypolydian. In practice, MacMillan's use of chant connects him to an iconographic tradition through its facilitation of worship and as conveyer and embodier of a sacred text.

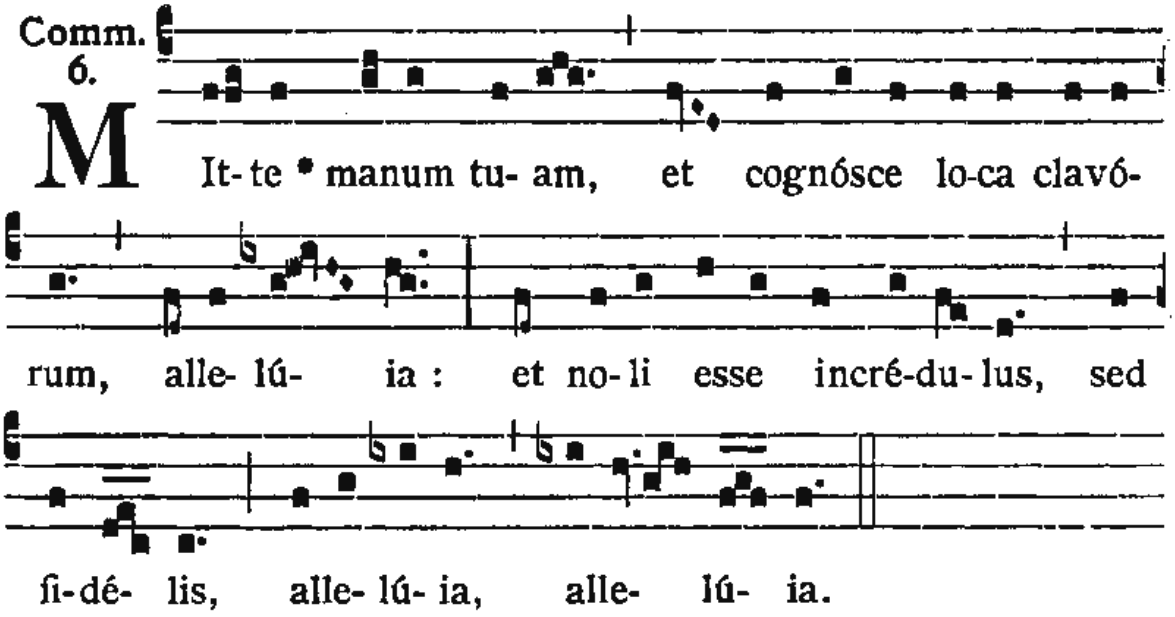
Example 4.1
Bass part, mm.1-10.



"Mitte manum tuam" By James MacMillan

[86] Hiley, *Gregorian Chant*, 4.

Example 4.2
Communion motet for the second Sunday of Easter.



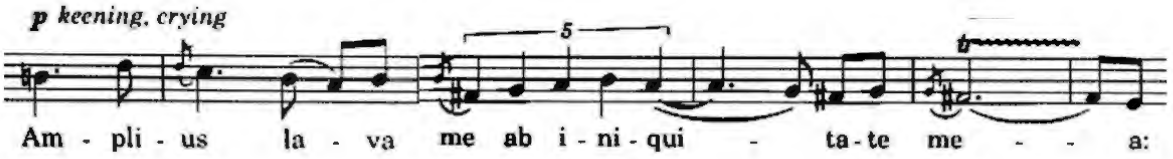
Graduale sacrosanctae Romanae Ecclesiae de tempore & de sanctis (Solesmis: Abbaye Saint Pierre, 1979), 218.

When an icon is venerated in the Orthodox church, this veneration is not supposed to be directed towards the icon itself; at a basic level, the icon symbolically points to the image depicted. It stands in the place of the person rendered, in social practices of veneration.[87] In MacMillan's music, he frequently makes use of musical symbolism. This is seen in programmatic depictions of Christ, musically embodied in the *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, *Veni Veni Emmanuel*, or most explicitly in MacMillan's *Triduum*, a collection of three works that together describe the three-day Passion narrative.[88] This is also seen in his re-use of material, including chant, that points towards something extra-musical and beyond itself. One example of this is the "keening" melody we saw in his *Miserere* (example 5.1). There, it seems to be a reflection on the human condition; it is paired with the Psalm text in opposition to MacMillan's frequently re-used "Tryst" melody, which symbolically points towards divine sacrificial love.[89] Yet MacMillan reuses this keening melody in his *Since it was the day of Preparation*, a work continuing the Passion narrative where the St. John Passion leaves off. The solo horn interlude picks the melody up, this time as a reflection on the mystery of the resurrection (example 5.2). The melody is transformed

[87] C.f. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought: The Social Practices of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[88] McGregor, "'A Metaphor for the Deeper Wintriness,'" 31-35.
[89] See Dominic Wells, "Reincarnating the Tryst: The Endurance of a Simple Love Song," in *James MacMillan Studies*, ed. George Parsons and Robert Sholl, Cambridge Composer Studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 67-86. The Tryst melody occurs throughout MacMillan's oeuvre both consciously and unconsciously, transformed from a romantic love song in The Tryst to love of church in St. Anne's Mass, maternal love in Busqueda, and divine sacrificial love in Miserere and St. John Passion.

from the frantic, grieving, keen in the *Miserere* into a subdued but insistent symbolic recognition of Christ's redemptive power over death.[90] As a referent, MacMillan uses this theme symbolically to exegete the implications of the text, subverting the knowing listener's expectations of what this melody has signified in previous works and thus transforming the meaning of the music itself from grief to hope. Like visual iconography, MacMillan's re-use of melodic ideas and programmatic depictions of religious subject matter symbolically point beyond the merely musical.

Example 5.1
Keening melody.



"Miserere" By James MacMillan

Example 5.2

"Since It Was The Day of Preparation" By James MacMillan

MacMillan's music is thus characterized by many of these iconographic traits. It stems from silence as a window into divine presence, it is grounded in liturgical worship as a stylized and pedagogical tradition of Gregorian chant, it is embodied in the act of singing sacred text, and it symbolically points toward the beyond. MacMillan says of his music that it is fundamentally an "attempt to…encounter the face of God," and this creative encounter for both the composer and the listener is only possible through a sacrificial, embodied, and contemplative receptivity.[91] MacMillan writes that "being openly receptive to the transforming power of music is analogous to the patient receptivity to the divine that is necessary for religious contemplation…music allows us to see beyond to what lurks in the crevices of the human-divine experience."[92] It is this seeing beyond toward the divine that I argue is essentially iconographic in MacMillan's music, but it is not one-sided. As he wrote of his iconic experience with his granddaughter that mirrors his conception of music, sometimes "God looks back." MacMillan's music is therefore a space for transcendence.

[90] The interlude comes near the end of the work, immediately preceded by text from John 21, where Christ is revealed to the disciples at breakfast on the beach, forgives Peter, and foretells Peter and John's deaths.

[91] MacMillan, "God, Theology and Music," 20, 24-26.
[92] Ibid, 25.

It is this space that Arvo Pärt so deftly navigates, offering his music as an iconographic connection to the divine. Insofar as MacMillan himself is concerned, he seems to similarly consider his own music iconographically in both philosophy and technique, at least implicitly. Yet this raises questions for our interaction with his work that are perhaps different than with Pärt. In particular, issues of audience reception, composerly authority, and applicability beyond the particular religious context remain. While the composer may see no difference between the sacred and secular in his music, can we universally see his music as an encounter with the divine in the absolute-music instrumental works as well as the sacred choral ones, the liturgical as well as the concert-hall works? Pärt's own conception of tintinnabuli is all-encompassing, and as we've seen his religion and philosophy are wedded to his technique. I have attempted to motivate a similar movement in MacMillan's work, but admittedly his oeuvre is more varied in style and his Catholic background is religiously distinct from Pärt's Orthodox context. Furthermore, musicologist and theologian Jeremy Begbie problematizes musical transcendence itself in MacMillan's religious context, and he notes that a vaguely Kantian understanding of musical transcendence is incompatible with God's "self-representation" in the incarnation of Christ. For Begbie, such a continental understanding limits the power of music to transcend the human experience in the same way that the iconographic lens would suggest.[93] We need to therefore ask if the iconographic claims for transcendence are applicable to an audience who do not share in MacMillan's own religious beliefs. Since the publication of "God, Theology, and Music" in 2000, MacMillan's philosophy and output has given rise to these issues, and it will be interesting to note how they change or expand in the future as MacMillan continues to compose sacred music.[94] Further research is needed, and satisfying answers to these issues lie beyond the scope of this paper, yet in all this it is hopefully evident how this Pärtian iconographic lens could and indeed does apply to aspects of MacMillan's work as it seeks to be an aural icon, a window into "the face of God."

[93] Jeremy Begbie, "Negotiating Musical Transcendence," in *Music and Transcendence*, ed. Férdia J. Stone-Davis (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2015). Begbie's analysis would support my iconographic claims for MacMillan within the specifically Christian context: the incarnation reveals a locus of transcendence that is found in a specific space and time (the person of Christ), rather than at the limits of human perception in the "quasi-divinity of the sublime." Transcendence in this view is thus embodied, occurring in and through matter like the icon, and music uniquely serves to enrich and transcend language about the divine. However, the question here is whether MacMillan's music can offer transcendence regardless of belief in the Christian narrative of transcendence.

[94] See Cooke, *The Music of James MacMillan* for a discussion of future projects, including MacMillan's plans for two more Passion settings.

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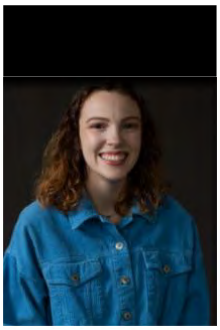

"Son, Why Have You Treated Me Like This?": A Marian View of Miscarriage

NATALIE NICHOLS

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THE CHURCH LOVES BABIES. Christ chose the form of a squalling, red-faced newborn baby as his preferred entry into human life. He drew small toddlers onto his lap. Nearly all churches have some ecumenical mark to celebrate a new baby: baptism, dedication, or simply showering mothers and fathers with meal trains. Like the liturgical season of Advent, pregnancy is a joyful season filled with longing and waiting. Yet the tragic reality is that around twenty percent of pregnancies end in miscarriage.[1] Subverted hopes, dreams, and longings are washed away in a torrent of blood and tears. The taboo of publicly acknowledging miscarriage leaves grieving families largely alone with questions, trauma, and deep pain. What do you do when there is no baby to celebrate?

Historically, the Church has entered this question well and comprehensively explored a theology of miscarriage. When it has, it has narrowly sought to address the question of who is at fault for the loss of the child. More recently, some theodicies of miscarriage, primarily from womanist and feminist theologians, have emerged to comfort grieving families and seek God amid this unimaginable suffering. Yet while these scholars have substantially enriched this desperately-understudied topic, one key tenet of a comprehensive theology of miscarriage continually seems missing. Mary, the Mother of God, offers an entry into and path through the grief and loss of women suffering from miscarriages in a uniquely empathetic way. I argue that she is an integral component of crafting a holistic theology of miscarriage to minister to grieving women and prepare the church to respond.[2]

Fault and Consequence: Historic Womb Theology

Early church debates were understandably concerned with ironing out key dogmas and did not turn dramatically turn towards questions of motherhood and families, only pausing to define Mary as *theotokos*, the mother of God.[3] This meant that miscarriage losses were not open for discussion, leaving gaps of care and

[1] Agnes Howard, "Where Neither Choice Nor Life Prevails," *Comment*, November 22, 2022, https://comment.org/where-neither-choice-nor-life-prevails/?utm_campaign=2022-11-24,%20Agnes%20Howard&utm_content=229907225&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&hss_channel=tw-105196688/.

[2] For the scope of my paper, I will be focusing only on the grieving experience of mothers. However, there is also a real theological need to address the grief of fathers in miscarriage and craft a comprehensive miscarriage theology.

[3] In fact, Sally Cunneen notes that even in these discussions about motherhood pertaining to Mary, the discussions still Christ-centered, not about lived experiences of motherhood and womanhood. Cunneen claims that the decision she was "theotokos...defined Christ, not Mary; it guaranteed the unity of Christ's nature..." and it "stressed Mary's biological role." See Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary: The Woman and the Symbol* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 130.

unspoken inferences of shame and blame on families struggling with miscarriages.

In the few instances where reproductive topics were discussed, as when Augustine defined canon abortion theology, these discussions were principally shaped by men committed to celibacy, who lack both scientific backing and the embodied experiences of trauma and loss. These theological movements sought to affirm the *imago Dei* in all people, but unfortunately more often than not ended up vilifying mothers in their ideas of the sinful and senseless death of babies. Augustine did attempt to differentiate between "ensouled" and "unformed" fetuses; that is, early-term and late-term pregnancies. He thus suggested that mothers should not be shamed and faulted for unformed, very early-term abortions (the only terminology he had to discuss any kind of pregnancy loss, voluntary or involuntary).[4] However, he did not have the capacity to understand losses across all stages of the pregnancy process, and he also never addressed what happens to the lost babies in terms of their salvation, resurrection, and grace. These questions of blame, shame, and salvation are questions that sit at the heart of the Christian grief of miscarriage.

The Reformation provided one of the first key shifts in the theology of miscarriage. For the first time, the family became a focal point of faith. Because clergy could marry, preachers were interested in speaking about the "day-to-day faith of women" and wives.[5] Motherhood became a more important—even the highest—calling for a woman. [6] It is therefore in the Reformation that we find one of the first real attempts toward a theology of miscarriage.

Luther's wife suffered a miscarriage, alongside two other deaths of their young living children, and in turn, Luther writes "A Consolation for Women Whose Pregnancies Have Not Gone Well" in 1542 as a preface for a book on Psalm 29.[7] Luther notes that "it was not due to their carelessness or neglect that the birth of the child went off badly."[8] He reassures women that God is not angry at them, and her "deep longing to bring her child to be baptized will be accepted by God as an effective prayer." [9] This is in contrast to the Catholic view, which to this day remains ambiguous on the fate of unbaptized, miscarried babies.[10]

Luther's turn towards questions of individual blame and the salvatory fate of the child is a critical development in miscarriage theology. Breaking from previous discourse, Luther makes it clear that the woman is *not* at fault and the child *will* be saved. Yet, unfortunately, this short sermon ends here, leaving much unsaid about the pain after a miscarriage—the lingering trauma and grief, and the movements forward for families and churches in response to miscarriage.

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[4] Daniel A. Dombrowski, "St. Augustine, Abortion, and Libido Crudelis," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 1 (January-March 1998): 154, https://doi.org/10.2307/2709708.

[5] Jennifer McNutt, "No Simple Story: How Women's Roles Changed in the Sixteenth Century," *Christian History* 131 (2019): 6-7.

[6] See Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2021) for a discussion of this turn in church history. Like any major turn, it had both valuable and harmful implications in the church and women's lives. I will cover here the benefits of this shift; alongside her helpful historical overview of this Protestant family-focused turn, Barr notes some of the more harmful effects that this had on women's leadership capacity and equality.

[7] McNutt, "No Simple Story," 6.

[8] Martin Luther, "Comfort for Women Who Have Had A Miscarriage," trans James Raun, *Luther's Works* 43 (1968).

[9] Ibid.

[10] Lynne McIntyre, et al, "'I Want to Bury It, Will You Join Me?': The Use of Ritual in Prenatal Loss among Women in Catalonia, Spain in the Early 21st Century," *Religions* 13: 336, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040336.

Additionally, this discourse still centers on a man's voice. While Luther certainly brings his own valuable experiences to learn from, there remains a gap in the firsthand perspective of a mother in learning to grieve.

Womb Theology Today: The Missing Mother

In the last twenty years, womanist and feminist theologians today have begun turning towards the need to address the trauma of miscarriage in the church community as a whole, not from simply individualistic responses. Trauma is an embodied experience, often defined as a wound that "leaves an imprint on the mind, brain, and body as a whole."[11] It must therefore be addressed in an embodied, holistic way; thus, feminist theologians have begun asking not just how to handle the guilt of miscarriage, but how to *respond* to it and move forward in grief and loss.

L. Serene Jones (2001) draws on psychological understandings of trauma and miscarriage as well as feminist theory to explore the key issues that require a theological response. First, a woman faces a loss of control and agency, coupled with intense guilt. Second, Jones identifies the grief of a "hope forever deferred."[12] The woman "grieves not only an immediate loss, but the loss of an entire lifetime, a lifetime lived vividly in the drama of her hoping."[13] The third traumatic experience is "the loss of bodily integrity," a "rupturing of the self...when one experiences the radical dissolution of the bodily borders that, in ordinary time, give the self a sense of internal coherence."[14] A woman's understanding of he own physical body dissolves and falls away with the baby and the blood.

Jones concludes by offering ways to respond to these theologically. One doctrine to "hold and shape the unique characteristics of this grieving" that she jests is "not very Reformed" is Mary.[15] However, she dismisses Mary as the best option because she thinks Mary only offers three avenues of interpretation: 1) as the mother of God, a "womb, productive ground"; 2) as the "choosing agent" of the Magnificat in liberation theology; and 3) as "the site of fragmenting discourses," a postmodern, symbolic option.[16] None of these Marys resonate with lived experiences of miscarriage, according to Jones. Each fails to address one of the three key trauma areas.

Instead, Jones offers Trinitarian doctrine as "an image that can hold [the] experience" of women grieving miscarriages.[17] She suggests that this image both reminds women that God's redemptive love extends to all people, including those suffering from reproductive loss, and also creates a point of empathy—a Godhead that takes death into Godself as Jesus bleeds on the cross.[18] Jones' Trinitarian theology has sparked other reflections on ritual and liturgy after miscarriage, particularly in the Protestant tradition.[19] Ritual is a key trauma

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[11] Y.K. Susanta, "Feminist trauma theology of miscarriage as an embodied experience," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, vol. 1 (2022): 1, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i1.7898.
[12] L. Serene Jones, "Hope Deferred: Theological Reflections on Reproductive Loss." *Modern Theology* 17, vol. 2 (April 2001): 233, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0025.00158.
[13] Jones, "Hope Deferred," 234.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Jones, "Hope Deferred," 239.
[16] Jones, "Hope Deferred," 238-239.
[17] Jones, "Hope Deferred," 240.
[18] Jones, "Hope Deferred," 242.
[19] For the length of this paper, I do not have time to unpack these, but two interesting theological explorations in this area are McIntyre et al. "'I Want to Bury It, Will You Join Me?': The Use of Ritual in Prenatal Loss among Women in Catalonia, Spain in the Early 21st Century," *Religions* 13: 336. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040336 and Eliana Ah-Rum Ku, "The Need for Lament in Liturgy to Deal with Women's Suffering Experience of Pregnancy Loss Based on the Image of a Lamenting God,"

response—it helps our body recognize, mark, and process deep issues.

Like Jones, psychologist and theologian Christy Bauman turns towards womanist theology and Trinitarian doctrine of a God who takes death into God's womb, so to speak, to make sense of her embodied experience as a woman suffering reproductive loss.[20] In her *Theology of the Womb*, Bauman discusses how it was too difficult to receive communion after a stillbirth, because "there were no tears, there was utter and overwhelming waiting ... that came every time a pastor or a priest broke bread. For my body had been broken and death was laid in my arms."[21] In her trauma, she could not take the broken body of Christ. I began wondering if Jones had dismissed Mary as a doctrinal locus for miscarriage too quickly—for who better to illustrate a reapproach to the Eucharist than Mary at the foot of the cross?

I began to believe that, across her text, Bauman was searching for a Marian answer. Bauman needed a doctrine that could envelop her experience with a womb that brought death. And, like Bauman, Mary had held the broken dead body of her child and wailed over it. I believe that Mary, a real woman with a real womb, offers a rich, robust theology of miscarriage.

A Marian Turn Towards Miscarriage

Jones' principal critique of examining Mary at the foot of the cross as the basis for a miscarriage theology is that Mary is not suffering from the loss of bodily integrity—the third trauma point—at that moment. Her "barrenness and her bodily disintegration are not at issue," as she is not losing a physical part of herself.[22] However, this ignores the Christian tradition that supports an understanding that Mary's life and body were mystically intertwined with that of her son. Catholic contemplative Caryll Houselander reflects that Mary "formed Christ of her own life, in herself; and now that she had brought him forth, she lived in Him. Quite literally, her life was in Christ. Therefore there could never be anything He suffered which she did not. He would suffer and she with Him."[23] Similarly, historic contemplative Pseudo-Maximus suggests that during Christ's crucifixion, "not only was the immaculate mother inseparable from him, but she shared his pain," continuing to suggest that perhaps she even "suffered more than him and endured sorrows of the heart."[24] Even as she cradles her newborn, Simeon hints at this theological idea of Mary's impending bodily disintegration, as "a sword will pierce [her] heart too."[25] Her own body will die by the same sword that kills her son.

These reflections illustrate how deeply the life of the *theotokos* was embedded in Christ; Mary must be suffering some loss of bodily integrity at this moment. Her body formed Jesus' and joined in his flesh; across his life, he therefore remains part of an externalization of her womb and body. As she watches her own flesh die on the cross, she must be losing some sense of bodily borders that Jones identifies. And without a doubt, she is suffering a loss of control and shattered, disillusioned hope for her life and his at that moment.

Mary's whole path is marked by the death of children. Even amid the glow of a new mother, Mary is asked to confront the death

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[20] Christy Angelle Bauman, *Theology of the Womb: Knowing God Through the Body of a Woman* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019), 75.

[21] Bauman, *Theology of the Womb*, 68.

[22] Jones, "Hope Deferred," 239.

[23] Caryll Houselander, *The Reed of God*, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2020), 61.

[24] Maximus the Confessor, *The Life of the Virgin*, trans. Stephen J. Shoemaker (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 101.

[25] Luke 2:35 (NIV).

that she has begotten. After Herod orders the death of all of the little boys in Bethlehem, Matthew inserts a lament from Jeremiah: "*A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.*"[26] I argue that Rachel does not merely represent the mothers of the babies; Mary is Rachel here too. She must feel the guilt and the weight that women who miscarry do, that they have brought death to someone undeserving. She may not feel the bodily separation of miscarriage yet, but her playmates' babies are being slaughtered as a direct result of Mary's womb. Mary knows what it is like to hold the guilt of birthing undeserved death.

Other instances of Mary in scripture both speak empathetically into the grief of miscarriage and begin to offer theological responses. When Mary loses the adolescent Jesus, Houselander notes that she "suffered the loss of God."[27] Quite literally, Mary does not know where God is after her child is lost. This is an integral and vulnerable experience for a grieving mother. Where is God amid missing, lost children? When Mary does find Jesus, she asks, "why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you" (Luke 3:48). Jesus asks why she has been looking—he has been in his father's house. This passage echoes strains of Luther's sermon. It acknowledges the grief and worry of miscarriage in the Marian anguish of a lost God, yet there is theological significance in the reality that the child is in his father's house now. In no way does this diminish the pain and fear of lost children, but perhaps it offers solace to a grieving mother wondering where her baby went.

Further, at the foot of the cross, as Mary is watching her flesh ripped away, Jesus offers another theological gift. "Here is your son," he tells her, gesturing to John. He teaches the community around her to become her family; yet this is not disconnected from Mary weeping at the foot of the cross. This passage offers two callings, both integrally paired in a Marian theology of miscarriage: there is a communal calling to surround and embrace grieving mothers as a family alongside the individual calling to wail and mourn.

A Burnt Womb at the Center: A Visual Marian Theology

As I consider what Marian theology offers in miscarriage, I cannot stop returning to an image of the Pietà that holds grief and resurrection all in one. In Fenwick Lawson's carved Pietà (1981) in the Durham Cathedral, Christ represents brutalized death; yet, one of his hands gestures up to Mary, the container of life.[28] This suggests a resurrection, placing her embodied womb at the center.[29] It is reminiscent of his verbal gesture on the cross—"here is your son." There is—and will be—a life that surrounds the grief of death. Meanwhile, Mary's hands stretch out to her dead son, palms stretched upwards as if seeking for answers from heaven. The crack in her wooden face draws us into her pain, coupled with a long, drawn expression. She mourns. There is no answer for her.

The most interesting parts of the sculpture are the burns across the Christ and Mary. In 1984, the statue was in a York church that caught fire.[30] Molten lead splashed Mary's brow and split her head further, and singed her knees. A screen

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[26] Matthew 2:16-18 (NIV).
[27] Houselander, *Reed of God*, 97.
[28] See Appendix A.
[29] Anna Lawson, "Pieta by Fenwick Lawson: Unique Insights from his Daughter," *St. Cuthbert's Final Journey*, March 17, 2013, https://stcuthbertsfinaljourney.com/2013/03/17/pieta-by-fenwick-lawson-unique-insights-from-his-daughter/.
[30] Ibid.

protected most of her, but the Christ statue caught much of the debris and falling, burning lead. Both ended up burnt, but especially Jesus. Lawson noted that the burns were a "fantastic" dimension to the exploration of life and death that he could not have conceptualized.[31]

This image models the Marian miscarriage theology that I am suggesting. Here is a Mary whose body has been burned with her son's, who cradles her dead son in her arms. Here is the Mary who sobs, racked with guilt because she birthed death. Here is the Mary of hopes deferred. Here is the life at the center of death.

Bauman tells the story of going to church after another miscarriage and being pulled in by her friend Heather, who whispers "you are loved. You are loved. You are loved." She is "a strong and knowing mother who is not afraid to comfort my grief. She is not afraid to allow me to melt in her arms."[32] This is where Mary meets grieving mothers. In learning to stand with her at the foot of the cross, we begin to find the rituals and liturgy of burial, of cradling broken bodies of babies, of crying tears of baptism, back towards the table of the resurrection—the table that makes no sense in these moments.[33]

After a notably-absent Mary across her book, Bauman closes with a powerful image: "I often wonder what sound Mary hummed as she held Jesus when he was a newborn, and I wonder if she hummed that same song over him as she held his lifeless body after he was taken off the cross."[34] Mary is a key, missing component in our theology of wombs, particularly as Protestants. We need not fear, avoid, or dismiss her; instead, we should turn towards her embodied experience as a real woman with a womb who can enter the soul of the experience of miscarrying. Though Jones' trinitarian doctrine of miscarriage is beautiful, it lacks the capacity to do so. Mary is equipped to offer the empathy and compassion that grieving women need, understanding and raising their same questions as she loses God and asks, "why have you been treating me like this?"[35] And, all the while, Mary also offers a theological approach for the church that picks the broken body up together with the mother and hums over it, the familial community around the mother that performs little liturgies of grief and moving through pain in community.

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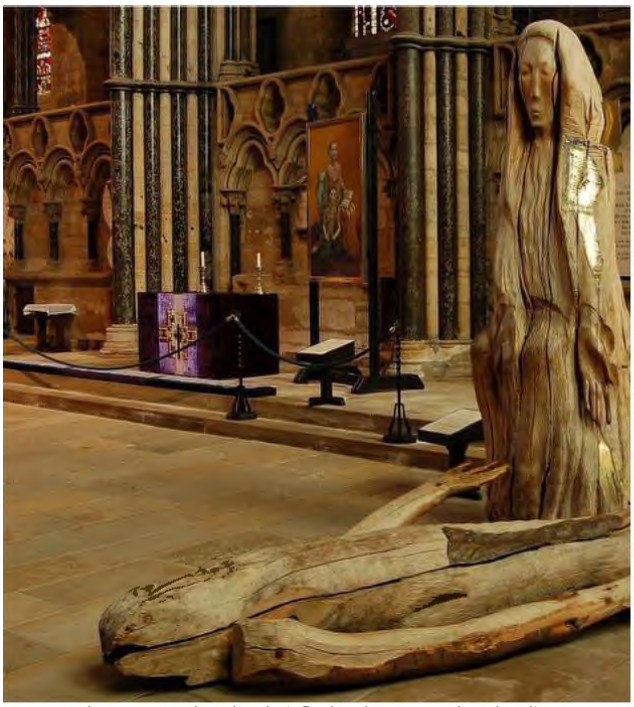
[31] Lawson, "Pieta by Fenwick Lawson."
[32] Bauman, *Theology of the Womb*, 87.
[33] Bauman speaks of the "baptism of tears," that, for her, serves as one theologically-informed trauma ritual that helps her process the grief of reproductive loss; cf. Bauman, *Theology of the Womb*, 75-77.
[34] Bauman, Theology of the Womb, 145.
[35] In speaking to my own mother, who has had three miscarriages, she echoed the powerful impact of recognizing Mary sharing questions of miscarriage. She said "one of the big questions I found myself wrestling with in miscarriage was, 'Is this little life meaningful? Did it matter?' It matters to me. I loved it deeply even though I barely knew it. I have to think as Jesus was on the Cross, that question might have dogged Mary too."; Jennifer Nichols, personal email to author, September 7, 2022.

Appendix A: Pietà (1981) by Fenwick Lawson

Lawson, "Pieta by Fenwick Lawson."

Fenwick Lawson, "Pieta," Fenwick Lawson, last accessed December 14, 2022, http://www.fenwicklawson.co.uk/pieta.html.



Durham Cathedral (@durhamcathedral), "Good Friday. The Pietà, by Fenwick Lawson, depicting Mary at the feet of the body of Christ," Twitter, March 29, 2013, https://twitter.com/durhamcathedral/status/317577249316536321.

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Dignity and the *imago Dei*: A Rights-Based Argument for Environmental Justice

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IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY, the pressing dangers of climate change are prevalent, as more and more studies reveal the damaging effects of industrialization to the world's balanced ecosystems. One such example of the effects of climate change is rising sea levels across the globe, which threaten the lives and livelihood of human beings. While one could argue for the need to take action to pursue environmental justice from a position of needing to care for the earth as God's good creation, the argument gains strength when factoring in the harm being done to human beings as a result of climate change. All humans are God's handiwork, made in His image; any failure to uphold this basic dignity for all individuals essentially denies the *imago Dei*.

The goal of this paper is the argue that as human beings created in the image of God and endowed with duties to care for marginalized communities, there is an obligation to pursue environmental justice for those whose rights are violated by rising sea levels. First, the scientific phenomenon of climate change will be discussed and correlated to rising sea levels. Next, the harmful effects of sea level rise on human habitation will be investigated. Then, these impacts will be linked to violations of basic human rights. Finally, the obligations to uphold environmental justice on moral and Christian bases will be outlined and potential actions proposed.

Contribution of Climate Change to Rising Sea Levels

The rise of industrialization, though tremendously important for the development of societies, has nevertheless left an array of tragedies in its wake. One impact of the rise in factories and fossil fuel burning is global climate change. Carbon dioxide (CO_2) is the byproduct of burning processes, including power generation, transportation, and burning of land (Ramanathan and Feng 2009). With the recent rise in these processes, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising to unprecedented levels. Currently, the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere is estimated to be 414 ppm; however, 430 ppm seems to be the point past which dangerous climate change cannot be avoided (Lindsey 2022a). Therefore, serious consideration must be given as to the consequences of these high concentrations, and actions taken to help remedy the phenomenon known as the greenhouse effect.

The phenomenon of the greenhouse effect results from the presence of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The surface of the earth absorbs incoming solar energy, becoming warmer, then consequently emits infrared (IR) radiation back toward space. CO_2 and other greenhouse gases (such as CH_4 and NO_2) trap emitted IR radiation as the atoms vibrate at frequencies equal to the frequencies of emitted radiation, and this absorbed energy becomes heat as the molecules in the air collide (Ramanathan and Feng 2009). As a result, the balance of incoming and outgoing energy into the

earth's system can be disrupted: too much energy can be inside the atmosphere with increasing greenhouse gas concentrations. To balance the system, Planck's black body radiation law comes into effect. The warmed earth emits more heat to get rid of the extra energy inside the system, leading to rise in global mean temperature and global climate change (Ramanathan and Feng 2009). The change in climate also creates a self-perpetuating cycle that accelerates the rates of global temperature rise, in part due to decrease in the albedo effect. The albedo effect is caused by light-colored surfaces (such as snow) reflecting solar radiation; however, global warming is causing melting of polar ice caps and mountain glaciers (California Academy of Science 2018). This decreases the white surface areas from which solar radiation can be reflected, causing the earth to absorb more energy and increase the rate of global temperature rise.

Rising temperatures due to human-induced climate change result in altered weather patterns and general ecological changes across the earth. One of these global changes is the rise of sea levels. There are two major physical contributions to global mean sea level (GMSL) rise. The first, accounting for approximately one-third of GMSL rise since 2005, is thermal expansion causing the ocean waters to slightly swell and increase in volume as they warm up (Wuebbles et al. 2017). Ninety percent of additional heat in the climate system due to excess greenhouse gases is absorbed by the oceans, increasing the ocean heat content (Fasullo and Gent 2017). The increase in ocean heat increases the kinetic energy of water molecules, which causes more movement and space between each molecule (Urone et al. 2016). Consequently, the volume of the oceans grows, resulting in sea level rise. Secondly, ice from mountain glaciers and polar ice sheets melts and increases water mass of the oceans, accounting for approximately two-thirds of GMSL rise since 2005 (Wuebbles et al. 2017). Overall, global mean temperatures are on the rise and encroaching on coastal regions, largely as a result of human increases in fossil fuel emissions.

Not only is sea level rising across the world, but the rate at which it is rising is increasing. On average, the GMSL has risen approximately 20-23 centimeters since 1880, and with a high greenhouse gas emissions model, GMSL rise could physically exceed 2.5 meters by 2100 (Wuebbles et al. 2017; Lindsey 2022b). Though this severity is improbable, these projections emphasize the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. Over the last 27 years, the average sea level rise has been measured at 3.4 mm/year; however, in the last 10 years, the average rate of sea level rise has been 4.8 mm/year (Griggs and Reguero 2021). Therefore, the rate of rise is increasing. Furthermore, isolated events of flooding are becoming more common, as there has been an increased frequency of annual and high-tide flooding. High-tide flooding is 300-900% more frequent than 50 years ago, and scientists are predicting a rise in annual floods and frequency of tidal flooding after observing a 5 to 10 fold increase in "nuisance floods" since the 1960s (Wuebbles et al. 2017; Lindsey 2022b). Sea level rise is not only a slow and constant phenomenon but has an impact on isolated events that can cause massive damages if unexpected. Finally, sea level rise varies geographically due to spatial patterns and regional climate change differences, indicating different populations are at greater or lesser risk of impeding sea levels (Wuebbles et al. 2017). This disproportionate impact begins to point toward concerns regarding environmental justice and the need to advocate for the rights of disadvantaged populations.

Detrimental Effects of Sea Level Rise

Before assessing the rights violations and moral obligations of privileged populations, it is important to address the detrimental effects of sea level rise and recognize where and how human rights might be violated due to climate change impacts. The most at-risk communities are those in "low-elevation coastal zones," and around 625 million people currently live in these areas worldwide (McLeman 2018). The large population involved places importance on understanding the issue at hand, and the alteration to human disbursement across the globe poses points of concern for the global population. Humans are intimately dependent on their ecosystems for life, and changes in these ecosystems (such as is occurring with climate change) impacts people's ways of life. This paper seeks to focus on the impact that rising sea levels have on how humans relate to and are affected by their environments, and the population patterns that shift due to changing sea levels. Overall, there are two main factors associated with sea level rise: land loss and damage due to intense weather events. Both factors result in two main effects of sea level rise: economic costs and population displacement.

To begin, land loss due to sea water inundation is a major factor that contributes to damages of climate change. One island that is particularly at risk of sea level rise is Viti Levu, Fiji, due to its low elevation and encompassing coastline. Researchers estimate between 20.5 and 29.9 square kilometers of Viti Levu will be inundated by 2100, with a compounded effect caused by storm surges (Sabūnas et al. 2020). Similarly, sea level rise is projected to account for 3-32% land loss due to inundation in the Southeast Asian and Pacific (SEAP) islands, with sea level rise models ranging from 1m to 6m (Wetzel et al. 2012). Sea waters encroaching on communities not only threatens their availability of inhabitable land but impacts agricultural systems as well. In the SEAP islands, 35% of urban and intensive agricultural land is being lost due to inundation of islands (Wetzel et al. 2012). In addition to surface area being lost from submergence as sea levels rise, saltwater intrusion, termed "salinization," deprives areas of freshwater, rendering some land unusable for agriculture (Griggs and Reguero 2021). Therefore, one important factor to address with regard to climate change and sea level rise is the land that is lost, either physically or functionally, and how this might affect the ecological relationships and dependencies of humans on nature.

The second major factor that contributes to the detriment of sea level rise is intense weather events, which cause pervasive damage. Typhoons and superstorms are expected to grow in size as sea levels rise and global temperatures increase (Griggs and Reguero 2021). Warmer temperatures result in increased wind speeds and more moisture held in the air, and sea level rise causes more severe storm flooding (Colbert 2022; Hurricanes … 2022). These factors together inflate the severity of tropical storms, as wind speeds, rainfall, and flooding all occur to greater degrees. Notably, the occurrence rates of storms is not predicted to change, but rather the strength of storms is on a rising trend. From 1979 to 2017, the number of major hurricanes increased, and the number of small hurricanes decreased, but the total number of hurricanes remained relatively consistent (Hurricanes … 2022). Damages from these storms can be very difficult to recover from especially in already-vulnerable locations. As with sea level rise in general, the intensity of severe storms is disproportionately increasing. The impact of

weather hazards and storm surges on communities is increased in locations where natural coastal protections have been destroyed (McLeman 2018). Therefore, a negative cycle begins to set in, necessitating discussions from more privileged communities regarding how to take action. Overall, the two main aspects of sea level rise—land loss and storm damages—are leading to two overarching effects of this climate disaster: economic cost and displacement.

The first detrimental effect of sea level rise is the cost to the economy. As land is lost and severe storms leave communities in tragic states of destruction, pressure builds on governments to find resources to sustain their people and help rebuild. In the year 2021, the US spent $67.4 billion on flooding and tropical cyclone damages (Smith 2020). Though the US may have been able to afford these damages and support the rebuilding of communities, many developing countries do not have this ability. Therefore, a catastrophic natural phenomenon could leave impoverished nations in dire states of need. Across the world, typhoons and superstorms have cost communities billions of dollars in damages and pose consequences for coastal risk and adaptation needs (Griggs and Reguero 2021). Without a stable economy that can support such damages, disadvantaged communities are at the mercy of neighbors who can assist. Nevertheless, though the economic dangers are concerning, even more concerning are the detrimental effects on the livelihoods of human beings threatened by sea level rise.

The second effect of GMSL rise is population displacement, as people are being forced from their homes in efforts to preserve their lives. The term “climate refugees” refers to people displaced either internally or externally due to certain climate change impacts on communities, such as rising sea levels (Sabūnas et al. 2020). It is projected that 15-27% of people living in coastal areas will become climate refugees due to sea level rise, greatly altering the density and dispersion of human populations around coastal areas (Wetzel et al. 2012). Both inundation of sea waters and damages due to intense weather events factor into these witnessed climate migrations, as evidenced by the following examples. In the Philippines, 1.9 million people were displaced after Typhoon Haiyan hit with the strongest recorded winds in history (Griggs and Reguero 2021). An estimated 70,700 people of the entire 740,000 people living in Viti Levu, Fiji, may be affected by sea level rise and storm surge, as they inhabit land close to inundated areas (Sabūnas et al. 2020). Finally, Bangladesh is experiencing high levels of internal environmental migration as people move away from areas destroyed by tropical storms and food unavailability (McLeman 2018). Though displacement and climate migration occur in an effort for communities to escape uninhabitable areas, the places to which they are migrating are little better than the homes they left. For instance, Dhaka, the city to where many people are migrating in Bangladesh, cannot meet basic human needs such as shelter, water, and sanitation (McLeman 2018). Further yet, evidence has indicated that people with limited access to quality living are forced to resort to living in hazardous locations (Walker 2012: 130). Thus, not only are the people in low-lying areas vulnerable to sea level rise, but many are also already in disadvantaged positions whereby they have limited access to resources to aid their situations. As will be described below, these experiences of climate migrants are violations of their basic human rights, and therefore those who are capable to assist have a moral obligation to do so.

Violation of Human Rights Due to Climate Change

To understand the violations of human rights relevant to the impacts of GMSL rise, it is necessary to define the foundation of basic human rights in order to assert their validity. Human dignity is the widely accepted foundation of human rights, as recognized from ontological and theological approaches. The concept of human dignity can be defined by a demanding duty of respect that is due to all human beings simply by nature of being human (Zylberman 2016). The existence of this pervasive dignity is widely supported by many philosophical approaches. First, ontology is the nature of being, whereby people have worth rooted in their metaphysical existence. According to Antonio Autiero, "...human dignity is nothing other than the fullness of being; the telos of the person that is already written within her, through natural law" (Autiero 2020). Essentially, dignity pours out of the full essence of what it means to be human. Secondly, a theological approach to the existence and vitality of dignity in establishing human rights comes from the concept of the *imago Dei*, or the image of God infused in every created human. At the creation of the world, God infused in both man and woman the image of himself: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Holy Bible: Gen 1:27). The International Theological Commission published a text to define the Roman Catholic understanding of the *imago Dei*. In this Communion and Stewardship, the authors state, "the *imago Dei* consists in man's fundamental orientation to God, which is the basis of human dignity and of the inalienable rights of the human person" (Petrusek 2017). This Roman Catholic perspective offers a clear picture of the relationship between the image of God and human dignity. Biblical texts also confirm that all people have an inherent connection to God, the creator of the universe, as He "breathed into [man's] nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Holy Bible: Gen 2:7). God is the Sovereign Lord of the universe, making Him worthy of all honor. Thus, being created in that likeness grants humankind a uniqueness of being, or human dignity, that necessitates conservation of inalienable rights.

Leading from the establishment of dignity as the foundation for human rights, specific guidelines of fundamental rights can be defined. The United Nations has compiled the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," which aims to give a general description of the rights that should be upheld for all human beings. Two articles are specifically relevant for the issues of environmental justice:

> Article 1: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." (United Nations)
>
> Article 25.1: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." (United Nations)

In support of the United Nations' declaration, there is a biblical foundation for equality and rights of humankind. All people are equal under the divinity of the Lord, and that equality should be advocated for in the upholding of human rights. In Leviticus, the Lord gives Moses commands regarding justice and care for the oppressed:

> "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.
> You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord." (Holy Bible: Lev 19:13-16)

These laws honor the rights of all humans by advocating for equal pay, enabling capabilities, just order, and supporting the lives of humankind, all of which align with the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Furthermore, the New Testament emphasizes how Christ leveled the playing field for all human beings: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Holy Bible: Gal 3:28). This reference affirms the equality claimed in Article 1 of the UN's declaration as well. Therefore, to deny certain inalienable rights of human beings, by failing to support vulnerable populations, denies the validity of God's image in all human beings and Christ's sacrifice for the world.

The violation of human rights is directly linked to sea level rise, as the previously described effects result in failure to uphold certain defined rights. In the above section outlining the impacts of sea level rise, it is evident that the rights outlined in Article 25.1 of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" are not being upheld for many populations, as living spaces and food sources are violated by encroaching sea levels. In addition, people are not being treated equally by allowing many groups to suffer while other groups thrive, especially since the advancement of developed countries is a contributing factor to climate change. In the US south, there is a negative correlation between percent population that is black and mean altitude of urban areas, meaning that communities with greater black populations are likely to live in lower-lying areas that are more vulnerable to flooding (Walker 2012: 132). Pervasive environmental injustice due to sea level rise disproportionately hinders the rights of disadvantaged people across the world, as equality and quality of life are not upheld. Therefore, there is a moral and Christian obligation to defend these disadvantaged communities.

Moral and Christian Obligations to Uphold Environmental Justice

In any instances of rights violations, the question arises as to who is responsible for the injustice, and who has the duty to pursue justice. Outside of the Christian realm, philosophers have debated the issues of morality and obligations when addressing disadvantaged populations. One perspective is utilitarianism, which is a form of consequentialism that argues actions are justified so long as they result in the greatest good for the majority of people. Peter Singer, a prominent utilitarian, claims if a person can prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, they must act regardless of proximity or if others could do the same (Singer 1972). As long as the net benefit of aiding a group impacted by sea level rise outweighs the harm potentially incurred, and the greatest number of people are helped, nations in positions to help vulnerable communities have an obligation to do so. Furthermore, humans in general are inclined by the Rule of Rescue, which is "the moral impetus or knee jerk reaction to save identifiable people facing death"

(Hoffman et al. 2022). If people recognize the threats facing coastal communities around the world and find themselves in unique positions to offer aid, there should be a natural urge to act in such a way to uphold morals and rights. In the instances of sea level rise, nations surrounding vulnerable communities may find themselves in positions to help, and therefore have a moral obligation to do so.

Going off this philosophy, some argue that those on whom the blame can be placed have a heightened duty to mitigate the detriments of their actions since they are in unique positions of fault. Philosopher Thomas Pogge makes an argument that because the developed world is an active participant in poverty, by failing to uphold both the positive duty to support marginalized communities and negative duty to not harm other populations, there is a duty to actively participate to better the global condition (Pogge 2001). Hoffman and others agree with Pogge, arguing more duty may lie on those entities that are at fault. Since climate change can be correlated to the impacts of human industrialization, people or nations largely contributing to greenhouse gas emissions have a more burdensome ethical duty to aid in relief efforts (Hoffman et al. 2022). In the context of climate change causing sea level rise, industrialized nations with high greenhouse gas emissions may be more obligated to support displaced people groups and supplement economic costs. Overall, philosophical perspectives offer strong incentives to act against climate change on the basis of human rights and dignity; however, approaching the question of obligation from a Christian perspective strengthens the motivation to pursue equality and justice.

The Christian duty to pursue justice for those impacted by GMSL rise is founded on the concept of the *imago Dei* and the biblical commands of Christ. First, the *imago Dei* is closely intertwined with relationality, whereby the *imago Dei* is derived from a triune God who is in perfect relationship with Himself (Pilkington 2017). All human beings are intimately connected relationally through the *imago Dei*, and as with any relationship there is a need for general love and support between beings. Pulling from Pope Benedict XVI, "love is what guides the normative implications of appeals to dignity rooted in the *imago Dei*. Love informs our treatment of others and ourselves" (Pilkington 2017). The second greatest command Jesus gives, after loving God fully, is to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Holy Bible: Mark 12:31). Christians have a duty to love their neighbors because Christ chose to love the whole world and sacrifice himself so that all people were put on the same level by his grace. This love has no regard for time or distance but seeks the good of all people who have been and will be created in the image of God. As a response to the grace received by Christ, Christians must listen to the words of Christ, as he says, "truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Holy Bible: Mt 25:40). In the context of inundation of sea water and population displacement, the "least of these" may become coastal communities suffering without the ability to save themselves, either now or in the future. In positions of privilege there exists greater obligation to "act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God," since there is both fault in the matter of global climate change and ability to provide needed resources (Holy Bible: Mic 6:8). In total, Christianity places even more duty to assist the vulnerable communities because all people are endowed with the same *imago Dei* and commanded by the words of Christ.

Thus far, it has been emphasized that land loss and storm damage due to GMSL rise is causing unwelcome economic costs and

population displacement of coastal communities around the world. Philosophy and theology both offer foundations for human dignity and fundamental rights due to that dignity, bestowing people in positions to help with a duty to do so. Therefore, the next step is assessing what people in positions of power can do to help those in positions of vulnerability and need. To begin, one way by which people can pursue love of neighbor is creation care efforts. The earth is intimately connected to the goodness of God, as it is a product of his creative work, whereby "the earth bows down to [God]; they sing praises to [him], they sing the praises of [his] name" (Holy Bible: Ps 66:4). Manifestations of this connection of God and creation should encourage Christians to advocate for good treatment of the land. One way this could be promoted is through use of clean energy, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and make use of renewable resources. Examples of renewable energy include wind power, solar power, bioenergy, geothermal energy, and hydroelectric power (Renewable … 2022). Caring for the earth by adopting these forms of energy can help mitigate climate change and reduce harm done to vulnerable populations, therefore fulfilling in part the duty to care for marginalized communities.

Alternatively, people can act by advocating for and enforcing environmental justice. In his book Environmental Justice, Gordon Walker proposes a few different ways humanity can respond in this way. One proposed approach to pursing environmental justice could be "equalizing the capability to be resilient," which follows a capabilities-approach to human rights by "focusing justice on concepts of coping-capacity or resilience" (Walker 2012: 151). Martha Nussbaum defines the capabilities approach to global justice and human rights as having the capability to do something, with a positive emphasis that there must be active support of populations to ensure capabilities are upheld (Nussbaum 2003). This approach is also sensitive to cultural differences and leaves room for pluralism. As sea levels rise and impose threats on coastal communities, it will become necessary to prepare for these events and provide migration groups with the resources they need to sustain a sufficient quality of life, as is deserved via inalienable rights. For this to fully take effect, justice must be pursued at the levels of the state, communities, and the individual (participatory justice), thus "maintaining an inclusive and collective sense of process and participation" in enforcing procedural justice (Walker 2012: 153–154). Procedural justice maintains a cultural sensitivity regarding the contexts of people groups in need of rescue, listening to their needs and requests before imposing their own ethics on them (Hoffman et al. 2022). Displaced people groups only need to be helped so much as they perceive they need help, which is determined by remaining in conversation with the vulnerable. Finally, rescuing could also involve pursing adequate preparation in anticipation of migrating communities due to sea level rise and developing policies to enforce acceptance of climate refugees beforehand (Hoffman et al. 2022). These preparatory actions enforce justice by ensuring those in need have the capacity to migrate to safer locations or the ability to rebuild their lives and homes in the events of severe weather catastrophes. Overall, in response to recognition of the rights violation prevalent regarding sea level rise, nations with the capacity to aid impacted communities can do so by enforcing fundamental rights in a manner that respects cultural pluralism and maintains capabilities of vulnerable people.

In conclusion, humans have fundamental rights based on inherent dignity, as creatures made in the image of God, and these rights must be upheld specifically in the context of

environmental justice. As greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere increase, the global climate has been shifting to warmer temperatures and higher sea levels. Consequently, land loss and severe weather damage have led to economic hardship and population displacement mainly for low-lying coastal communities. These effects put people in positions where their fundamental rights are being violated, and human beings—specifically Christians—have a duty to uphold those rights for all image-bearers. The fulfillment of this duty could look like pursuing participatory and procedural justice, whereby all people take actions to enact justice and provide equitable opportunities for those in need. The love of neighbor that Christ commands in Mark 12 does not stop at proximity, but rather extends to all people in all situations, especially for those whom God has positioned his Church to help.

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Despairing and Hopeful Loneliness: The Monastic Journey in Marilynne Robinson's *Jack*

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THE EPONYMOUS CHARACTER OF Marilynne Robinson's *Jack* is intimately acquainted with loneliness. Having withdrawn from his family in Gilead to the city of St. Louis, Jack has committed himself to "harmlessness." For Jack, this entails eschewing any form of relationship so that his desires to exploit others' vulnerability will no longer have an outlet. Regardless of these continued attempts to self-isolate, Jack meets an African American woman, Della, and falls in love. Despite the hope that love introduces into his life, Jack's existence continues to be characterized by loneliness both in his unorthodox marriage to Della and in her family's inability to accept their relationship. At the conclusion of the novel, Jack and Della are effectively exiled from her family's home and set out to seek a community where their interracial family can be accepted. Throughout the novel, Jack's experience with loneliness is largely negative, yet he is transformed in positive ways through his isolation. The monastic tradition of Saint Antony contextualizes Marilynne Robinson's positive and negative presentation of loneliness in *Jack* and provides a vision for the transformative role of loneliness in the Christian life.

Hagiographical Form

The three-part form of Athanasius' *The Life of Antony* presents a timeline of Christian transformation and the impact of isolation on the Christian life. Athanasius' account of the life of Saint Antony was not only one of the first hagiographies—an account of the life of a saint—but also incredibly influential, "establish[ing] the frame of Christian hagiography" (Clebsch xiii). Douglas Burton-Christie, in his article "The Work of Loneliness: Solitude, Emptiness, and Compassion," characterizes this "frame" in three distinct sections. Athanasius writes Antony's story starting with *anachoresis*, progressing to *askesis*, and culminating in *agape* (31). *Anachoresis* is the response to the call for withdrawal (Christie 31). For Antony, this was a literal call from God to withdraw into isolation in the desert (Athanasius 31-32). Once in isolation, the period of *askesis*, meaning discipline or training, began (Christie 31). It is the time of trial and temptation that Antony experienced in the desert, attacked by demons yet growing closer to God. Finally, *agape* is the emergence from *askesis* and the reconciliation with human community (Christie 31). Antony's *agape* results in a plethora of healings and wisdom imparted to his community (Athanasius 42, 64).

Thus, Athanasius presents a timeline of Christian transformation as the individual is called to withdraw, confront the demonic and God in isolation, then return to benefit the community. In this timeline, isolation is essential in opening the individual not only to negative spiritual realities but also to God's presence: the only path to communal good. In Robinson's novel, Jack is by no means a saint. His motivations and experiences differ significantly from those of Antony, and Jack himself has doubts as to the state of his own soul. While Antony's isolation in the desert is more akin to solitude, Jack's isolation is steeped in loneliness, for he does not have the reassuring relationship with God that Antony does. Nevertheless, Jack's experience of loneliness mirrors the combined negative and positive attributes of Antony's solitude. Jack, like Antony, emerges from his loneliness with an increased awareness of the social ills in his community and an increased desire for the healing of those ills.

Jack's *Anachoresis*: Withdrawal

Antony and Jack withdraw from society; however, only Antony's withdrawal comes from a place of love and dedication to God. Antony hears, multiple times, a direct call to sell his possessions and follow the Lord (Athanasius 31). In following this call, Antony's heart for solitude was pure. As Athanasius relates, Antony's tenet was "that neither the way of virtue nor separation from the world for its sake ought to be measured in terms of time spent, but by the aspirant's desire and purposefulness" (36). For Antony, the rightly placed heart was essential to *anachoresis*. Jack's heart in withdrawal is not rightly placed. His desire to withdraw did not come from a place of openness to God's will for his life; rather, it is rooted in an unhealthy understanding of his relationship to those around him.

Jack's decision to isolate is a broken facsimile of Antony's holy calling, based on turbulent relationships with his mother and father. Because Robinson begins the novel *in media res*, there are only hints of Jack's original desire to withdraw and his response to that desire. Many of those hints relate to his father. During Jack and Della's graveyard conversation, Della comes to a realization about Jack that provides insight into the reason he withdrew from Gilead. She asserts that "'something happened that made you decide you'd had all the life you could stand. So you ended it there. Except you have to stay alive, for your father.' … 'You don't feel like part of the world anymore.'" (Robinson 73). From Della's perspective, Jack has ended his life in a figurative sense by cutting himself off from the rest of society. His father who waits for him to come home is the only reason he did not end it in a literal sense (47). In this way, Jack's withdrawal is motivated by a desire for death that he cannot satisfy out of a fear of hurting his father.[1]

Jack's isolation in St. Louis is also a result of his inability to live up to his father's hopes, a particular trial for a minister's son. In a reminiscence of his childhood, Jack considers his reputation as a child of vice; "he was great at setting teeth on edge" (Robinson 111). He "would sometimes stand beside his father, grinning, shaking hands as the flock filed out, much more than charming," in part because he knew it would both irritate and embarrass his father to have his prodigal son act so innocent (111). It is from this reminiscence

[1] Interestingly, Antony does desire death at some points in his life albeit for a vastly different reason. During the oppression of Christians by Maximin, Antony desired martyrdom but was unable to give himself over to the persecutors for similar reasons that Jack cannot contrive his own death (Athanasius 65-66).

that Jack himself provides another explanation for his withdrawal from society: "it was in some part as a courtesy to his father that Jack began to slip out of the house before dawn on Sundays" (111). Feeling his inadequacy in the face of his father's virtue, he decided that his only option was to remove himself from not only the life of the church, but the lives of those around him. He is unable to do so by suicide, so he physically removes himself to another city where he can isolate from human connection.

Jack's relationship with his mother also plays a role in his withdrawal. Jack sees his mother as delicate and easily harmed. He sees himself as someone who easily harms. Jack's withdrawal is a solution to the problem of keeping his mother safe from himself. In a reflection on his early truancy and the familial relationships that resulted from it, Jack remembers that

> He could have said [to his mother], 'I found a little creek where the ice wasn't solid yet, panes of ice, clear as glass.' He could even say he liked the sound they made under his boots, how they shattered when he threw them down. She knew about his interest in fragile things, and would have liked to hear that for once no harm was done. But she was fragile, so he could not bring himself to comfort her. Half the time he would roll up whatever he could of his supper in a piece of bread and be out the door again. Better the cold. Better the dark. Why was that? He knew how she felt when he left. He felt it himself. Dear Jesus, keep me harmless. He knew what that meant. Keep me alone. (Robinson 85)

Robinson brings to the forefront the inner turmoil that causes Jack to withdraw. Others, including his mother, are thin and brittle in his mind, like the most breakable ice that he throws to the ground with the greatest force. In order to mitigate his inherent harmfulness, he withdraws from them even though the withdrawal itself causes harm. In this interaction with his mother and the prior commentaries on his father, Robinson reveals the brokenness in Jack's *anachoresis*. Rather than withdrawing as a humble response to God's call, Jack allows his sinfulness and fear to lead him to reject not only his family in Gilead but any possibility for community in St. Louis. How, then, can the same good fruits grow from Jack's loneliness as do from Antony's time in the desert, given that their reasons for isolation differ so markedly?

Jack's *Askesis*: Isolation

Through Jack's *askesis*, Robinson demonstrates God's ability to bring beauty and transformation from brokenness, for Jack is transformed through the loneliness that results from his *anachoresis* no matter his reason for choosing isolation.[2] Although loneliness is a complex feeling that is largely experienced as negative even in Christian culture, the loneliness that can result from isolation in the monastic tradition is, for Christians, an opportunity for deeper intimacy with God. Robinson reconciles both of these realities in *Jack*. Just as Antony's isolation resulted both in painful struggles with the devil and deeper intimacy with God, so too does Jack's loneliness result both in intense wrestling with the reality of himself and in increased

[2] Jack's battle with agency and determinism throughout the novel underscores that his spiritual journey and transformation are not necessarily of his own choosing, yet the results remain the same. For a further exploration of agency and determinism in *Jack* see Mouw, Alex. "'Free to Act by Your Own Lights': Agency and Predestination in Marilynne Robinson's Gilead Novels." *Literature & Theology*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2021, pp. 198-219.

compassion for others. In Jack's own words, "his life was solitary and ascetic, as it was, almost past bearing, relieved by the library, occasional drunkenness, and lately by lunch with the Baptists" (Robinson 202). His lifestyle, besides the drunkenness, in St. Louis is reminiscent of the asceticism of Antony in the desert, and the outcomes of it are likewise parallel.

For Antony and Jack, time alone was not an easy commune with God; rather, "in opening oneself to the cleansing power of solitude, one's soul becomes porous and vulnerable" to demonic power (Christie 33). A time of isolation is a time of purification, but the cost of this purification is an openness to *all* spiritual forces. The demonic power that confronted monks such as Antony was not always the apparition of physical demons and beasts, often it was a necessary wrestling with the self. Christie writes that

> for Antony and the early monks, to speak of confronting the demonic in solitude was another way of talking about confronting the self. It meant facing up to all those anomalous forces at work in the depths of the psyche, forces which are usually kept at bay by the noise and distractions of everyday life but which, in the space of solitude, make their presence felt with alarming intensity. (33)

In this way, Antony's first temptation was a confrontation of his own lustful desires which he was able to resist (Athanasius 34). In Athanasius' account of one of Antony's sermons, Antony clearly states that the demons' "stumbling blocks consist of evil thoughts. … They pretend to prophesy and to predict things to come" (48). Again, Antony underscores this reality by saying "when they come, their actions correspond to the condition in which they find us; they pattern their phantasms after our thoughts" (63). The demonic attack Christians via internal methods, forcing the individual to wrestle with their own thoughts and emotions.

In Jack's *askesis*, this demonic wrestling manifests itself in his battle with the side of loneliness that most closely resembles despair. Josef Pieper, a neo-Thomist philosopher, defines despair as "a perverse anticipation of the nonfulfillment of hope … [it is] a decision of the will. Not a mood, but an act of the intellect" (113-114). Jack is continually beset with this despair; he anticipates the ways in which his hopes will be dashed. During his conversation with Della in the graveyard, Jack thinks of it as "a way of anticipating memories he particularly did not want to have" (Robinson 41). This anticipation of ruined hopes recalls Antony's description of the demons' false prophesying and prediction (Athanasius 48). Jack's future preconceptions reveal themselves particularly in Jack's relationship with Della. When Della gives Jack a poem, he anticipates reading it and tearing her mediocre writing to shreds before he has even looked at the page. Jack is continually casting himself forward into a future where he destroys the good in everyone around him. His assumption that all things shall be ruined in the end is not only despairing, but it is the direct and unique attack on his self by demonic forces.

As he wrestles with the belief that he will inevitably harm those around him, Jack begins to aspire to harmlessness. Robinson reveals that, for him, this harmlessness is yet another manifestation of despair. In a rumination instigated by seeing Della with another man and considering the unlikelihood of a relationship with her, Jack considers that

> It was on the basis of the slight and subtle encouragements offered by despair that he had discovered a new aspiration, harmlessness, which accorded well enough with his habits if not his disposition. Keeping his distance was a

> favor, a courtesy, to all those strangers who might, probably would emerge somehow poorer for proximity to him. This was his demon, an eye for the most trifling vulnerabilities. (Robinson 119)

While Jack is able to correctly identify the "demon" that manifests for him as a desire to exploit others' vulnerabilities, he misses the larger demonic influence—his despair over always causing harm in a relationship.[3] For Jack, harmlessness is a perpetuation of isolation and loneliness which leads him further into despair. He enacts harmlessness in his relationship with Della by cutting off the relationship, and "for a day or two he would take pleasure in the thought that her good life was unthreatened by his Jackness, Jackitude, Jackicity. (Robinson 139). Jack considers his ability to harm as the core quality of his being. Thus, the only way for him to minimize the harm he causes to others is to remove himself from the picture. This is his reality to the point where he considers himself to be his own worst enemy (Robinson 266). Such is the cyclical nature of Jack's encounter with the demonic during his *askesis*. His loneliness internalizes as despair and reinforces his self-conceptualization as one who can only harm others. This, through his aspirations for harmlessness, pushes him deeper into isolation.[4]

The spiritual warfare which manifests for Jack as isolation and despair is also the manner in which the majority of individuals experience and conceptualize loneliness. In his book *Loneliness, Solitude and Companionship*, Robert E. Neale describes loneliness as a state in which "we are aware of absence as a most powerful presence" (21). This absence is a separation from relationship (Neale 22). There is pain in such a separation, and Jack clearly experiences that pain. When Della first sees Jack, she mistakes him for a pastor. To remedy this, Jack acquires a different suit that more properly conveys his identity as a bum. When Della later sees him in the ragged suit, he knows she has realized that he is not the upstanding pastor for which she originally took him. In response to this separation from the possibility of a relationship with her, Jack thinks, "this was misery enough to justify a drink. A binge, in fact. But for some reason he just spent most of the night lying on his bed, feeling an elemental loneliness pour into his bones, that coldness that inheres in things, left to themselves" (Robinson 118). Jack's experience of a coldness in his bones resonates with all humans. In this passage, Robinson emphasizes that the coldness is not unique to him, it is something "elemental" that rises from the core of the earth itself, and, like the cold of winter, its "coldness" precludes new life or change. It is pure despair.

Jack internalizes this despairing loneliness by both acting as if and seeing himself as less than alive. His experience

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[3] Jack's view of himself as inherently harmful is presented as objective truth in parts of the novel, a result of Robinson's free indirect discourse that blurs the lines between Jack and narrator. For more on Jack as an unreliable narrator who has an inaccurate understanding of himself, as well as the way his self-concept connects to racism and original sin, see Horton, Ray. "Seeing in 'the Darkness, Visible': White Supremacy and Original Sin in Marilynne Robinson's *Jack*." *Christianity & Literature*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2022, pp. 223-243.

[4] Minimization of one's negative effects on others is not always a problem. Antony also wishes not to be a burden on others during his *askesis*, so he plants a garden in order to be self-sufficient with his food and reduce the work others must do for him (Athanasius 69). This comes from a place of love for others; however, Jack's desire for harmlessness is rooted in self-hatred, a very different motivation. This again underscores Jack's brokenness in his *anachoresis* and in the beginning of his *askesis*, contrasting with the beginning of Antony's spiritual journey. See conclusion for comments on the redemptive nature of Jack's journey.

coheres with a reading of loneliness in the Old Testament in which loneliness is akin to death. Samuel Hildebrandt undertook a word study of the phrase "I sat alone" and concluded that "the lonely, [are portrayed] as somehow less alive and 'less there'" in the Old Testament than individuals who were living in community (524). In Hildebrandt's reading, "isolation is not simply being cut off from others and loneliness is not merely a painful condition; rather, to be alone is to slowly succumb to the power of death that invades life" (524). Equating loneliness with living death recalls once more Jack's reason for *anachoresis*; he desires death, but—unable to enact his own literal death—he settles for, in Della's words, "'living like someone who has died already'" (Robinson 72). Like Antony's spiritual battles, Robinson emphasizes Jack's spiritual battles through his desire not to be living. Jack tells Della: "Sometimes I wish I were just a suit of clothes and a decent shave. Uninhabited, so to speak" (Robinson 42). To the woman he loves, Jack is able to confide that he wishes he was not a human being, even preferring to be a soulless shell of a man. In this confession, Jack conveys a despondency devoid of hope.

The deathlike despair that Jack experiences leads him to think of himself as not only lifeless but fundamentally less than human. Jack believes he is more akin to Satan than to a sinful human being. Twice, Jack tells Della that he is "the Prince of Darkness," and he means it genuinely (Robinson 40,48). He considers himself to be devoid of light and possibility, like a fallen angel, like the Devil. Jack thinks of himself this way again when his landlord notices the geranium in his room and extrapolates correctly that it is there for Della. The landlord subtly reminds Jack of his powerlessness against the law that does not allow him and Della to be together. As a result, Jack feels "buffeted like Satan, falling through the billowing voids" (Robinson 170). Jack always considers himself to be in the process of falling from grace, and he sees no other reality. Slowly, he has stopped seeing himself as a human beset by demons; rather, he is one of the demons. In comparing his actions towards Della with those of hers toward him, Jack reflects that "when defects of character *are* your character, you become a what" (Robinson 118). He does not even consider himself to be a "who." In sinking so far into despair, Jack loses the ability to see himself as human, identifying with his demonic assailants instead.

Jack's demonic wrestling is fundamentally a wrestling with a despair characterized by seeing himself as perpetually damned to hurt anyone with whom he enters into relationship. While wrestling with spiritual forces is, for Antony, a challenging yet edifying experience, Jack is unaware that he is experiencing spiritual warfare. Because he believes harmfulness is fundamental to his nature, Jack does not distinguish between himself and the demons that afflict him; however, those around him do. When Jack confides his harmful desires to the minister of the Baptist church he has begun to attend, the minister tells him, "You should remember that the part of you that makes you try to avoid doing harm is as much yourself as any of these impulses are. Maybe you should try calling them 'temptations'" (Robinson 230). The minister challenges Jack's understanding of himself. Rather than being defined by harmfulness, perhaps he is defined by the concern for others that led him to pursue harmlessness. And perhaps the harmful desires are temptations that can be resisted. This minister has offered Jack hope and the possibility of relationship with others. From this hope, Robinson constructs a reality in which the loneliness Jack experiences in *askesis* is not purely negative.

There are demons in the desert, but God is there too.

In *askesis*, both Antony and Jack experience God's renewing power through their isolation and loneliness. When Antony exiled himself to the desert, changes began to occur within him. Not only did he grow in his ability to stave off demonic influences (Athanasius 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41), but he grew in hope, in understanding of himself, in relationship with God and with others. Christie asserts that in the monastic tradition it is in the pain of isolation that we are inexplicably made new (34). This recreation of self, enacted by God, affects the orientation of the self towards others. Athanasius describes that in Antony "it was not his physical dimensions that distinguished him from the rest [of the monks], but the stability of character and the purity of soul" (81). Antony was grounded in himself, consistent in the person God created him to be. He also had a "purity of soul" that can only result from proper relationship with God. After his isolation, this was physically visible to those around him, even to those who had never seen him before.[5] In the desert, Antony's isolation opened him to self-renewal, and it became visible to those around him. This is the hope of loneliness, and the renewing process of *askesis* for Jack as well.

In *askesis*, Jack experiences the innate connection between loneliness and hope. In "Considering the Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, and Love," Robinson defines hope as "a felt lack, an absence, a yearning" (225). With this definition of hope, loneliness becomes innately hopeful. Neale considers this characteristic of loneliness to be a search. He asserts that loneliness is active rather than passive; it is an attempt to resolve absence and demonstrates a faith in the possibility of relationship (Neale 22). In just such a way, Jack's loneliness is a felt lack of community, a yearning for others. As this yearning causes Jack to seek out relationship, those around him become the hands of God that transform him. Time and time again in Robinson's novel, Jack's loneliness leads him to hope for a relationship with Della despite his despair that he will hurt her. When Della buys a new hat, Jack realizes that "he was in love with her. That did it. That hat brought out glints of rose in the warm dark of her skin. Women know that kind of thing. She, Della, wanted him, Jack, to see that particular loveliness in her" (Robinson 125). As Jack realizes that Della wants him to see her as beautiful, he begins to open himself up to connection with her. Robinson's use of their names—"She, Della, … him, Jack"—reinforces that connection. Each one sees the other as truly different from themselves, creating space for love. In identifying their difference, they come closer to truly loving each other. Jack notices this as it happens, and he hopes that Della does love him.

Throughout the novel, the hope in Jack's loneliness opens him to Della's love, and over time he starts to let go of despair. When Della visits his room and falls asleep before he gets back, Jack realizes that he has no reason to be guilty although it is his default reaction. Della made the choice to come to him. (Robinson 198). Actions like this break Jack out of his cyclical thoughts of harm and harmlessness, opening him to hope and change. About halfway through the novel, Jack starts to realize that no human relationship is without risk of harm. He

[5] Yet another parallel between Antony and Jack is this outward purity that those around them notice. Della sees Jack's purity and comments that "once in a lifetime, maybe, you look at a stranger and you see a soul, a glorious presence out of place in the world. … I've seen a few others. Kids at school. Yours is the brightest." (Robinson 208-209). Her comment is interesting considering Jack's self-conceptualization as a bum, defined by his outward clothing rather than his inward soul.

realizes that in his relationship with Della "harmlessness was more than he could aspire to," yet he was also unable to do anything "baldly self-interested" (Robinson 138). Jack has begun to see himself as human rather than inanimate or satanic: an individual with the power to hurt others but without the desire to. As his relationship with Della deepens, Jack comes face to face with the fact that he can make another person sad, can harm her, yet he is no longer afraid of doing so (Robinson 205). In this way, Della helps Jack realize that he cannot aspire to harmlessness. She forces him to reckon with the despair that led him to harmlessness in the first place and abandon it for further hope.

As he embraces hope in loneliness, Jack's understanding of himself is renewed in the same way that Antony was renewed in *askesis*. In his book *Loneliness*, Clark E. Moustakas expresses the impact of loneliness on the self. He writes that loneliness is one of the few experiences in modern life "in which man communes with himself … [and] comes to grips with his own being" (Moustakas 102). Moustakas includes the caveat that this communion is only possible when loneliness is confronted head-on and courageously (102). When Jack starts to hope, he confronts his loneliness without succumbing to despair, and this honesty renews his understanding of himself. In a conversation with the Baptist minister, Jack thinks about his intentions with Della, and "it surprised Jack to realize that, in some part of his mind, he aspired to being an impeccable white gentleman" (Robinson 186). In hoping to end his loneliness through a relationship with Della, Jack is attuned to who he actually wants to be: respectable, worthy of relationship. Robinson demonstrates this renewed, authentic understanding when Jack gives his "actual name," Jack Boughton, to the minister, saying it is who he truly is (Robinson 188). Furthermore, after Della and Jack are married—in their own way—, Jack realizes that he is "a person of consequence" (Robinson 211). While, for him, this means he is in a position where he can harm Della, it also reveals a shift in his thinking. Instead of wishing he was merely a suit of clothes or thinking of himself as the devil, Jack realizes that he is a person with a responsibility towards another. Although he is able to harm Della, he can also love her.

This renewal of himself—by way of loneliness and relationship with Della—makes possible the renewal of his relationship with God. Just as Antony's time in isolation created an openness to God's cleansing power, so too does Jack's loneliness open him up to feel the force of God's character. Throughout the book, Jack is constantly talking to God, using phrases such as "sweet Jesus" and "dear Jesus" (Robinson 87, 85). At the beginning of the novel, Robinson's use of free indirect discourse makes these feel more like instinctual phrases that Jack thinks out of habit to convey desperation and despair: "oh, sweet Jesus, the guard actually put his hand on her" (77) or "dear Jesus, he couldn't even decide to leave his room" (87). Over time, Robinson demonstrates Jack's internal changes as the phrases change to "Dear Jesus, keep me harmless" (85) and "Ah, Jesus, get her home, keep her safe" (211), and start to sound like prayers. As Jack's loneliness shifts to hope and leads him towards a relationship with Della, his understanding of God deepens. When Jack finally visits Della's family, she keeps holding his hand when he sits after greeting each family member. It causes him to ponder "how one human being can mean so much to another human being in terms of peace and assurance, as if loyalty were as real as gravity. His father said it had to be that real, because the Lord is loyal. Jack was just then feeling the force of the idea" (300).

The loneliness-*cum*-hope that led Jack to Della allows Jack to understand God's loyalty.

While Jack is transformed for the better through the relationships towards which loneliness drives him, even the loneliness itself provides a deeper intimacy with God. As he thinks of taking Della after hours to the dance studio where he works, Jack thinks that Della "might have no idea yet that embarrassment, relentless, punitive scorn, can wear away at a soul until it recedes into wordless loneliness. Maybe apophatic loneliness. God in the silence. In the deep darkness" (Robinson 250). Loneliness provides Jack with an insight as to *how* we understand God. An apophatic understanding of God is one in which God's character is made plain via the things God is not. As Christian Wiman put it, God is felt in God's absence (Wiman 61). Jack realizes that God appears in the silence. In the moments that seem devoid of God, that is where God meets us. Thus, loneliness is where Jack encounters God.[6]

As Jack progresses in his hope, his understanding of himself, and his relationship with God, he begins to recognize that loneliness is not a singular experience specific to himself. Just as Antony "sympathized and prayed [and] … encouraged those who suffered to have patience and to know that healing belonged … only to God," so too does Jack come to terms with the ubiquity of suffering (Athanasius 73).. Moustakas professes that to be human is to be lonely. By virtue of being individuals with individualized experience, humans are cut off from others. We are othered from each other, that is, lonely (Moustakas 101). Jack understands this in his marriage to Della. Many times, Jack refers to his relationship as a "lonely marriage" (Robinson 210), being a married man as "a higher order or loneliness altogether" (224), and even that "solitude could be the proof and seal of marriage" (219). Jack comprehends the universality of loneliness and its power that even marriage cannot overcome. Loneliness is something he and Della will both always be experiencing no matter how much they may feel "as if they had solved loneliness" in a given moment (Robinson 268). This is partly by nature of their relationship: a white man and an African American woman who are legally prevented from marrying in the state of Missouri. Yet, it is also the nature of all human relationships. So, Jack comes to grips with the reality that loneliness is fundamental to being human, and it will be present with him and with Della wherever they go.

In knowing that all humans experience loneliness, Jack's experience provides him with an increased compassion for others. In his reflection on Thomas Merton's solitude, Christie narrates that "the ache of loneliness he feels, which is bound up for him with ecstatic longing, seemed to break open within him a new space of vulnerability, a deepened capacity for intimacy and compassion" (42). Moustakas details the same experience in that "loneliness paves the way to healing, to true compassion, to intimate bonds with all living creatures" (103). In feeling his own loneliness, Jack's ability to resonate with others' loneliness increases. This empathy is a fundamental aspect of his relationship with Della. In their graveyard conversation, they engage in the following exchange:

> 'You're very sure of yourself. At ease in your skin. While I—"
> She stopped. 'You actually said that.'

[6] For more about the theological implications of Robinson's fiction, specifically in *Jack*, see Smith, James K. A. "Making the Truth: Fiction as Theology in Marilynne Robinson's *Jack*." *Christianity & Literature*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2022, pp. 244-256.

> ‘What? Well, yes, I suppose I did … It’s true, though, isn’t it?’
> ‘No. Much of the time it isn’t true. When I find myself trapped in a white cemetery, it definitely isn’t true.’
> He said, ‘You may not believe this, but I have had something of the same experience. A number of times.’
> She laughed. ‘I’m sorry, but I actually do believe you.’ (Robinson 49)

Jack commits what is generally a grievous faux pas. To assume not only that Della is comfortable in her own skin, when skin color has made her life so different from his, but also that he, a white man, can somehow understand her discomfort is presumption of the highest order. Yet Della believes him when he claims a share in her experience. She sees the loneliness in which he exists and realizes that the socially imposed barriers that exist between her and other people, exist in similar ways for him. He can understand her to some extent because of his own encounter with loneliness.

Jack’s loneliness-engendered compassion manifests itself in his relationships with others besides Della. In his job at a shoe shop, Jack considers that the improvement of business after a few weeks of him working could be because of him. He considers the loneliness of the store owner before he worked for her and understands that, somehow, he broke her isolation and made the shop more appealing in doing so (Robinson 83). Jack empathizes even with imagined strangers in the same way. He remembers the way his father would treat someone new who was passing through their parish, that “the stranger would have stepped out of loneliness, moved by hope or nostalgia, then slipped back into loneliness, forgotten as soon as he was gone” (Robinson 165). Because of his own experience of loneliness and isolation in St. Louis, Jack relates on a deeper level with these lonely wanderers who once were the beneficiaries of his father’s hospitality. Instead of seeing them from the outside and “forgetting” them as soon as they slip away, Jack is able to imagine their whole lonely journey, not only the point where his path intersects with theirs. The work of loneliness in Jack’s life does not stop at renewed compassion for others. As his *askesis* comes to a close and he reintegrates with society, the empathy Jack gained through loneliness provides him with eyes to see the injustice in the world around him.

Jack’s *Agape*: Emergence

Antony’s monastic journey demonstrates the benefit that isolation provides not only to the individual who experiences it, but to the community as a whole. When Antony embraced “human community” after his *askesis*, he provided not only physical healing, but social healing as he “reconciled in friendship [those who were hostile to each other], urging everyone to prefer nothing in the world above the love of Christ” (Athanasius 42). Antony is able to bring this reconciliation and unity because of the clear vision God granted him during his solitude. In one example of this vision, a boat of men come to Antony and the boat stinks. The men claim it is from the fish in the boat, but Antony says the fish is not the cause. He casts out a demon that is in one of the men and the stench goes away. Only then do the others realize that the stink was from the demon and not the meat (Athanasius 78). Antony sees reality more fully than those around him do, but he is able to impart his vision to the rest of his community. While Jack does not transform his society the same way Antony does, his experience of loneliness and Della’s amelioration of it allow him to see the brokenness of his racialized society and long for its healing. Through loneliness, Jack receives the clarified vision which was Antony’s first step towards societal transformation.

Through loneliness, Jack identifies his potential to harm others, allowing him to see and mourn that same propensity in the society around him. As he considers the planned demolition of the African American neighborhoods of St. Louis, Jack is terrified by the idea that the demolition is a physical manifestation of the harm he internally envisions. He reflects that "he was [society's] essence, its epitome" (Robinson 237). *Askesis* revealed to Jack the brokenness within himself, and that understanding gave him the eyes to see the parallel brokenness in the society around him. One poignant instance of this is the impetus of Jack leaving Chicago—where he ran as a last-ditch effort to protect Della from himself—and his return to Della. In Chicago, Jack embodies the internal change from despair to hope as he begins a new life in which he has a comfortable home, a steady job, and is even having a new suit made. For Jack, this is akin to donning a new personality. The whole time, he envisions Della there with him, living as husband and wife. Finally, he tells his landlady that his wife is African American, and she is outraged at their illegal relationship. Jack is equally outraged at her heartless response to the point where he must plead, "dear Jesus, don't let me lay a hand on this woman!" and wait "for the outrage that flooded him to recede enough to allow him to move or speak" (Robinson 294). Now, Jack can physically feel the injustice suffusing his society. It angers and saddens him that the world in which he lives is one that does not allow him to live together with his wife. It is a society in which humans are divided solely based on arbitrary physical characteristics.[7]

Even after he leaves Chicago and engages with Della's separatist family, Jack sees the division which is the brokenness of society. For all their hospitality, Della's family still rejects Jack in the end. They are willing to support Della and the child she and Jack conceived, but they cannot allow a white man to be a part of their family because of their separatist beliefs. Jack represents, to Della's father, the harm of racial brokenness. Jack feels the injustice of this, responding that Della's father does not know him as an individual very well, but he understands that he must leave (Robinson 305). Della also understands that her own family is not a place where she and Jack can find acceptance as a pair. Her family has imposed their own isolation from the world, yet it isolates her from them as long as she stands with Jack. The result of this separatism is Jack and Della both leaving her family and setting out, still searching for a community that will accept them. Such is the brokenness that Jack is able to see in society as a result of his own loneliness. Humans reject each other. Family rejects family, conceiving new forms of loneliness. Jack is powerless to do more than mourn, to create change. So, he and Della continue on.

In part, the brokenness inherent in Della's family's rejection is so poignant because Jack's loneliness had already driven him engage in a loving, accepting community. In St. Louis, Jack—almost unintentionally—becomes part of a black Baptist church. It starts when various parishioners mistake him for a beggar outside the church; he goes inside to return the money they dropped into his hat, stays for the service, and for the lunch that follows. Out of shame, he is "certain" he would never go to the church again, yet, somehow, he comes back the very next Sunday (Robinson 162). Just like the communities Antony established that maintained "love and harmony … for

[7] For a nuanced discussion of Robinson's engagement of structural racism in *Jack*, see Engen, Abram Van. "Della's Rage: Race and Religion in Marilynne Robinson's *Jack*." *Christianity & Literature*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2022, pp.172-189.

neither perpetrator nor victim of injustice was there," this church community welcomes Jack with love and harmony despite his racial identity as a perpetrator of injustice (Athanasius 64). Unlike Della's family, this African American community accepts Jack as a brother, engaging in friendly song competitions on the piano and feeding him with a genuine kindness to which Jack is unused (64). In the midst of loneliness, this warm welcome pulls Jack back to the church. Even Jack's relationship with the pastor of the church, as it develops, is akin to that of a father and a son. According to the minister, Jack is a "son of the church" (166), and Jack tells the minister, "as if to his father, the very things he would never tell his father" (169). Although the minister disapproves of Jack and Della's relationship just like Della's family, Robinson uses the Baptist church to provide an example of a loving, accepting, biracial family. This is exactly what Jack and Della could not find in her family and leave to seek at the end of the novel.

In the final page of the novel, Robinson reveals the clear vision of the world that is present in Jack and Della's relationship, and she instills hope in the reader that Jack and Della may someday be able to enact transformation. In one of the final paragraphs, Robinson recounts that "they were together, after their fashion, and the world was all before them, such as it was" (309). In keeping with the free indirect style that characterizes the rest of the novel, this phrase blurs the boundaries between Jack and narrator. In a sense, Jack is the narrator, and it is his conceptualization of the world to which the reader is exposed. Therefore, the qualification of the world, "such as it was" demonstrates the vision Jack and Della, like Antony, possess in confronting it. They see the world as it truly is: unjust, racialized, broken. In ending in this way, Robinson allows the reader to share in Jack and Della's true vision and hopeful confrontation of the world.

So, as Christians—like all humans—embark on desert journeys shrouded in loneliness, they know that hope can rise from despair, new sight can grow from isolation, and God will renew all things: the demons, the desert, and his disciples. Thus, like Jack and Della, all Christians "hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,/Through *Eden* [take] their solitary way" (Milton 642).

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Neuroethics, Theology, and ADHD: A Christian Response to Ethical Dilemmas Surrounding the Neuroscience and Treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children and Adolescents

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Introduction

Journey with me for a moment to an American elementary school classroom, perhaps even your own 1st or 2nd grade classroom. Look around at the 20 children in the room and the teacher up front charged with their well-being and education; 2 children in the class have a mental disorder that will affect their lives in ways they can only begin to understand. Let's select one of those children and take a closer look into their life. Little Mary has always been a fun-loving outgoing girl who loves jungle gyms and crafts. She is her parents' first child so when she starts displaying behavioral issues, they assume that Mary is "going through a difficult phase" or that parenting toddlers/preschoolers is more difficult than they'd imagined. At a parent-teacher conference last year, Mary's kindergarten teacher brought up that Mary seemed to have trouble focusing in the classroom. Her parents brought this up at Mary's next checkup at her pediatrician and soon after were faced with referrals, testing, and ultimately an ADHD diagnosis. They did what most parents do in this situation and proceeded with a stimulant prescription from the pediatrician. After many years of trying different stimulants and doses for months at a time, Mary's parents settle on one that seems to work well for her with minimal side effects. Fast forward now to high school. Mary has become more aware of the effects of her ADHD, especially seen in the shift in priorities, focus-ability, and emotions when she takes her medication compared to days she does not. Medication brings Mary undeniable productivity, often at the expense of her enjoyment of life and her ability to interact socially as she normally would. On non-medicated days she feels more fully herself, but can only barely manage the minimum of productivity and focus required by school.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects 10.2% of children in the

USA, and a general average of around 5% of children globally (Carolan 2022). Not only is 1 in every 10 kids in the US affected, but for each child diagnosed with ADHD there are 1-2 parents or guardians impacted as well as a myriad of teachers, siblings, and friends. As Christians we have a call during our time in this fallen and disordered world, namely to love the Lord with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strengths, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:25-27). Given that ADHD has such a prevalent impact on our neighbors in society, it requires some attention and consideration from the Church.

As we will see momentarily, ADHD is a very complex and multifaceted disorder. There is some consensus on certain core behavioral symptoms, but often the effects stretch far beyond these standardized symptoms. Every bit of research is contested or debated, from the neurobiology to the causes and risk factors to the treatment and management. Once we delve into the realm of treating mental disorders, particularly in minors, there are a plethora of ethical issues that are raised, some of which are explored in this paper. Also part of the discussion are the impacts on and influence of parenting, friendships, and society. When we factor in the Christian belief that all this discussion is taking place on an earth riddled by Sin and by spiritual warfare against an enemy with solely ill intentions, the conversation becomes all the more dire; a battle is being fought for every heart and mind around us. So in the discussion of this complex mental disorder, let us proceed with concern for our neighbor and with wisdom, which ultimately comes from fearing the Lord (Psalm 111:10). In order to utilize wisdom, we must first familiarize ourselves with what is known on the subject of ADHD.

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

In the past hundred years, science has witnessed the discovery, and rise of what we currently call ADHD. There was some early mention of a "disease of attention" with mental restlessness and an inability to keep the mind from straying by physicians around 1800, but only relatively recently did this translate to clinical study (CHADD 2018). From the 1960's until the 1990's medical interest in ADHD was largely confined to North America, but the past 30 years have seen globalization into both European and South American contexts, likely due to the rise of internet technology (Conrad and Bergey 2014). In recent years, social media content about ADHD has increased to the level of what some would even call a trend. While some question its legitimacy altogether, there is a general consensus that it is indeed a valid mental disorder, but more on that later (Quinn and Lynch 2016).

Symptoms

Psychiatry has, over time, compiled a list of 18 core ADHD symptoms, divided by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM5) into 2 major categories: inattention and impulsivity-hyperactivity. Inattention symptoms include: "fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes", "difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activity", "reluctance to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort (such as schoolwork or homework)", "does not seem to listen when spoken to directly" because the mind is elsewhere, "easily distracted by extraneous stimuli", "often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores or duties in the workplace", difficulty organizing tasks, frequently losing things necessary for activities, and forgetfulness (DSM5 quoted by Ringeisen et al. 2016.). The 9 symptoms associated with hyperactivity-impulsivity are: "often fidgets with or taps hands or feet

or squirms in seat", "often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected", "often runs about or climbs in situations where it is inappropriate (Note: in adolescents or adults, may be limited to feeling restless)", "often unable to play or take part in leisure activities quietly", "is often "on the go" acting as if "driven by a motor""... or "uncomfortable being still for extended time", "often talks excessively", "often blurts out answers before questions have been completed", "often has difficulty awaiting turn", and "often interrupts or intrudes on others" (DSM5 quoted by Ringeisen et al. 2016).

Diagnosis

Diagnosis of ADHD usually flows (or ought to) from this fairly standardized list of symptoms. A child is diagnosed with ADHD if 6 of the 18 core symptoms have persisted for 6 months to a greater degree than is developmentally expected and impact social and academic activities (DSM5 quoted by Ringeisen et al. 2016.). Some additional caveats purported by the CDC include: several symptoms must be present before the age of 12, symptoms must clearly interfere with daily life, and symptoms cannot be better explained by any other mental disorder (CDC 2022). In the past, the term ADD referred to inattentive-type ADHD, but it is now recognized under DSM5 as the same disorder and the term is no longer used (Rodgers 2022). However, those with ADHD still can present Predominantly Inattentive, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive, or Combination-type (CDC 2022).

While this diagnostic standard seems fairly clear-cut, there is much subjectivity involved. First of all, the diagnosing is being done by various medical professionals who are each interpreting reported behavioral symptoms; where human interpretation is involved there is room for error (Parens and Johnston 2009). Since there is no way to draw a clear line between those who do and don't have ADHD, there is an inevitable zone of ambiguity (Parens and Johnston 2009). There is also a difference in symptom expression as well as diagnostic prevalence between boys and girls, with a 3:1 ratio of boys to girls diagnosed (Carolan 2022). Closely related to these issues is the consideration that some symptoms can simply be the result of parenting differences; the child who leaves their seat in class may have ADHD, or simply may not have been taught to obey their teachers. One final difficulty is that there is one simple diagnosis to encapsulate ~$8x10^{16}$ possible combinations of 6 symptoms, not to mention the fact that each symptom occurs along a spectrum of intensity (Parens and Johnston 2009). There have been attempts at using objective tests, such as neurophysiology and neuroimaging, to test for ADHD, but none have proven reliable (Wolraich 2019).

Legitimacy

As I mentioned earlier there is some debate about whether ADHD truly exists. In their discussion of this question Quinn and Lynch (2016) quote a book entitled *"The ADHD Fraud: How Psychiatry Makes "Patients" of Normal Children"*, published in 2006 by neurologist Fred Baughman. The primary argument of such critics is that we as a society diagnose and medicate kids who are difficult to maintain in classroom settings, assuming that they have some neurological chemical imbalance. The goal and outcome of ADHD treatment then is to make the difficult child more compliant via drugging. Baughman argues that ADHD is a disorder we have manufactured to fit our time and is a "quick catch-all" allowing for a "magic bullet treatment" (Quinn and Lynch 2016). Parents of children with ADHD would likely press back against his idea that ADHD symptoms are reserved to the

classroom. The DSM symptoms listed above do look at children's behavior through the lens of a school-setting, but this likely reflects the fact that school is often the first focused environment an attention-deficit child is placed in rather than the belief that ADHD symptoms are virtually all related to classroom behavior, as Baughman claims. Classrooms also have teachers who might be able to better recognize abnormal behaviors which parents have accepted as normal for their child; that is to say, symptoms are often noticeable long before the child reaches school-age, but no one is going to diagnose a 2-year-old with ADHD because they 'squirm in their seat' or 'lose things necessary for tasks'.

Another critique of ADHD is made clear in Diller's 1998 book entitled "*Running on Ritalin: A Physician Reflects on Children, Society, and Performance in a Pill*". Such critics argue that the ADHD label allows patients to "blame their behavior… on brain functioning or genetics, rather than accepting personal responsibility for their problems" (Quinn and Lynch 2016). This critique also ties in our cultural emphasis (over-emphasis perhaps) on performance and efficiency. In light of this, ADHD is then a social construct and its treatment is nothing more than a medicinal performance enhancer for those who fail to perform at the level of their peers. While these critiques of the existence of ADHD are not generally seen as true, they do raise some valid concerns which will be addressed in the discussion of ADHD treatment.

Neurobiology

A look into the neuroanatomy and neurophysiology of brains with ADHD compared to those without the disorder provides strong evidence that ADHD is indeed a 'real' mental condition. In very general terms, ADHD was thought to be the result of low levels of norepinephrine (NE) in the brain, though this is an incomplete picture of the complexity that is ADHD. While there is no one underlying neurotransmitter or systemic failure, a few considerations can help us build an idea of the ADHD brain.

The Locus Coeruleus (LC), or "blue spot", nucleus in the brainstem is the primary source of NE in the brain and is historically understood to release NE in response to arousal (i.e. in response to thoughts, emotions, external stimuli, etc.) (Aston-Jones and Cohen 2005). The LC operates in 2 modes: phasic and tonic. Phasic mode involves a widespread rapid release of NE and allows the brain to concentrate on the task at hand; the tonic mode involves a baseline release of NE and allows the brain to disengage from the current task and observe the environment for a task that proves more beneficial or useful at the time (Aston-Jones and Cohen 2005 & Vazey 2018). The delicate balance between these two LC states of NE release is crucial for normal brain function and performance but is impaired in ADHD (Howells et al. 2012). The brains of those with ADHD operate in a continual state of "hypoarousal" as the tonic baseline release of NE happens at a lower frequency than normal (i.e. a release NE frequency of <1-3Hz); consequently, the phasic mode is unable to maintain signals and the result is decreased arousal of the cortex and a deficit in attentional abilities (Howells et al. 2012). One study of mice discovered that genetic knockout of an intracellular signaling enzyme in LC caused behavior comparable to ADHD (D'Andrea 2015). This aspect of ADHD only explains the handful of ADHD symptoms pertaining to sustained attention, though. Equally complex systems, that are equally sensitive to the slightest dysregulation, are found all throughout the brain.

Dopamine (DA) release is also thought to be implicated in ADHD. There are numerous models and theories as to how this might play out (Rege 2022), but there are a few basic principles. In general, brains with ADHD are found to have lower levels of DA than in those without ADHD; this is associated with sadness, lack of motivation, sleepiness, mood swings, memory loss, and problems sleeping and concentrating (Benisek 2022). This might be caused by high levels of DA transporters which clear DA from the brain too quickly (Benisek 2022). Attention is thought to be maintained by DA release in anticipation of reward, but in ADHD there is a delayed DA release, only after the reward and not in anticipation of it (Rege 2022). Other ADHD DA issues include: lower baseline DA in reward pathways, less DA released in response to actual rewards, a greater emphasis on immediate rewards than delayed rewards, and less ability to learn via conditioning/reinforcement (Rege 2022). The theories surrounding these lower levels of DA are too complicated for the purpose of this paper and ultimately are still undergoing research (Rege 2022).

The structure and function of numerous other brain regions were found to be implicated with the introduction of neuroimaging techniques; such brain regions include the prefrontal cortex (cognitive control in response to dopamine), the thalamus (sensation relay station), the amygdala (fear processing), and the cerebellum (coordination and motor control) (Kasparek et al 2013). The anterior cingulate and orbitofrontal cortices process stimuli for decision-making and directly control LC activity, but do not function optimally in ADHD (Aston-Jones and Cohen 2005; Kasparek et al 2013). One key feature of neurons is their ability to change (termed *neuronal plasticity*) under the regulation of the dopaminergic system, but this too is altered in ADHD; this is likely the underlying cause of the more widespread issues of brain form and function (Kasparek 2013). In EEG measurements of cumulative brain activity, those with ADHD display a higher prevalence of theta (slow) waves and lower prevalence/intensity of beta (fast, thinking) waves than normal brains (Cortese 2012).

Ultimately ADHD is far more complex than we know. The above explanation of the LC function is simplified from much research and even then is only a part of the vast interconnected web of abnormalities of the ADHD brain. Zooming in, brain abnormalities are largely the result of genetic variation and the influence of the environment of genes (Cortese 2012). Zooming out, the behaviors resulting from brain dysfunction vary greatly and are influenced heavily by one's environment. On an even more large scale level, our behaviors have the capacity to be shaped by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In every level of consideration, from genes to brain structure to social interaction, the disorder that we characterize as ADHD varies by person, as is true with any mental disease or disorder. For the Christian, this unfathomable complexity serves as a reminder that we indeed are not omniscient, but that we serve a God who is.

Treatment of ADHD

When it comes to the treatment of this complicated mental disorder there are two general options: medication and behavioral therapy. The medication route involves the use of a stimulant taken orally. The stimulant Ritalin, or methylphenidate which is related to amphetamines, was first released in 1955 and then took off as the primary response to ADHD (Miller and Leger 2003). Since then numerous other stimulants have been released by various companies, all containing some level of

methylphenidate or amphetamine. Behavioral therapy for ADHD has two components: "parent training" and executive function training (Miller 2022). This usually includes sessions with a therapist and shifts made in the child's environment both at home and school (Parens and Johnston 2009), basically all with the goal of teaching the child to live a functional life.

A large randomized clinical study conducted over 14 months looked at the multiple treatment modes of children with ADHD; it was thus referred to as the Multimodal Treatment Study of Children with ADHD, or "MTA" (MTA Coop 1999). This was the first long-term comparison of pharmacotherapy to behavioral therapy. In the study 500+ children with ADHD between the ages of 7-10 were placed in one of 4 groups: intensive behavioral treatment, medicinal management, a combination of the 2, or standard care by medical providers in their communities. They concluded that their specifically crafted concoction of stimulants was the ultimate treatment for ADHD, outpacing any efforts of behavioral therapy or combined treatment. Parens and Johnston (2009) question this conclusion and ask what influence the pharmaceutical industry might have had in this conclusion (Parens and Johnston 2009). This same article points out that in the subsequent years following the MTA study the researchers followed up on the participants and their results were different than initially reported. At the 2-year mark following the end of the 14 months subjects who were assigned to intensive behavioral therapy while on a low dose of stimulant fared just as well as those who had relied solely on the stimulant concoction (Parens and Johnston 2009).

This skepticism of a pharmacological approach to ADHD is further amplified by research done into the negative aspects of stimulants. In a study performed with preschool-aged children with ADHD, research found that preschoolers on stimulants grew an average of 1.2 cm less per year than controls (Swanson 2006). Another consideration is the negative side effects stimulants have on daily activities critical to life; some such effects are insomnia and a decrease in appetite (Connor 2006). There is also the concern for the potential development of Substance Use Disorders (Carolan 2022). Ultimately, much more research is required on the effects of stimulants, particularly on the long-term effects on the developing brains of the ever-younger children to which they are prescribed (Parens and Johnston 2009).

One practical consideration in the discussion of treatment is the cost, both financially and temporally. Both behavioral and medicinal treatment cost time and money to the patient or the patient's parents. Stimulants prescribed by a medical provider are typically covered by medical insurance, despite a rather large copay that still falls on the patient. This is all assuming that the patient has access to a primary care physician and medical insurance, which are far from guaranteed in our present society. The benefit to stimulants, though, is that once an effective dose is established for each individual, symptom management is as quick and simple as taking a pill every morning. Behavioral therapy has been shown to produce long-term changes that last the individual long after the treatment itself (Parens and Johnston 2009). The benefit here is that the treatment remains effective even after the time has been spent and money has been paid, as opposed to medicines that are only effective when in the patient's system. One issue with this though is the time it takes out of the week; additionally, this takes the cooperation of school teachers as well as insurance companies. Behavioral therapy can also be combined with a stimulant as we saw above

in the MTA trial. This option often proves to be cost-effective in that behavioral therapy provides long-term symptom management, while stimulants serve as a supplement in lower, thus cheaper, doses (Parens and Johnston 2009).

A Christian Evaluation of ADHD Treatment

The Christian response to the above issues is as multifaceted as the problems themselves. One issue that faces Christians in medicine from time to time is the claim that various interventions are a means of "playing God" or replacing God by using earthly things to alter our biology; surely Christians ought to simply pray enough and a miraculous healing will occur, right? John Piper has a beautifully succinct response to this in a short video responding to Christian use of antidepressants, which we can easily apply to the conversation of ADHD treatment. He says that "God has ordained physical means"; in the same way that God has ordained water and sleep and food to sustain us and point us to Him, He can use medicine to bring healing (Piper 2010). As humans we are mortal beings who are inherently dependent; this was true even of Adam and Eve before the Fall. We were created as embodied creatures designed to rely on God through interaction with the earth He built for us. Thus, on principle, there is no issue with Christian reliance on medical practices, so long as we see them as an outworking of God's compassion and grace.

In regard to the use of stimulants to manage the symptoms, a portion of the scientific community still remains skeptical (reviewed: Parens and Johnston 2009). This skepticism is echoed in the Christian call to think critically seen throughout Scripture. In multiple places the Church is encouraged to use discernment and wisdom (Philippians 1:9, Proverbs 9:10). In a list of closing remarks to the church in Thessalonica Paul urges them to "test all things" and "hold fast to what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). In the original context this likely refers to a vigilant awareness of teachers preaching false doctrine, however the same principle can apply to ways we interact with things we face in our lives. We are to be thoughtful and prudent people who give thought to our steps, not simple fools who believe everything (Proverbs 14:15). John Piper does this in his address on antidepressants. He points out that dealing with the mind is a very difficult and tricky thing. His response to medication, then, is that we should not necessarily rush to it as our first line of defense to alter our mental state and that it instead should be treated with caution.

During His earthly ministry God promised us that while on earth we would face suffering (John 16:33). God has graciously provided some means of comfort via relief from earthly remedies, but there is no magic pill that will perfectly re-order what Sin has disordered. In this world we will never plumb the depths of our insufficiency, fallenness, and dependence on Christ, but in this weak state God's power is made perfect and complete in us. For about 10% of the population this weakness, or thorn in the flesh as Paul calls it, is the complex brain misordering known as ADHD. The effects of the Fall and of a limited mortal weak state are just as prevalent in the other 90%, though, just in other ways.

So what of the treatment of ADHD? Perhaps a Christian response is one that utilizes community and therapy through behavioral therapy. This has been shown to have long-lasting effective results and is a valid treatment for many ADHD patients (Parens and Johnston 2009). Or maybe treatment looks like the use of stimulants, using moderation and caution, with the attitude that they are a gift from God that He

can use to restore dysfunctional parts of the brain. Ultimately the treatment of ADHD is up to the discernment of the diagnosed individual or their parents if the child is too young to understand their condition. To handle the difficult considerations that come with an ADHD diagnosis, the only truly wise option is to prayerfully seek God and His will in it all.

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