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The salient qualities of Christ's patience in the Garden of Gethsemane are highlighted in this painting attributed to Matthias Stomer.

Matthias Stomer (c.1600-c.1650), CHRIST AT THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE (n.d.). Oil on canvas. 60" x 78" (post-restoration). Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Photo: bpk, Berlin / (Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Museen) / (Joerg P. Anders) / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.

Christ's Patience in the Garden

BY HEIDI J. HORNICK

Filled with anxiety about his painful and humiliating death and his decision to accept it, Christ went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray (Luke 22:39-45). There he modeled patience. The theologian Christopher Vogt identifies four salient qualities of Christ's patience in the garden. First, his patience seeks to avoid suffering if possible, but endures it if necessary. Second, it rests on a sense of Providence, or of divine purpose. His patience can be interpreted as having a limited autonomy. Finally, Jesus shows a connection between patience and the love of his disciples that is a social virtue.¹ The first two qualities of Christ's patience are highlighted in these paintings attributed to Matthias Stomer and Jacopo Marieschi.

Stomer, a Baroque painter from Utrecht, the Netherlands, who traveled to Rome for study and stayed in Italy, and Marieschi, a Venetian Rococo painter, both depict Christ in prayer before an angel with a cup. This is a direct reference to Luke 22:42-44: "'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.' Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground."

Matthias Stomer may have been a student of Abraham Bloemaert (1566-1621) in Utrecht and he went on to study with Gerrit van Honthorst (1592-1656) in Rome. He was influenced by the dramatic lighting and gestures in the paintings of Caravaggio. He traveled and worked throughout Italy, with commissions in Rome (where his home is documented), Messina, Naples (several documented church commissions), and Palermo. He died in Sicily.² Stomer became part of the group known as the Utrecht Caravaggisti. Although very little is known about the artist's life, we do know that Don Antonio Ruffo, the Duke of Messina who was the patron of Rembrandt and Artemisia Gentileschi, purchased three of Stomer's pictures between 1646 and 1649.³

In this *Christ at the Garden of Gethsemane* attributed to Stomer, the characteristics of the Caravaggisti are present. Jesus and the angel are set in the foreground against an almost black background. Stomer probably used a

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Jacopo Marieschi (1711-1794), *CHRIST ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES* (n.d.). Musei Civici, Padua, Italy. Photo: Cameraphoto Arte, Venice / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission.

child on the streets of Rome or Sicily for his model to create this urchin-like angel. The angel is disheveled and points to the cup, which creates a strong diagonal between Christ and the cup. According to Vogt, the cup represents one's portion or destiny that comes from God; it might be a symbol of either bounty and salvation, or divine retribution and punishment. In this instance, Jesus is offered a cup from God that entails suffering and death.⁴

The artist used chiaroscuro – strong contrast between light and shade – to heighten the drama of the scene. For instance, Christ wringing his hands simultaneously in prayer and anxiety, is emphasized by the tenebrist light. Soldiers are visible in a small area to the right of Christ in anticipation of what will happen next in the passion narrative. Christ's prayer is answered by the appearance of an angel who gives him strength to endure the suffering and to embrace the divine purpose.

The second scene, *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, is attributed to Jacopo Marieschi. Even less is known about Jacopo than Stomer. Scholars agree that Jacopo was born and died in Venice. There is a considerable amount of confusion between Jacopo and the landscape painter Michele Marieschi (d. 1743) that began as early as the end of the eighteenth-century.⁵ Jacopo was very

active in the Venetian Academy of Painting, where he became a professor in 1755 and was nominated for president in 1776.⁶ He was considered a "history painter" and taught life-drawing classes.⁷ Many of his paintings remind the viewer of the color palette used in the *Cinquecento* Mannerist style. He displays the accuracy that comes from drawing from life, which for the Mannerists was important aspect of an artist's "academic" education.

This composition is split in half by a tree in the middle of the painting. The left side contains Christ and an angel bearing both a cup and a cross. On the right side, the approaching soldiers are in the upper quadrant while the disciples sleep in the lower right corner. Christ is robed in the colors traditionally used in the Renaissance and Mannerism for the Virgin Mary – a red garment with a blue mantle.

Once again, Jesus' prayer is answered by an angel who offers the cup to him. Its meaning is suggested by the cross placed prominently across the angel's shoulder. Through patient prayer Christ solemnly accepts the cup of sacrificial suffering that he discerns to be God's will.

NOTES

1 Christopher P. Vogt, *Patience, Compassion, Hope, and the Christian Art of Dying Well* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 103-127.

2 "Stomer, Mathäus I or Matthias," *Benezit Dictionary of Artists, Oxford Art Online* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/benezit/B00176401 (accessed November 11, 2015).

3 Leonard J. Slatkes, "Stom, Matthias," *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T081526 (accessed November 11, 2015).

4 Vogt, 103.

5 Ralph James, *Painters and Their Works: A Dictionary of Great Artists Who Are Not Now Alive*, volume 2 (London, UK: L. Upcott Gill, 1897), 175. Some sources state that Michele was Jacopo's father, while others say Michele was a contemporary landscape painter born in 1710 who followed in the tradition of Canaletto. For more information on Michele Marieschi, see Filippo Pedrocco, *Visions of Venice: Paintings of the 18th Century* (London, UK: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 148-173.

6 Federico Trastulli, "Marieschi, Jacopo," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 70 (2008), www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/jacopo-marieschi_%28Dizionario_Biografico%29/ (accessed November 11, 2015).

7 Giovanna Nepi Sciré, "Aspects of Cultural Politics in 18th-Century Venice," in Jane Martineau and Andrew Robison, eds., *The Glory of Venice: Art in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 60-67.



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