

# Gordon Review

## *Doxology*



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## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

*“I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.”  
(Psalm 145:1).*

Many of us are used to singing the “Doxology,” or at least some version of it, on Sunday mornings or in chapel services throughout the semester. We know the words well: *Praise God from whom all blessings flow...*

But have we truly allowed these words into our hearts? Has praise permeated our lives outside of pews and benedictions?

The word “doxology” is typically defined as worship expressed through liturgy. And what is liturgy? It refers to a form of structured action or ceremony. However, participating in liturgy does not necessarily mean getting dressed up. It is not always fancy or beautiful, as the word seems to suggest. Rather, our lives are full of mini ceremonies—moments each day and each season where we go through the same motions just to exist or accomplish tasks. Waking up and hopping out of bed each morning is a ceremony. Brushing your teeth is a ceremony. Going to class. Eating with friends and family. We might be used to taking such commonplace actions for granted. However, even in their mundanity, each of these moments of ceremony is one we can choose to dedicate to the Lord. In this way, they become worshipful. In this way, we live a life of “doxology.”

Of course, it is not the natural inclination of our hearts to seek the Lord’s glory in all we do. We have selfish motivations and a desire for our own glory. But praise God, for Jesus offers freedom from these things. When Christ gave up his life on the cross, the curtain was torn. We are no longer separated from God by our sins and impurities. Now, through Christ, we can live life to the full—we can sincerely worship at any place or time, in Spirit and in Truth.

Dedicating every aspect of our lives to Lord is a discipline. And it is not something we can accomplish without the transformative work of the Spirit in our hearts. But imagine how refreshing it would be, as college student and beyond, to view our days as opportunities for worship.

In the following articles, our contributors explore what it means to live in this worshipful way. We invite you to join us as you think about the role of “doxology” and how God is calling you to praise Him today.

**MAISEY JEFFERSON**  
**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

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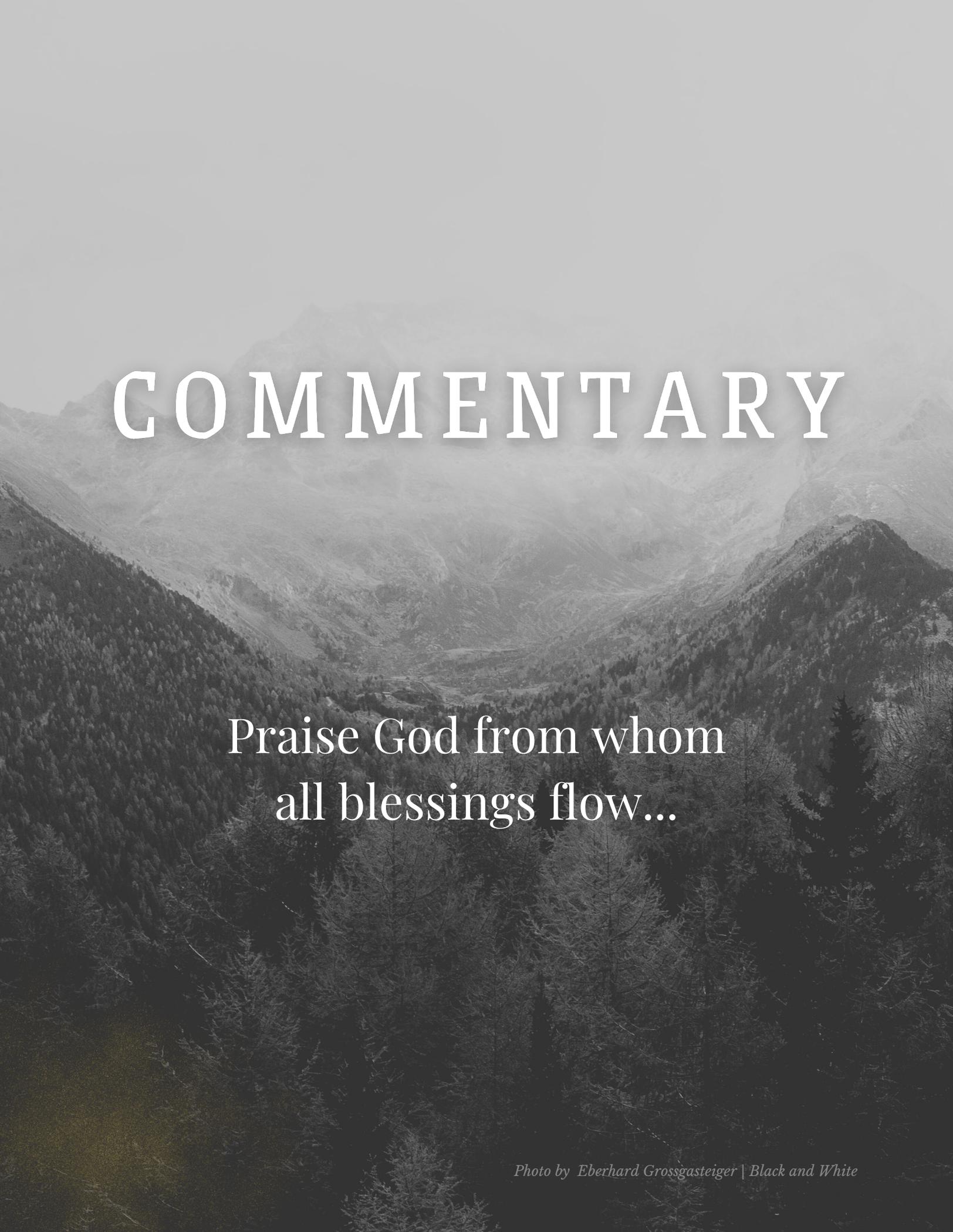
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# COMMENTARY

Praise God from whom  
all blessings flow...

## OUR TIME HERE BELOW: WORSHIP THROUGH POLITICAL ACTION AND STUDY

BY GIOVANNA JOHNSON

Within Christian culture, many individuals have subconscious or overt beliefs about the believer's role in politics and the study thereof. Many deem the study of politics a waste of time for the Christian, assuming that the political world is too far gone. These opinions appear all across the internet. For example, an article from *Believer's Magazine* states plainly, "Engagement in the political process in any form is contrary to the spirit of Scripture. It is inconsistent with the Christian's position and spiritual priorities." An article from *Becoming Christians* draws a similar conclusion, reasoning with claims such as "the Believer's citizenship is in Heaven," "Politics isn't the best way to show your love to others," and "Christ wasn't involved in politics." Such statements draw a clear line in the sand: Christians belong on one side of the line, and the unholy world of politics on the other.

As a political science major, I beg to differ. Though they are not inherently incorrect, I find conclusions of this caliber incredible. In response to those who say politics are "too far gone," that the field is "too risky" for the Christian to enter, or that politics are simply an anti-Christian clamoring for power, I point to my faithful political science department at Gordon and the principles of Reformed Political Theory. They point to the beauty found in the study of and involvement in politics, and how it is truly glorifying to God.

To deem a career field "too unholy" for the Christian is a lofty assumption. The world is indeed tainted by sin, and the Christian's citizenship in Heaven is infinitely more valuable than any earthly identity. However, to neglect the



*Photo by Katie Moum*

importance of stewarding our time on earth is to neglect the beautifully crafted world that our Father in Heaven declared "good" (Genesis 1:31). Caring for creation and other human beings in this world requires a system of justice—a stable governing body.

As one who generally falls under the Reformed branch of Christianity, I believe James Skillen from the Center for Public Justice offers fit commentary. He expresses that a just state clearly defines right and wrong, and that a "just political order is one that seeks to fulfill its specific limited responsibility before God" (Skillen). In Christian doctrine, there is a strong emphasis on "right and wrong," and morality which stems from God. Therefore, to enforce a standard of right and wrong inherently honors God. With the understanding of the government's role to "do justice," one cannot say that the Christian has no place in this effort, advocating for such a system.

Considering we serve a just God, the Christian has a similar responsibility to do justice, which then reopens the theoretical pathway for a Christian to be involved in politics (Micah 6:8 NIV).

Will justice be enacted perfectly? Certainly not, as sin has infiltrated this world. However, when government and politics have a defined role, there is room for a more generous understanding when it comes to how the Christian can be involved. Considering Scripture exhorts that "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it," there is an inherent duty for man to care for creation, both human and nonhuman. Professor of political

science at Gordon College Timothy Sherratt would agree with this. “Stewardly tasks’ is making space via policy for the non-governmental institutions of society,” he said, “from individual people to various sorts of groups and associations to do their tasks of stewardship well.”

Connecting further to stewardship, Sherratt also acknowledges the multiple roles humans often play in their lives. As an illustration, he gave an example of an individual who has both a career and a family. “Government facilitates those two dimensions of stewardly activity with policies that allow parents to take sick children to doctor’s appointments without suffering negative consequences at work,” he said.

Advocating for policy that enforces right and wrong supports procedures that help those in society steward their time on earth well. Therefore, there is ample room for the Christian to be involved in this practice. Striving towards a just state adheres to Scripture’s call that we care for our fellow humans and the world we inhabit, which glorifies God.

Politics and the study thereof may not always be considered “worship” in itself. However, there is still space for worship to be involved. When studying or working towards the effective stewardship of one’s time on earth through politics and policy, the Christian honors the intention God has for our time in this world. As Sheratt said, “We are a little bit more inclined to say that work is, after all, part of what it means to be human in our Christian understanding, converts work not into drudgery, but into meaningful cooperation with God.”

Dr. Melkonian-Hoover, also a professor of political science at Gordon College, expressed something similar in her interview. “I also think the study of such helps us not only understand the world, but it helps us care for the world better,” she said, “and it calls us and increases our recognition of the need to do justice for all, but also for those who are often voiceless.”

There is no institutional sphere that the Christian is told to avoid, as there is no sphere God’s jurisdiction does not reach. As Melkonian-Hoover explained, “I go back to [Abraham] Kuyper again on this...‘every square inch is God’s and under his sovereignty,’ and so I don’t know what Christians are not supposed to enter.” Within this mindset, as citizens of this world, it makes sense that we involve ourselves in all institutions—not only politics, but also business, education, etc.

This is not to say that theocracy, a government ruled by the Church in the name of God, is the solution. Simply put, through studying and being involved in politics, the Christian advocates for a just state. This stewards creation well and therefore, glorifies God.

In the Reformed perspective, participation in politics is the gradual respiration of the created order as designed in Genesis—not by man’s effort, but by God working through man. This includes political action and advocacy. In his article, Skillen expresses,

*“My argument for public justice is grounded in the biblical conviction that standards of justice are part of God’s creation order and that Christ is reconciling creation to God over time. This reconciling process calls us forward to our tasks as family members, working people, church people, citizens, and countless other responsibilities.”*

With this in mind, the notion that a Christian should not study or enter the realm does not consider the value that politics and government hold. This well-meaning zeal for the kingdom misses the importance of caring for the world as we know it. There is value in this study, and merit in such actions.



*Photo by Elina Sazonova*

# THE WORSHIP OF ADVOCATING FOR FAMILY VALUES

BY PANO VLISMAS

## What is the Nuclear Family?

As this semester's print edition is devoted to "Doxology," we are talking about how we as Christians can best praise God in our everyday lives. Therefore, I thought it right to emphasize the importance of the nuclear family to childhood development—the most impressionable state of life and one that is quintessential to both religious growth and social stability.

The term itself originates from the work of social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. By nuclear, he means an extension of the word nucleus. This label essentially means that the described family structure of two married parents with children is believed to be the epicenter of society—a central point from which all function stems.

## Cultural Significance

The concept of the nuclear family was particularly popularized in America during the Cold War. The family unit was one of many components utilized to express American supremacy through foundational Judeo-Christian principles. In contrast, Soviet society had a more communal view of children as belonging to the state.

Throughout this era, the American people were encouraged to take pride in their nation's founding values and institutions. An emphasis on such national sentiment continued across the multiple decades of the Cold War. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan called the Soviets an "evil empire" in a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals, highlighting the differences between each nation's founding principles. He encouraged the West to never compromise its Judeo-Christian values in dealing with the Soviet Union.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in late 1991 and following a period of sole American hegemony, there was no longer such a staunch adversary to emphatically contrast and bolster our values against.

According to Pew Research Center, at the height of the post-WWII baby boom, 73 percent of children lived in a first-marriage household. As of 2015, the figure was lower than 50 percent and I fear it has declined even further through the past eight years. Due to rising divorce rates, these statistics have been offset by an almost threefold rise in single parenthood—26 percent of children under 18 live in single-parent households.

Unfortunately, the decline of the two-parent institution speaks to a larger falling significance of America's once-treasured institutions. In such a troubling time, our society must remember why the nuclear family was once viewed so favorably.

### Personal Experiences

Speaking from my own upbringing, I consider myself incredibly lucky to have been raised by two loving parents who not only exemplified the qualities of a healthy marriage, but also raised me the best they could by each leaning into their distinctive roles in a marital partnership. My father instilled in me the principle of a strong work ethic, while my mother taught me the value of compassion and empathy toward others. By witnessing compromise between the two at such an impressionable age, I have grown to work well with others and participate in valuable discussions—even ones in which there is some sentiment of disagreement.

These examples are just a few of many, but they clarify how such a family setting is crucial in the development of young minds.

### Where do we go from here?

There must be new campaigns to advocate for the nuclear family's rejuvenation in America so that all children can experience the loving environment of a two-parent home. There are multiple realms in which progress toward this ideal can be made, like through increased participation in the adoption/foster care industry by couples who cannot have children of their own. Moreover, by encouraging more couples to adopt, children who have been left without a family are introduced to a healthier environment of upbringing.

Another means of fighting for the nuclear family is advocating for marriage itself, specifically when it comes to living and raising a family within a healthy relationship. What does this type of advocacy matter to the unmarried student reader? According to Genesis 2:24, "a man leaves his father

and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (NIV). This verse emphasizes the social nature of humans—no one person is meant to walk through life alone. The marriage bond provides social fulfillment. By seeking out this type of close-knit relationship with someone else, arguably the highest form of all human social connection becomes present throughout everyday life. Its presence leads to greater levels of individual happiness and sets the groundwork necessary for the healthiest of environments for raising children.

In our quest for the rejuvenation of America's nuclear family, we can take comfort and draw on the Christian roots of this institution to be unwavering in this pursuit with full praise to God.

# TIPPING THE SCALES: AMERICAN POWER SHOULD BE WILLING TO SHRINK AS ALLIES STRENGTHEN

BY CONNOR HALL



*Photo by Pixabay*

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, defense budgets among Western nations are skyrocketing and previously less influential benefactors of the liberal order have found a new purpose—examples are numerous. Concerned over potential Russian aggression in the Nordic region, Sweden and Finland have officially submitted their applications for NATO membership (Rand Blog), and if admitted, will raise NATO's roster count to 31 nations. Germany, which has traditionally retained a very limited military, recently reached an agreement with U.S. aerospace giant Lockheed Martin for the purchase of 35 F-35 stealth fighters (DefenseNews), joining 16 other Western nations currently operating or awaiting delivery of the aircraft. Militarily reclusive nations such as Japan have significantly boosted defense spending for the first time in decades, shoring up their ability to counter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific.

Amidst this newfound liberal resolve, it's quickly becoming apparent that the familiar precedent of American political and military leadership may not be so unilateral in the future as Western allies are beginning to realize that their best form of defense might be themselves, not the limited might of projected American power which may not always have their best interests in mind. In a full-scale conflict, only home-grown domestic militaries can truly ensure the pursuit of national interest while in the shadow of American primacy.

While some European nations are decreasing their reliance on American security guarantees by strengthening their own defense industries, diplomatic ties are stronger than ever. Many Western allies have expressed considerable frustration since being shunned under the Trump administration, which moved to reduce American influence and abandon allies in institutions and agreements where American leadership was previously an indispensable force. Since President Biden's overt recommitment to American globalism at the beginning of his presidency and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the collective strength of liberalism has been reinvigorated by the appearance of a new adversary, but not all Western nations have taken a unilateral approach in reorienting their relations with the U.S.

In December of 2022, Japan revealed its first national security strategy in a decade (Center for Strategic and International Studies), revealing that, in addition to bolstering its own defense industry, it's also cementing strategic ties with the U.S. in an attempt to increase its aggregate deterrence capability. This signals a continued reliance on American power to protect Western interests. After all, American security guarantees created a safe environment for Japan, Germany, and numerous other now-Westernized nations to prosper following World War II—a precedent on which it has proven hard for the West to decrease their reliance.

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Abdicating more responsibilities to Western allies would represent a massive step towards concretely identifying the new adversary of the West, which rightfully appears to be autocracy. While some scholars have objected to using such a restrictive, binary model to describe the state of great power conflict in the 21st century, it retains significant merit in how it distinguishes between two very different forms of government that all nations wrestle with—power is either taken from the people or granted to them.

However, certain components of authoritarian governments can be found in the very nature of American hegemony, which has not gone unnoticed. In the current “rules-based” international order, many critics argue that the U.S. has manipulated the rules to its benefit, given it largely created the rules and maintains by far the greatest share of military power within Western organizations. As a result, external Western interests have understandably felt subordinate to distinctly American interests at various points within the past several decades. A prime example is the recent loss of France’s contract with Australia (Associated Press) to produce nuclear submarines for United States-based industries, which France has explicitly ascribed to the unfair dominance of the American military-industrial complex.

The U.S. may be reluctant to admit it, but even within its sphere of ideological allies, it exerts an occasionally authoritarian degree of influence over the trajectory of the liberal order. As Western allies grow in their collective ability to cooperate with American hegemony as well as keep it in check, greater accountability backed by military independence is crucial to ensuring an equitable liberal order.

It may fly in the face of realist theory to suggest that the United States might actively seek to weaken its hegemony, but greater charitability would be vastly beneficial in pursuing more multilateral, decentralized, and democratic neoliberalism.

A concern for broader liberal ideology beyond distinctly American interests must be adopted for this to influence the current structure of Western influence. Given that allied entities with similar values would likely fill the vacuum left by a downscaling of American power, the only barrier facing such a course of action is the self-interested motive of hegemony preservation, which I believe should be ample motivation for reordering priorities—rising inequality, deteriorating infrastructure, and declining social capital are just a few of the major issues facing domestic American life, all of which warrant a reallocation of resources to address in some form or another.

However, this shouldn’t be seen as an imperative with exclusively domestic implications, but rather a wholesale investment in the credibility of American influence—there have been numerous instances where the dysfunction of Western democracy has been weaponized by more nefarious forces to undermine the effectiveness of the American presence in global affairs. With democracy around the world and at home under assault, extreme centralization of power within both the liberal order and domestic American politics is counterproductive to modeling and enforcing those same democratic values around the globe. Washington should be willing to take a step back if it means more collective progress toward these values to which it so frequently claims allegiance.

None of these sentiments should be interpreted as a broad call to retrenchment, however. In fact, if one imperative has emerged through the political turmoil of the past century, it’s that the world cannot afford an isolationist America. While American power doesn’t by any means have a unique capacity for virtue, it does have the most influence among its Western allies, and therefore the greatest potential for the promotion of human flourishing. For as much as other nations deserve an opportunity for a greater stake in world leadership, completely abandoning the status quo would be disastrous for the current balance of power that exists as a byproduct of American globalism.

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Collective Western success, whether it be economic, political, or military, is so intricately intertwined with American leadership that backpedaling too far could easily yield disastrous results. While asymmetric American military strength can stand to be diminished in favor of decentralized Western autonomy, diplomatic relations, strategic coordination, and stalwart resolve cannot. Crucial pillars of Western security cooperation such as the F-35 program and continued Ukrainian assistance cannot be left in the dust. When structured to provide economic and security wins for all involved, overseas defense cooperation is a massive job creator, confidence booster, and efficiency boon. Joint military exercises strengthen relationships, build trust, and reinforce the collective objectives of the liberal order.

As America enters a new age of great power competition, it finds itself at a crossroads—one that presents a crucial opportunity for Washington’s verbal commitment to democracy to gain massive credibility if it’s willing to defy the hegemonic instinct of rule preservation. An America that is perceived as conceited and self-serving won’t make any meaningful progress in a geopolitical climate driven by mutually beneficial relationships.

As American power rallies to counter Chinese influence that is often framed as suspicion-worthy and nefarious, it has a rare chance to take a long look in the mirror and come to terms with its own intentions, which must begin with the recognition that America doesn’t hold a monopoly on the promotion of liberalism. Western allies can and should be allowed to take the reins in spheres where American influence was previously a unilateral force—and Washington should be willing to encourage it.

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# REIMAGINING WORSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

BY IRIS MARK



*Photo by Markus Spiske*

It was hot for September, but then again, when was the last time anything was the way it was supposed to be?

The streets were unfamiliar, and the pavement smelled like city; a cosmopolitan mix of dust and everything else, and maybe a bit of pizza in there, too.

There were *so* many people! Young people, old people, in-between people. There was a girl reading a book on the ground while her parents stood over her and said things like “This isn’t her first rodeo.” She flipped on, oblivious to the clamor around her. There was a stage with speakers projecting covers of familiar songs, while banners and signs were thrust into the air, drifting and swaying like garlands adorning the great concrete jungle in which we congregated. It was Sunday, Sept. 9, 2023.

I am describing a 75,000-person protest advocating for the banning of fossil fuels. Held in downtown Manhattan, the protest was organized in response to UN meetings that were scheduled for that week. My uncle, a pastor in Boston, forwarded me an email from his church’s “climate jubilee” team inviting me along. In a moment of spontaneity, I went with two other compatriots who bravely put up with me for the bus ride there and back.

I’ve been to protests before, but only so much commotion can be mustered up in Columbus, Ohio. Here, in New York City, things happen, and

I was ready to shout and stomp my feet in tandem with the sounds of the First Amendment in action. But there was another facet to our day of public disturbance: We were there, above all else, to worship—the concept of which I didn’t fully grasp at the beginning.

Worship is expansive and all-encompassing of anything and everything we do to glorify God. It is transcendent of time, ignorant of differences in culture or custom, and it doesn’t discriminate between class and money. I originally titled this piece “Redefining worship in the face of the climate crisis.” But “redefining” doesn’t feel like the right word to use when talking about something that is incredibly personal and expands far beyond wooden pews or rock concert halls.

So how can a protest be seen as an act of worship?

We associate protests with a lot of things, most of which are divisive and hostile. And yet, when you subtract the stigma from “protest,” there are many similarities between singing a hymn together and marching side by side for a better world. This is exemplified when we start to view climate change not as a doomsday message, but rather a chance to live out how God has called us to work and love together.

When I first arrived at the protest that Sunday, I felt heavy, like I’d put weights on my ankles and jumped in a pool. Maybe it was the heat or the crowd standing behind me, but for a moment my uncle’s words of “jubilee” rang hollow in my ears.

It felt like that promised feeling of “being a part of something bigger” had walked out and not bothered to close the door. I simply felt dwarfed by the enormity of it all; the masses, the buildings, the burden of the crisis we were drawing attention to yet again. Why should this be the protest to turn the tides? Why should this be the event that finally attracts the change we need? How will we as a species come to a universal reckoning about the very real impact our habits have on the environment?

There was sadness on this day as well, for while we celebrated our commitment to collaboration and hoped beyond measure that our leaders out there would act on their promises, we also had to recognize and acknowledge the sorrows that have and will come to pass because of humanity’s disregard for the integrity of the Earth: Land stolen and abused; displaced families and communities; children who grow up wondering how old they’ll be before the world burns around them; heartbreak in all its forms.

Where in all of this is there room for reconciliation? Where in all of this is there room for rejoicing?

These kinds of questions are exhausting.

It took me until we passed Times Square to come up with an answer. New York City is not known for its kindness, and yet I felt something there, something in the voices and the inorganic sounds, the crush of bodies and the rumble of 75,000 feet marching with urgency on their way to something, *anything*. Amongst the panic and the alarm bells, I realized there was joyful hope here above all else, *and I was a part of it*. The sign I was carrying, while still a piece of cardboard, felt a little lighter.

As we reimagine worship, so too must we reimagine the climate crisis itself not as something to make us “feel bad” or worse, to ignore, but as a platform for dialogue and compassion, fueled by the commitment to loving our neighbors as Jesus commands. If we are to love one another, then by

default we must care for the Earth, because without a healthy Earth, there is no life. The very fact that we are here, on this planet, armed with the resources able to enact positive change, is a gift.

At last, when the protest was over and the crowds were swallowed up again by the push and pull of the city, I understood what my uncle had meant long ago in the email I first looked at. “Worship in the Streets for Climate Justice” the subject line read, and further down it invited me to join them “as we worship God through prophetic public witness for the healing of our world.” The “jubilee” of this protest does not equate comfort, nor does it negate the sorrow that comes when dealing with environmental issues. But in the coming together of passionate souls who act as a collective embodiment of the justice of Christ, there is something joyous to be held—and it opposes the dangerous current attitude of “accept and move on.”

It is a time of healing and rejoicing, but we should not let that overshadow the critical time in which we live; let us consider it a privilege and an opportunity to be witnesses to God’s restoring power as we fight to maintain justice on all fronts.

“This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,” says Psalm 118 (ESV). Let us rejoice, be glad, and let us not give up the fight.

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# THE LITTLE FLOWER OF JESUS: THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF SAINT THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

BY COLLIN WILLIAMS

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Many are familiar with the minor doxology prayer, the Glory Be. In English, it reads,

*"Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."*

This prayer is meant to summarize the truths of the Christian life, whose sole purpose is to bring Glory to God. But how can we live to glorify God? Let us look to our older brothers and sisters in Christ for guidance. One great role model for us is Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. Saint Thérèse was an eighteenth-century Discalced Carmelite Nun who pioneered a method of Christian living called "The Little Way."

Her parents, Louis and Zélie were both very pious individuals who discerned consecrated religious life. Louis and Zélie had nine children, two boys and seven girls. The parents delighted in their children, but tragically, within a three-year period, they lost both baby boys, a five-year-old girl, and an infant girl. After this trauma, and because of Thérèse's seeming frailty, her parents were unsure if she would survive when she was born on January 2, 1873.

Miraculously, Thérèse proved to be more resilient than they anticipated (Society of the Little Flower). When she was four, however, her mother died suddenly of breast cancer, leaving only her father and older sisters to comfort her. Thérèse was the baby of the family and had grown up with an attitude of "wanting it all." She was a sensitive child, who was prone to tantrums, stubbornness, and a bad temper. Thérèse persistently tried to join the Carmelite Monastery, but she was not granted entry until she was 15.

Most of what we know about the interior life of Saint Thérèse comes from her autobiography *Story of A Soul*. In this work, we find that Thérèse desperately wanted to be a great Saint, but when compared to others who had lived lives full of mortification and righteous deeds, she felt as though *her* life was merely a grain of sand sitting next to a mountain. Thérèse recognized that God desired all of us to be holy, but she was concerned that a magnitude of greatness comparable to these Saints was unachievable. She surrendered,

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deciding to acknowledge her own littleness and admit that her way to heaven would be by the arms of Jesus. The way of going about this would be to live a prayerful life that paid special attention to the small duties required of her, and to do them with great care and devotion to the Lord. Thérèse, in her writings, stresses the importance of the Blessed Mother saying she wished “to live during this sad exile in the company of Mary, submerged in loving ecstasy in the depths of her maternal Heart.”

Thérèse loved flowers and was content in glorifying God just by being uniquely herself in his magnificent garden, thinking of herself as the “little flower of Jesus.” In her autobiography, she wrote, “What matters in life is not great deeds, but great love” (St. Therese Little Flower Parish).

Thérèse did not need to perform any particular great deed to feel deserving of God’s love—she simply expressed her own love towards Him by loving her neighbor. One example, out of many, where she displays this attitude is when a nun repeatedly splashed her with water as they were doing laundry. Although tempted to display her frustration, Thérèse was able to exhibit great patience, controlling her anger and offering up this little annoyance to God as a means of allowing her own personal dissatisfaction to pass (Bernadette Vesco).

Therefore, in exploring Thérèse’s life, we can recognize the importance of patience, which allows us to acknowledge our own littleness and weakness. We can learn to accept that, by our own accord, we will always fall short of what God desires of us. But by relying on His grace, we can become holy.

Not all of us are called to enact God's will with enormous deeds, but we all are called to obey the Lord and lead lives that bring glory to him, even if it is as small as being patient with and loving our neighbor.

Thérèse’s autobiography *Story of a Soul* is one of the most significant works on Catholic Spirituality

to be released. Thérèse was canonized a Saint by Pope Pius XI on n May 17, 1925 and declared a doctor of the Church—meaning she made a significant contribution to the doctrine of the Catholic Church—by Pope John Paul II in 1997 (Society of the Little Flower). Thérèse is also one of only four female doctors of the church. Her life, though short and seemingly unremarkable, was—and remains— incredibly profound.

Saint Thérèse died of Tuberculosis on September 30, 1897 at the age of 24 (Society of the Little Flower). Her last days were agonizing—she slowly asphyxiated in a manner similar to Our Lord on the cross. But even in this enormous pain she did not despair or give up love. Her last words were “My God, I love You!”

*“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.”*  
- Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

# STUDENT LIFE

Praise Him all creatures  
here below...



*Photo by Life Of Pix | Black and White*

# THOUGHT EXPERIMENT: LANE SHOULD PLAY CLASSICAL MUSIC FROM ITS SPEAKERS

BY PERK STEELE



*Photo by Pixabay*

The Symphonic Band practiced in the chapel as two friends and I gathered for a prayer meeting in the lounge. As we waited for other students to arrive, my friends played contemporary worship songs to set the mood for our meeting. I suggested to my friends that we not play anything so that we could hear the band's majestic music. Even though the band was only practicing, playing several sections over and over, it still pointed me to God's majesty.

Perhaps the distinctive feature of Lane Student Center's atmosphere is contemporary Christian music played all day, every day, from the speakers. Occasionally, I may mock the song played if it is a "Jesus is my boyfriend" style song, sometimes even thinking about singing such songs to a friend to tell her that I like her. However, most of the time, I pass on. I hear many of the same tracks played over and over, and within these tracks, the same four chords, vocals, drum beats, and measures.

On that same note, what if Lane switched its playbill? Imagine opening the doors to the dining hall to hear Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" blaring from the speakers, or eating dinner in Sunnyside to Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue in D Major." Knowing what students are used to, this would certainly raise eyebrows.

Indeed, classical music from the 18th and 19th centuries draws me near to God, and I am willing to listen to it many times over. Having listened to Handel's *Messiah* many times, I cannot read certain passages in *Isaiah* without hearing the music Handel put to it. Musical pieces are not isolated. I am overjoyed when I hear a riff from one place and find its source—for example, hearing a musical track from *Up!* and finding its source in the opera *Carmen*, complete with vocals. Within single pieces, repeated patterns, or leitmotifs, not only connect one portion of the piece to another, but inspire awe. Listening to them, I am reminded that music is not in isolation, and, on a larger scale, nothing is isolated from God; certain songs and pieces (especially hymns) can bear emotional significance on repeated hearings at different moments, forming leitmotifs in my own life and faith.

The most significant patterns come in the church year. "Worship Christ the Newborn King!" at Christmas time becomes "Worship Christ the Risen King!" at Easter, complete with the same melody. Continuing with the thought experiment, Lane could change its selection of classical pieces depending on what season the church is in.

Among other pieces, "Unto Us a Child is Born" and the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" would blare from Lane's speakers during Advent, a sum of

Requiem Masses and Passion oratorios during Lent, and "Worthy is the Lamb" and Bach's Ascension Oratorio during Easter until commencement. The church seasons of Epiphany and Ordinary Time do not attract composers as much as other parts of the church year, but they can also be times to play many other pieces—and not just old masterpieces. More obscure pieces, especially pieces from Gordon's music students and faculty—from Gabe Southard's band rendition of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Antar" and Sarita Kwok's Chavalier arrangements to original works—could also be played.

Of course, such a change in music would encourage greater focus in Sunnyside, whether for students who eat alone and read as they eat, or for those who eat together and want to listen to each other. The library sometimes plays classical or jazz pieces to create this atmosphere of focus. However, to prevent this type of music, normally played at concerts rather than through speakers, from becoming cheapened, I would recommend Lane not play music when it is not serving food.

Most significantly, the varying tones of the diversity of orchestral pieces, especially at different times of the church year, offer a contrast to the mostly upbeat contemporary Christian music. This contrast would make classical music jarring when first played from Lane's speakers, especially pieces like Handel's "He Was Despised and Rejected" or A. J. Gordon's "They Led My Lord Away." But, ultimately, this variety is necessary—we must remember that Jesus died and took on our sins before He could rise from the dead. We must remember that the Christian life is not a series of triumphs because we received a ticket to heaven, but a continual journey with the God who redeemed us and who knows all of our trials and triumphs.

Gordon, as an institution of learning, should encourage learning even outside the classroom. It should not endorse music because it has the "Christian" label on it, but because it truly draws its listeners near to God. It should teach students to appreciate what is beautiful, stirring in them an awe of the God of beauty and a longing for His presence and joy.

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# SELF-REFLECTION THROUGH THE LENS OF LEISURE: WHO LEADS MY LEARNING?

BY SIMON KIM

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I am a student who cares about his grades. I get sad when I get a B plus instead of an A minus, and I make an effort to avoid getting a bad score. I used to think working hard to get good grades was a virtue because it made my parents happy. I used to read books for hours just because it was exciting and satisfying, but I eventually became a person who would tell others that I hated studying, and even thought of knowledge with negativity.

Working hard is a good thing, and we all have responsibilities to do our best even when it's difficult. However, it was getting more and more difficult for me to take pleasure in what I was doing, which made me doubt whether I was suitable enough for a college education in the first place.

As I continued studying in college, I got some "good grades," which made my parents proud of me. But eventually, my heart was filled with pride—one of the seven deadly vices—because I credited myself. I started to trust myself rather than acknowledge my weaknesses and limits. As a result, I had nowhere to go for help when I was struggling with my studies, and they gradually became joyless. At this point, I was studying only to satisfy my parents, not to acquire knowledge. There was no more joy in my heart while studying.

Even though I noticed that something was wrong with my mindset, I still tried to approach it with my own strength instead of asking God for help.

Then this semester, in the JAF program (to which I also applied to prove to the world that I am a good student), I read a book called *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* by Josef Pieper. This book showed me a whole different perspective regarding studying. It helped me realize that one of the reasons for my hatred towards knowledge was a lack of "leisure" within myself.

When one thinks of the word "leisure," oftentimes the image of a person resting comes to mind. However, according to Pieper, the definition is different. He writes, "Leisure is an attitude of mind and a condition of the soul that fosters an ability to receive the reality of the world." This attitude of leisure forms when someone fully opens himself to the truth around him, and therefore becomes himself to the full extent.

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After he defines leisure this way, Josef Pieper goes on in his book to give the insight I needed most. He contends:

*“Compared with the exclusive ideal of work as toil, leisure appears in its character as an attitude of contemplative ‘celebration,’ a word that, properly understood, goes to the very heart of what we mean by leisure. Leisure is possible only on the premise that man consents to his own true nature and abides in concord with the meaning of the universe. Leisure draws its vitality from affirmation. It is not the same as non-activity, nor is it identical to tranquility; it is not even the same as inward tranquility. Rather, it is like the tranquil silence of lovers, which draws its strength from concord.”*

When I read this, it destroyed the hatred and negativity towards knowledge that I had been experiencing. I always thought that it was society that had destroyed my love of learning with all of its academic curriculum and competitive atmosphere. But this book helped me discover that it was me who had caused the issue.

This story of mine does not have a happy ending yet. I am still struggling to let my own expectations go. I still have a hard time giving myself fully to God. However, as I start to apply what I learned reading this book, I notice more joy and gratitude in my heart while studying—both of which are necessary to eventually reach a point of true “leisure” in my studies.

Ever since I acknowledged my weakness, God has helped me view the world with a broader perspective. I finally know that I do not have to ace everything I do. No matter how people look at me, I am just myself, an ordinary student who has to ask for God’s help whenever I do anything. I do not have to stress just because something did not turn out as I thought it would—I am not the one in control. After all, I am not alone in this process of learning.

To God I give my glory; He is the one who makes every success of my life possible, and He is the only one worthy of my praise. Amen.

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# SURRENDERED SONG: A REFLECTION ON CATACOMBS AND WORSHIP

BY MAISEY JEFFERSON



*Photo by Mike Labrum*

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Many of us are used to gathering in the chapel sanctuary every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning. However, on Sunday nights, all the lights are off. The sun has gone down. The curtains are drawn over the windows, and other than the electric candles that dimly flicker as you walk in, there is barely enough light to see the faces of people next to you.

For three semesters now, I have spent Sunday nights on the chapel stage with my guitar, watching silhouettes find their seats at 9 pm. During my time as a band member, I have played more than a few wrong chords, helped coordinate band member meetings, made new friends, started songs in the wrong tempo, planned worship sets, and nearly face-planted on stage in the dark. (More than once, but who's counting?)

Over the span of so many Sundays, I have come to love that no two Catacombs are the same. Well, apart from the fact that I always seem to walk onto the stage with an anxious heart. No matter how confident I feel in knowing the music, there is always one part of me, hidden behind my guitar, that tries to keep me from worshipping.

*But I know the chords, I say.*

*But your heart's not ready, I hear.*

Growing up, although it wasn't necessarily at the forefront of my mind, and even though I couldn't quite put words to it, I often felt a subtle yet uncomfortable twinge of guilt when I sang worship music in church. What if I did not quite mean the words enough? Did I really love the Lord as much as the words I was singing said? Was I just trying to look good?

In youth group, I would look around during worship time. People my age would be on their knees, hands in the air, as if they had no doubts about themselves or what they were singing. I compared myself to them, assuming they must be more secure in Jesus than me, farther along in their own faith journeys and more mature. I envied what they felt—and I thought I had to feel it too.

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So I spent time during worship songs in my own head, attempting to convince my gut to feel something—to feel the deep love toward the Lord that everyone else so clearly had. Just focus on the words more, I told myself. Just stop being distracted. Muster up the willpower and mean the words, for once. Just sing them from your heart.

I have spent so many worship songs tied up in a head-heart battle, trying, fighting to make myself believe in my own belief. But, even when I did feel the Spirit working in my heart, even when I was truly touched or convicted by certain words in a song, I was never quite convinced of my own authenticity—never quite able to decide whether my heart was ready to worship.

Throughout my time at Gordon, I have come face to face with this guilt in my heart in a variety of ways. Mostly, this has involved many teary-eyed walks around Gull Pond while I ask God what is wrong with me and deliberate how to fix it on my own. However, it has also involved a lot of these questions going unanswered, because God is slowly answering a different question I never knew my heart was asking:

*What is keeping me from you, Lord?*

And even though I don't know if I have ever directly asked this, I am hearing His answer more and more clearly:

*Yourself.*

I am slowly coming to realize the veracity with which I hold on to my own heart—the ways I have set my own standards and defined faith in my own way. My struggles with worship are just one example. In my mental straining, I have been attempting to praise God through my own strength. I have been trying to control my feelings and purify my heart before God without His help. I have depended on myself for saving rather than on the all-sufficiency of Christ.

The more I define my faith by the feelings of “devotion” I somehow muster—or don't muster—

on my own, the more inauthentic and detached it will become.

A lot of Gordon students appreciate Catacombs because it is held in the dark. There are fewer distractions—less of a temptation to look around and compare yourself with others. The worship itself is also acoustic, meaning none of the instruments are amplified.

This lack of distraction forces me to face my doubt, my lack of desire, and my self-sufficiency which always starts to sink in on Sunday at 9 pm. But instead of turning to myself, I have started asking for help in the face of this anxiety.

*You're heart's not ready for worship, I hear.*

*That's true, I say. Jesus, only you can make my heart worthy of you. Please help me worship you well.*

Then, as I let go, I hear more clearly the voices being lifted in unison to mine. The electric candles are not bright enough to show me whose they are, but, I know in my heart they belong to my brothers and sisters. They are those of a people set free from sin, redeemed, and striving to worship the King—and this will not be the last time we sing together.

# FAITH

Praise Him above ye  
heavenly hosts...

# REDEFINING BLESSINGS: PRAISE GOD THROUGH THE PEAKS AND VALLEYS

BY JULIANA LEACH



*Photo by Chris Flexen*

*“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.”* So says the first line of a doxology I grew up singing. However, by last semester, I found myself stopping after “Praise God” came out of my lips. God had been present, surely, but blessings had not been terribly evident in my eyes. I had lost respect, friendship, and sleep—the only thing I seemed to have gained was a host of program rejections flooding my inbox. And yet, “Praise God...from whom all blessings flow.” Why? Because His blessings are not confined by current societal conditions.

Only since the beginning of this semester have I begun to see how society, rather than godly wisdom, guided many of my pursuits last year. A couple weeks ago, as I checked references on a homework assignment, I came across the fascinating first sentence of the article, “What the Image of God Means for Our Dignity and Work,” which reads: “The number one fear of the millennial generation is living a meaningless life” (Lindsley). This sentence led to a period of eye-opening reflection, and I now can attest to the fact that this mindset plagues much of America, including Gordon College.

Is the fear of leading a meaningless life necessarily a bad thing? No, but it can lead you to equate “blessings” with “successes”—promotions, good grades, job offers, recognition, etc.—and to ultimately gauge your worth based on accomplishments rather than the value stamped on you by God.

This trap, which Dutch Catholic priest Henri Nouwen aptly named “the success-failure syndrome,” might work out for a while. Eventually, though, this house built on unstable ground will come crashing down around you as success descends into failure—the things and people in which you found your value no longer speak worth into your life (Matthew 7:26-7 ESV).

When this happens, how do we redefine our perception of blessings and worth to see that they are not found in success, but rather in the hand of an ever-present God? How does one look for the seemingly-absent Lord? A man long ago pondered very similar questions as he struggled to escape the wiles of sin. The first segment of one of his famous works, *Confessions*, offers us a suggestion: Begin with a prayer.

St. Augustine of Hippo remarked on much of his life in a voice of prayer. In the opening paragraphs, after briefly contemplating how to approach God, he wrote, “I shall look for you, Lord, by praying to you and as I pray I shall believe in you, because we have had preachers to tell us about you” (21). Following the guidance of this much-respected theologian, make known your requests, doubts, tribulations to God (Philippians 4:6). Converse with God—keep it long or short, loud or silent; but in all cases, keep it real.

Sometimes, the only words left to utter are those already given to us by the Psalms and through the cry of our own Lord: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22.1, Matthew 27.46).

Appreciate the raw vulnerability of those dark valleys; pour out your heart in the silence of your hopelessness, for as Augustine found, “In him is the place of peace that cannot be disturbed, and he will not withhold himself from your love unless you withhold your love from him” (81). After acknowledging those sorrows in chapel, your room, the woods—wherever it is you give in to that tension—go forth and wait upon the Lord. This may seem like a rather anticlimactic “next step.” Yet, the depth of awareness that comes to fruition in this moment is exactly the state in which we begin to see God at work in our lives—not necessarily in grand, opulent gestures, but through the actions and words of strangers and friends whom God moves to pray with and for us in the moments of sorrow in which joy is sown.

This process is no overnight arrangement—in my case, it took months of seemingly unanswered prayers and sleepless nights, wondering whether my God had lost sight of one small soul among the billions he created. But hope does come, if you allow your eyes to be opened to the goodness of the ordinary joys God places in your days. And as we receive these seeds of hope, our narrow definition of “blessings” expands, and we recognize that the success-oriented interpretations of this world are too narrow for an all-encompassing God. For even when the world tries to withhold all, the one “who has faith in you owns all the wealth of the world, for if he clings to you, whom all things serve, though he has nothing yet he owns them all” (Augustine 95). Trusting in this worldview will allow each weary voice to once again find the solid footing of faith to sing, “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow”—for blessings do flow, and in abundance—if only we look past the meaning given to us by the world and instead accept the identity bestowed by Christ.

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*Photo by Julia Volk*

## ST. AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS AS A MODEL FOR PRACTICING INTIMACY

BY CHARLOTTE MCNAMEE

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*“You called me; you cried aloud to me; you broke my barrier of deafness. You shone upon me; your radiance enveloped me; you put my blindness to flight. You shed your fragrance about me; I drew breath and now I gasp for your sweet odour. I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am inflamed with love of your peace” (St. Augustine, Confessions.X.xvii).*

*Confessions* is a deeply human portrait of the Christian life. Raw and compelling, St. Augustine's work has remained a beloved classic of reading for Christians of all kinds since its composition in the 4th century. Separated by time, culture, and circumstance, it's remarkable how we still see ourselves in the words of the great church father's personal spiritual life.

In this work, Augustine sought to demonstrate how the pains and temptations of his own life were no less grim than that of any other Christian. While its particular expression is unique to Augustine, the experience of being a person, lost apart from God, is no less true for a Christian today than it was in late antiquity.

Augustine demonstrates through his confessional work that he could do nothing to save himself from his pain or pull himself toward the God who sought to save him. Only through relentless vulnerability could Augustine dare to draw near to holiness and allow God to shape him into the great theologian we know today.

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It is only through utter desperation that we are made vulnerable enough for our Heavenly Father to draw near and purify our hearts. I see this as the greatest lesson of *Confessions* and the truth that has attracted Christians to the text for so many years.

The quiet tears that roll down Augustine's face and softly shape the narrative of his life reveal the spiritual practice of intimacy—a practice every Christian must develop, without exception. We cannot muscle our way through the ups and downs of life, guarded in the presence of our Creator. If we truly want to be shaped into the image of the one who died to save us, we must relinquish all that we are into his hands. This is not easy. It is not something we do once. It is a task that we must continuously repeat throughout our lives to invite God in—or rather, to notice how He is already at work in us.

Scripture demonstrates the importance of practicing intimacy to remain close to God. And no Biblical figure demonstrates this as prolifically as David, the man after God's own heart. The words prayed by David are the ones Augustine turns to in his deepest despair, right before his conversion:

*“Lord will you never be content? Must we always taste your vengeance? Forget the long record of our sins”*  
(*Psalms* 6:3, 4; 78:5, 8).

Augustine's prayers also echo the language of Song of Songs. Radically, his language demonstrates how Song of Songs is not merely the tale of two abstract lovers, but the story of radical, intimate love between each of us and God. Once we have opened ourselves up in terrifying vulnerability, we there meet the God who “spoke words of love and inflamed our hearts, and now we hasten after the fragrance of his perfumes” (*Confessions* XIII.xv; Song of Songs 1:3).

*Confessions* beckons us to look toward our own life to ask ourselves honestly where we still need to surrender our innermost selves to God. What are you still holding onto in your prayer life?

What vulnerability do you dare not touch for fear of the Lord asking you to release it to Him? I pray that this look into *Confessions* encourages you to be bold in your surrender to God. When we invite the Lord to transform our lives, we will find the Gordon community transformed as well. How bold in our love would we become by supporting one another in the journey of intimacy with God, transformed by His love.

As Augustine demonstrates, the practice of intimacy inevitably persists until we see the natural state of who we are when we are at rest in God: A state of ceaseless praise. The realization of this end is how Augustine opens his most intimate *Confessions*:

*“The thought of you stirs [man] so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you”* (*St. Augustine, Confessions* I.i).

# THE TRUE HEART OF WORSHIP

BY JOZIAH CASTILLO

How do you worship God during your time in college? How do you praise Him? When we talk about worship, the very first thing that comes to people's mind is the singing aspect of Sunday service. But many forget that singing a song of praise is an *expression* of worship, not the *only* way to worship.

The true definition of Worship means continual devotion to something or someone. To the church of Colosse, Paul writes “And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17 NLT). What Paul is saying is that we are called to bring honor to Christ in every aspect and activity of daily living. As a Christian, you represent Christ at all times. If you look closely at the verse, it mentions that whatever we do or say, we do it to give thanks. Worship is our response, it's a way of being grateful to the Father!

## Reasons To Praise The Lord:

In Ephesians 1:3-10, Paul explains why we should give praise to The Lord. Such reasons are as follows: He gave us spiritual blessings, He chose us long before creation. He gave us sanctification, His grace, His redemption through Jesus Christ, His forgiveness, His gifts of wisdom and understanding, and His plan for the future.

Ultimately our motivation to worship God is because of who He is, but how do we *show* our worship to Him, here below?

## How to Worship The Lord:

Paul answers this question. His response: “Give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way

to worship him” (Romans 12:1). The way to worship is to be a living sacrifice.

That means we must submit to God and be consecrated to Him—we must be set apart for Him. As Paul continues, he says, “Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” (Romans 12:2). We are to let God transform us. This entails our hearts, our minds, our thoughts, our attitudes— everything and anything. With our minds transformed and our hearts dedicated to the Lord, the will or action will follow. A person's outward actions are a result of what is inward. (See what Jesus says in Matthew 15:18-19).

The heart is where our passions and motivations are. As Christians, we know that at the moment of salvation, our hearts were redeemed and we were given The Holy Spirit who helps us worship Christ in Spirit and in Truth. To worship “In Spirit” means to have a passion and love for God and “In Truth” means to have knowledge of God. Both are needed. Without love for God, we wouldn't know what truth is and our worship would not be genuine. We need The Holy Spirit to lead us into truth and to transform our hearts to love The Lord.

Being a living sacrifice means we use our bodies to worship the Lord. Here are some examples: Pray. Your tongue is a part of your body, so devote time to having a conversation with God. Use your ears to listen to Christian music. Use your eyes to look at what God has already done and to see where he is at work and how you can join Him. The Spirit also ministers to us through God's Word. As a college student, when was the last time you read your Bible? Align your mind and your heart to Biblical Truth as Philippians 4:8 says: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—*think* about such things” (emphasis mine).

Meditate on Hebrews 13:15: “Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name.”

When we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, then our hearts are transformed and our outward attitude will become a light that will impact the world. People will notice who we are in Christ.

### **This is True Worship:**

True worship is when our heart posture is fixed on the One who deserves all praise: Jesus. True Worship is when our hearts are fueled with love to do things the Lord loves and not what he hates, as said in John 14:15: “If you love me, obey my commandments.”

True worship is devoting our lives out of love and not out of obligation or legalism. Too often, we worry about how we dress or about church on Sunday, but we rarely reflect on our hearts. We go to Church expecting emotional moments, but if that’s our focus, then we are worshiping worship rather than the one who deserves worship. True worship is not confined to what we do on a Sunday, but rather what comes after.

True worship is for God and not for ourselves. We can’t serve something other than God and we can’t value anything other than God. What we devote our time to is what we are devoted to. So ask yourself: What is valuable to you? Is it praiseworthy? Practice the habit of worshiping the Lord.

God wants genuine and real worship, nothing fake for a show. We must also not expect anything in return—worship means sacrificing ourselves to give glory to God even when things go wrong. As Psalmist, David wrote “I will Praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak of his praises” (Psalm 34:1). David also writes, “I will exalt you, my God and king, and praise your name forever and ever. I will Praise you every day; Yes, I will Praise you forever” (Psalm 145:1-2).

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*Photo by Timothy Eberly*

## O COME LET US ADORE HIM

BY CAROLINE HELMER

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When I was younger, I went to a very traditional church. The nave was cavernous, complete with vaulted ceilings, and it had the most pronounced steeple I have ever seen. My favorite part, however, was the enormous pipe organ in the choir loft. Every service, the organ would start playing dramatically and we would sing “The Doxology.” My dad’s strong tenor voice and my mom’s soprano one would echo next to me while I saw the church elders sing stoically in the front row. The organ-playing wasn’t always my favorite part, though; the noise was too much, and it scared me a little. But as I got to know God for myself, it became what I came to love most about the service. As I was thinking about “The Doxology,” I realized I didn’t know why I loved it so much. It seems to be a simple song:

*“Praise God from whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him all creatures here below  
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.  
Amen.”*

Upon first glance, it appears to simply skim over what’s most important, like Jesus dying on the cross—which is why Christianity exists.

So why is this song such an integral part of the Christian tradition?

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What dawned on me is the fact that this sacred song is purely praise. There is no confession, gratitude, or petition. It is simply adoration and praising the beauty and the majesty of God. How often do we come to God in prayer for a reason other than confession, gratitude, or petition? How often do we acknowledge the Lord of Heaven and Earth as the Alpha, the Omega, and the King of Kings? Not often enough. We aren't asking a vending machine for a good grade on a math test. We are asking the most powerful being in all of existence.

I don't think this should scare us out of praying, asking for help when we need it, or even having a simple and stripped-down relationship with God. But we do need to recognize who we are praying to and give Him all the praise that is in our hearts—because He is more than worthy of it all.

One of my favorite books is *The Secret Garden* by Francis Hodgson Burnett. It is a story of a girl named Mary who is brought to an ominous mansion when her parents die. There seems to be nothing for her there, but soon she discovers a garden that's been forgotten for years. She makes friends with Colin, a boy living at the mansion who has been crippled all his life and has no gratitude in his heart. By the end of the book, he is healed in the garden, and exclaims that he wants to sing a song of praise. Mary and Colin, along with two other friends, decide to sing "The Doxology." They remove their hats, and earnestly sing these words to the Lord.

I love this scene because when Colin is healed, he simply and purely wants to praise God. He doesn't rush to his next calendar event or worry about the implications of the healing itself. He takes a second and sits at the feet of Jesus. The boy praises God in the small run-down garden, simply because He is and always will be.

Now when I hear the church bells ring, and see the congregation rise when the organ plays, I center myself on my Creator. I don't shy away at the thundering music, and instead just praise. Not to ask, not to confess, not to supplicate (though important), but to simply adore. When we adore, we are mirroring Heaven. Once we are fully reunited with our Lord, we won't have the mind to do anything else except ardently extol. So while we are here on Earth for this short time, let us praise and let us adore.

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*Photo by Tim Mossholder*

## DEPENDENCE ON DIVERSION LEADS TO A DISTRACTED FAITH

BY ERIN RICHARDSON

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Every day, we are bombarded with diversions. Social media creates an image to live up to as influencers instruct us on the best way to live our lives. Political parties wrestle for power, imploring the people to follow them on the correct path while dragging the opposing side through the mud. Hollywood crafts stories and, while some are good, others promote a wicked lifestyle cloaked in goodness.

The world is fallen and humanity promotes sin, reveling in wickedness disguised as good. It seems easier to indulge in the joy of the world rather than confront the fallenness that plagues the Earth. However, every “key to happiness” that the world offers is false. The only key to joy and freedom is Jesus and His redemptive love.

Blaise Pascal, a seventeenth-century mathematician, provides a profound outlook on the relationship between diversion and faith in his *Pensees*. His thought on this topic is extraordinarily relevant today as Christians everywhere fight against the darkness of the world and grow in their faith.

Pascal identifies diversion as one of the main barriers between man and faith. He argues that it keeps men from seeing what they truly are: Wretched. The avoidance of the curse brought upon man from Original Sin keeps the individual from recognizing that God is necessary for true happiness and salvation. He writes, “Being unable to cure death, wretchedness and ignorance, men have decided, in order to be happy, not to think about such things.”

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Rather than confront things such as death, wretchedness, and ignorance, humans utilize fictitious diversions to distract from the real world. These diversions come from outside of God and encourage dependence on distraction to maintain happiness. This happiness, however, is not lasting or true, because the wretched horror of the world will only continue to make things go wrong and cause distress.

Diversions create a false sense of security and, as Pascal argues, keep one from coming to terms with their wretchedness. This false security makes man think, "I don't need God." Therefore, these distractions must be disposed of if the groundwork of faith is to be laid. According to Pascal, faith is a gift from God, and yet the grounds must be prepared for the seed of faith to take root. The weed of diversion must be pulled out in order for faith to be received. How do we do this? "...[W]e can know God properly only by knowing our own iniquities," Pascal writes. And the only way to come face to face with wretchedness before God is to quash the illusion of our distractions.

While our salvation in Jesus can never be taken away, it is still important for us as Christians to continue to "prepare the grounds" to grow in faith and further our individual walks with God. Colossians 3:9-10 states that "...you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." Because we are made new in Christ, we must act following His image, and rid ourselves of these self-imposed constructs.

The maintenance of the grounds must continue throughout our entire Christian walk. Even with the seed of faith planted, it is important that Christians heed Pascal's advice and continue to deny the diversions of the world. When we stumble, let us repent, allowing God to wash us clean. In this way, we become dependent on Him rather than on this fleeting world.

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Photo by Jon Tyson

# EMPTYING OURSELVES FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRAISE

BY JOSH DENORONHA

It is evident that our present world is infatuated with self-glorification, and with what some may call “The Religion of Self.” We often see its effects in the ways people decide their own standards of truth, goodness, justice, and satisfaction. The reality of such standards are often hidden behind a curtain of self-praise—society offers the bait of “trust yourself,” urging you to embrace your own sovereignty. But, whether the world acknowledges it or not, upholding these self-decided standards can be quite a weighty task.

So, why do I mention self-praise in an edition dedicated to praising God in our daily life? Because we are surrounded by a world that offers lucrative possibilities for self-praise. It is after all naturally instilled in us as a cause of Genesis 3, where the first humans decided their own standards of truth over what God said. This is why the apostle Paul repetitively exhorts Christians to be transformed by the Gospel, and not conformed to the ways of this world.

Paul is onto something here when it comes to the importance of humility within our identity as Christians. Humility is and should be the driving force in our consistent praise unto God. Gavin Ortlund, a pastor and theologian, makes a wonderful case for this in his book *Humility: The Joy of Self-Forgetfulness*. Ortlund identifies a direct pathway to humility through Calvary, as we view ourselves in light of the cross:

*“The gospel cures us of this because it teaches us to measure our pride by the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross shows us the depth of God’s love, but it also shows us the depth of our sinful need. It reveals what God was willing to do, but it also reveals what he had to do. Our pride is such that it put the son of God on the cross.”*

What a sobering line: It is our very pride that put Christ on the cross—our belief we could live apart from Him. From Ortlund’s suggestion, we can understand that the worst thing we could do is depend on ourselves, which makes us think that we can be self-sufficient apart from God.

Later, to crush any temptation of such self-dependence, Ortlund adds: “Every breath we breathe is a gift from God. He is the fount and source of everything. We are infinitely vulnerable before Him—infininitely dependent, infinitely receptive.” We are infinitely vulnerable and infinitely dependent when placed before such a being who is the source of all creation. It is as if we were an ant standing at the base of Mount Everest, looking upward with an extraordinary sense of awe and utmost wonder. Still, even this image merely scratches the surface. How could we acknowledge His supremacy and still believe we know better? How could we believe that *we* deserve praise for what *we* think is right? In contrast to God, we are capable of nothing.

Now this can all seem pretty negative, but these realities are not meant to crush us. Instead, they challenge us to be all the more full of praise toward God. In light of this revelation, let us embrace the abasement of all our pride and take on the reality of living a life of Doxology toward this God who shows us so much love, care, and mercy, though we are so unmerited of it.

It is crucial to examine how this kind of Doxology can be approached practically. In his first epistle to the church in Corinth, Paul instructs his audience of believers to do all they do to the glory of God (10:31). How much there is to say about this—every word we say, every action we take, every thought we have should serve to glorify God. Now, is it possible for us to perfectly do this all the time? By all means no! However, we must follow the call to do all we do for the glory of God so that we starve our desire for our own glory.

In the first book of Thessalonians, Paul also instructs us to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances” (15:16-18 ESV). Rejoicing, praising, and giving thanks are vital within the Christian life. Firstly, to *rejoice always* does not literally mean that we be happy in each and every situation. However, the undertone of the passage is that we should seek to find joy in all circumstances.

Second, we are to *pray without ceasing*. Does this explicitly imply always performing customs such as a bowed head, crossed hands, and closed eyes? No. However, prayer is necessary to create intimacy and close out other distractions. When we remain continually in prayer, we retain our contact line with God, the Creator of all things, the One who cares for us. Though He is all-knowing, how much more does it mean when we confess how we feel and bring our requests to Him?

Lastly, we are to *give thanks in all circumstances*. This could also be called gratitude, and practicing it as a discipline bears great fruit in the Christian life. When we show gratitude toward God, it shifts our focus away from ourselves or anyone else and solely attributes glory to Him.

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If we give thanks within all sorts of circumstances, we are able to recognize the sovereign control of God, foregoing our own control as we lay it before Him.

The Christian life is one called to be set apart from the typical way of the world, and my prayer is that this revelation can motivate someone to become a living doxology—by shifting focus outward towards praising God. I will admit, my advice may not be perfect, but the Lord utilizes broken individuals for his purposes.

# PRAISE IS OUR WEAPON AS THE UNIFIED BRIDE OF CHRIST

BY ELIZA WEIGELT



*Photo by Shelagh Murphy*

Writer and theologian Saint Augustine wrote a profound anecdote in Book IX, Chapter 7 of his spiritual autobiography *Confessions*: In the face of persecution by the heretical empress Justina, Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, kept watch in the church to prevent Arian Christians from invading the space. In keeping that watch—"an anxious time of vigilance"—Ambrose introduced the practice of singing hymns and psalms. Later known as Ambrosian chant, the purpose was "to revive the flagging spirits of the people during their long and cheerless watch." In this brief paragraph, Augustine describes an important milestone in the history of Western sacred music and points to an interesting fact about the context in which it was founded: The purpose of musical worship was to provide strength and endurance for battle against enemies that sought to bring division to the Body of Christ.

This vignette is reminiscent of a familiar story from Acts 16:16-40. Paul, on his second missionary journey, is unfairly imprisoned with Silas in Philippi for casting a demon out of an economically exploited servant girl. After being beaten, abused, and chained in an inner dungeon, Paul and Silas pray and sing hymns throughout the night until a massive earthquake shakes the foundations of the prison and releases the prisoners from their chains. The whole encounter leads to the salvation of the jailer's entire household, and Paul and Silas leaving Philippi with an apology from the local government and an emboldened church. I suppose we'll never know if

Ambrose had this in mind as he led his congregation in steadfast perseverance for the true Gospel, though I wouldn't be surprised if it was.

As a classically-trained musician, I've engaged frequently with the realm of sacred music from an academic perspective—to study the history of Western music at all requires some understanding of Church history, since many developments in music history first began in the church. I've done harmonic analysis of Bach's four-part chorales, and sung those same hymns in church the next Sunday. I've studied sacred choral motets or large-scale sacred works like Bach's Passions, then heard fellow musicians lament the "simplicity" of contemporary worship music that mainly utilizes just four chords (I-IV-V-I, anyone?).

And yet, in being a worship musician for the past two years, I've seen the ways that these academic analyses and standards both have little bearing on the practical usage of music written for worship contexts and the ways they so evidently play out. As co-leader of Catacombs, I've seen how intentionally integrating diverse worship styles can unite a room of believers in a powerful way, defying worldly standards of togetherness. I've seen how surrendering a time of worship to the Lord in the face of frustration, grief, exhaustion, and discouragement transforms it into a time of victory and declaring the truth of Who God is.

But our worship isn't just about declaring the truth of Who God is—as we see in countless places across the New Testament, even the demons can acknowledge Who He is.

It's about joining the Church victorious at the throne of God as described in Revelation 7—the “vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language... [who] sang ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever!’” It's about declaring His holiness and surrendering our lives to Him in response, just as Isaiah did when he saw the Lord seated on the throne.

The Church sings with one voice at the throne of God. That kind of unity is impossible to create from our own human ability—it's a unity that can only come from dwelling together in the presence of God. That unity is what sets us apart as Christ's Bride, separate from a world riddled with division, and it testifies to the goodness and love of the God we worship.

In the 12th century, German nun Hildegard of Bingen wrote a morality play called *Ordo Virtutum*, in which a wayward soul (Anima) is rescued from the clutches of the devil by 16 female personifications of virtues. Every character in the play sings their lines as composed by Hildegard, with one exception: The devil is incapable of singing and simply screams angrily for the entirety of the play. What point, exactly, was Hildegard trying to make about music?

As we, the Church militant, engage in battle with the rulers, authorities, and spiritual forces of evil in this present age, we have a weapon that our enemy does not have: Joining with the Church victorious in pouring out our praise to the “one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.”

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# ARTS

Praise Father, Son,  
and Holy Ghost.

Amen.

# JOHN OF DAMASCUS AND THE DEFENSE OF ICONS

BY AUGUSTE CIORRA



*Photo by Beth Chobanova*

The Orthodox Church cannot be separated from icons. Since the time of the early church, icons have been venerated and used in worship. They rank among the essential tools of Orthodox spiritual practice. Seeing as this issue's theme is Doxology, I should discuss the “right worship” for which Orthodoxy is named—and what would be a better topic than Saint John of Damascus and his defense of icons?

Many students on campus would be familiar with the general Protestant distrust of icons and religious art. During the Reformation, a wave of “iconoclasm”—the destruction of religious images or opposition to their veneration (Merriam-Webster)—swept across Europe, disrobing many ornate and beautiful churches of their religious art and statues. Protestants were not the first iconoclasts, however. The first iconoclasts in the church were Byzantine – Christians inspired by Islam.

Islam rose to prominence shortly following Muhammed’s death in 632 AD, and over the next few centuries, from Arabia to Spain, it would take hold as the predominant religion. Shortly after the death of Muhammed, Muslim leaders wrote “Hadiths.” These writings compiled the sayings of Muhammed and provided a framework for Islam. The Hadiths strictly prohibit iconography, seeing it as a form of blasphemy and grounds for judgment from Allah (Sahih al-Bukhari 7.834). The iconoclasm inherent in Islam, paired with the

religion’s rapid growth, caused many Christians to adopt iconoclastic ideas in order to protect themselves from Islamic invasion. Therefore, as Islam spread, so did iconoclasm in the church. At one point, the Christian emperor Leo III even officially supported iconoclasm and instituted it across the Byzantine Empire.

One of the most prominent cities in the Byzantine Empire was Damascus, so when it fell to the Muslims in 634, the defeat was significant. One of the paragons of Christendom was now in Muslim hands, and many of its fleeing residents were slaughtered. Thankfully, Christianity was allowed to exist under Muslim rule, given Christians paid the head tax. However, this crushing defeat led many in the city to convert to Islam, viewing its victory as an omen. During all of this upheaval and heresy, John of Damascus made a case for Orthodoxy and later became a hero in the church's eyes from East to West. Eager to prevent the rise of Islam in Damascus, the upstart monk wrote fervently defending Christian teachings.

His work *On Holy Images* lays out arguments for their use and was his most influential work in defense of the Orthodox faith.

Defining terms in a highly erudite and philosophical manner, he first lays out the difference between veneration and worship:

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*“Worship is the symbol of veneration and honor. Let us understand that there are different degrees of worship. First of all the worship of latria, which we show to God, who alone by nature is worthy of worship. When, for the sake of God who is worshipful by nature, we honor His saints and servants, as Josue and Daniel worshiped an angel, and David His holy places, when he saved...” (St. John Damascene 10-17).*

This lengthy quote helps to define different forms of worship philosophically while still based on Scripture. However, St. John does not simply use definitions. His work is packed with logical quandaries which, when thought through, reveal the ancient nature of iconography:

*“The cherubim are not outside of creation; why, then, does He allow cherubim carved by the hand of man to overshadow the mercy seat?” (St. John Damascene 10-17).*

St. John’s theological enemies were of course both the Muslims ruling over Syria and the leaders of the largest Christian empire at the time, so any disrespect in his defense of iconography could have ended poorly for St. John. Yet, his gracious explanations testify to his saintly nature and are evidence of his great love for his enemies:

*“I venerate it, though not as God. How could God be born out of lifeless things? And if God’s body is God by union, it is immutable. The nature of God remains the same as before, the flesh created in time is quickened by a logical and reasoning soul.” (St. John Damascene 10-17.)*

St. John and his contemporaries were able to win out in the end. In 787 AD, iconoclasm was deemed a heresy by the seventh ecumenical council, and in the year 842 AD, iconoclasm had officially ended in the Byzantine Empire.

Though written in the 700s, St. John’s many theological works, as well as the refutations and reasonings found in them, are still relevant today. In a current environment where many are either against or hesitant of iconography, it’s time for more people to learn about St. John and his intricate defense of icons.

---

# DOXOLOGY: A SERIES

BY REBEKAH SWENSON

1.

Sanctuary  
of my bones  
weary, worn,  
paper-thin,  
the throbbing  
ache within  
my soul.  
Purify  
my heart,  
Your magnificence  
within me.  
Let my beating heart  
beat forward,  
into the golden sky,  
like the beating  
of the eagle's wings.

2.

One night  
there was this sunset.  
And the sky glowed  
so brightly,  
like the tangy,  
sweet  
wedge of a tangerine—  
and it devolved, trickled,  
into rouge-pink petal  
silk, lavender  
velvet, Christening the sun  
as it went down  
beneath the  
weightless wonder  
of the clouds,  
edges on fire  
by enormous candlelight.  
The incandescent heartbeat,  
created for joy's sake.

3.

And in due time  
the flowers are made  
beautiful. Though once  
they were shriveled seeds,  
life burst forth through the dirt.  
And the wind will sweep away  
the fiery leaves of autumn  
branches sinking under the weighted  
blanket of snow.  
In due time  
the robin will fly  
and the baby will crawl,  
and then run,  
sprinting toward all  
that will be.

4.

When Joy came  
it was morning;  
the sun  
lapped up the dew  
and shook off the restless,  
waking night.  
Weeping slipped out  
quietly, and defeated—  
but Joy blazed bright  
and smelled  
like coffee, and pancakes.  
It sounded like  
a dog's happy tapping paws  
clicking on a wood floor,  
the tail thumping on its drum—  
the table leg.  
Weeping tarried for a moment  
But in the morning,  
night's empty silence  
turned to Joy's unceasing praise.



*Photo by Cristina Gottardi*

# OCTOBRIS DOXOLOGIA

CAROLINE HENNINGER

---

praise God from whom all blessings flow:  
who created a world where you can recognize family by the way they smile  
who brought us friends that ask to slow down the pace to make a walk last  
longer  
who created a world where wrong turns lead through beautiful backroads  
who brought the swan back to the pond in due season  
who created a world where absences are noticed by grief  
who brought us the words we needed to hear out of unexpected sources  
You have given us the business of being alive in this world.  
help us to do it well.  
thank you.  
amen.

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## WHOLEHEARTEDLY, FOREVERMORE

GIOVANNA JOHNSON

---

though callused hands and a seemingly dimly-lit  
heart may fail,  
if they have glorified You,  
let them be strengthened.  
if i walk through the night, my hope fading as the  
duskward sun,  
let me turn wholly to You,  
my face warmed by your light.  
if i feel nothing again, so be it,  
but let me still sit awestruck at Your feet  
and whisper in chorus with the seraphim.  
if i do anything at all,  
let it be by Your grace,  
as i marvel wholeheartedly, forevermore.

## A DOXOLOGY OF VICISSITUDE

EMMA CARROLL

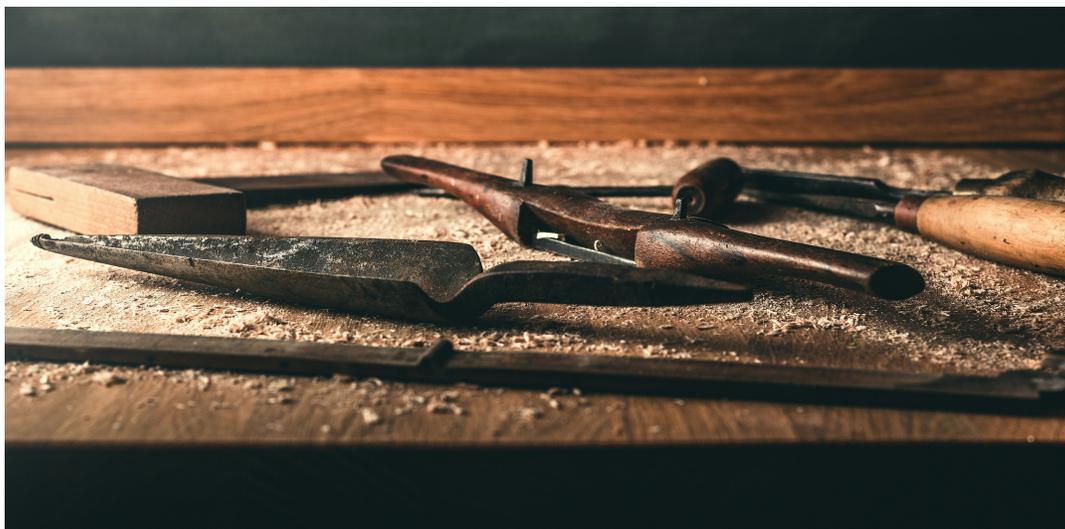
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Praise God, To Where My Tears Flow,  
Praise Him, All Suffering of My Heart,  
Praise Him, In the Despair of Woe,  
Praise Him, We Sheep in a Rampart,  
God, to you be the glory.  
Forever and ever,  
Amen



*Photo by Cottonbro Studio*

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*Photo by Alexander Andrews*

## MY FATHER'S HANDS

ABRAHAM ANTONELLI

---

A broken pair of hands  
My Father's hands  
Scarred and sliced and splintered from sawing  
Callused and creased  
Blistered and bruised  
Joints that click  
A back that cracks  
His life was tough, but he's tougher  
His body was broken so mine need not suffer.

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# GRACE ABOUNDS

ZACHARY ATOUI

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In the midst of the midsummer day  
Or the echos of a dark windy night  
You stand beside me; guarding me; protecting me, radiating light  
A spring of life; a beacon of hope,  
The one who is always there; ever above reproach

I wish this was me, the one I describe,  
I wish this was me, thus I may provide  
Provide for myself, requiring nothing else  
Until the day that I die, I pray that I may never need from the Name upon  
High

To conquer this goal, I throw you away  
To feed my desire, you get casted aside  
The passions rule over me, as Paul has warned against  
I cannot repent for something that makes so much sense

“Why would I rely on you Oh Lord?”  
As I sit there and mock: mock the name of the one who was guarding me in  
the night  
“I can do with only myself” I say every day, until the day comes where I cry in  
shame

I realize what I’ve done and the sin that I’ve made  
“I’m sorry Oh Lord” as I weep with pain  
I go and run and hide my face with fear  
Dreading the act that has brought me here

In the midst of the guilt and disgrace and sin,  
the Holy descends down to heal his kin  
The water of life, the beacon of hope  
Now holds me tight and brings me close

My head buried into his chest as He wraps me in His arms  
His strong humble presence eases my pain  
Because of the cup of blood He has slain

As my crying slows down and I’m able to breathe  
I look into His eyes but fearing to speak  
He notices my fear and comforts my heart  
With only a look and grin of please

“Oh my child, how I love you so,  
For I am with you wherever you go!”

“Why do you follow when I throw you away?”

“Because grace abounds for those led astray”

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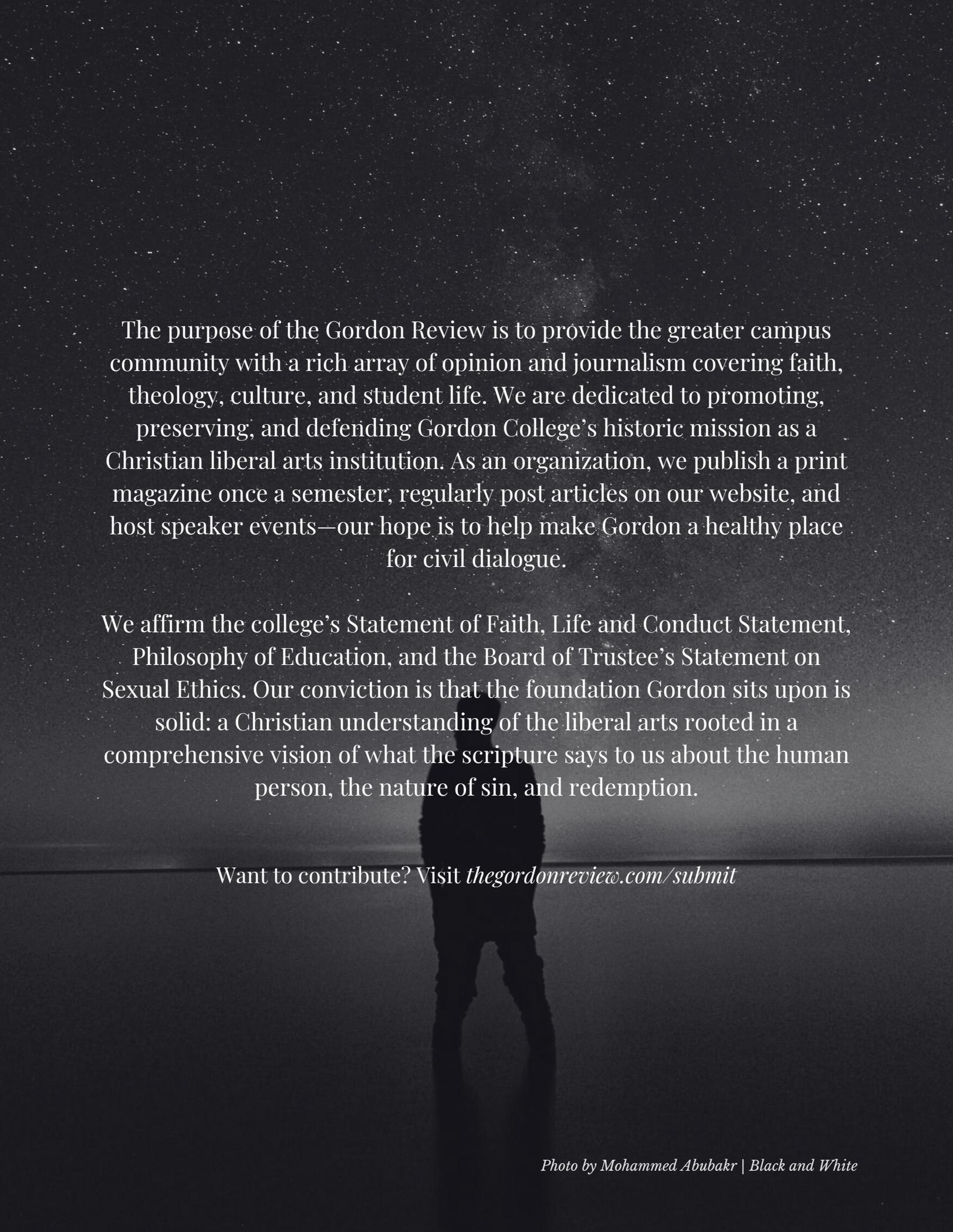
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We affirm the college's Statement of Faith, Life and Conduct Statement, Philosophy of Education, and the Board of Trustee's Statement on Sexual Ethics. Our conviction is that the foundation Gordon sits upon is solid: a Christian understanding of the liberal arts rooted in a comprehensive vision of what the scripture says to us about the human person, the nature of sin, and redemption.

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