

Gordon Review

Life to the Full

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ALUMNI CONTRIBUTION
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WELCOME TO THE GORDON REVIEW!

The *Gordon Review* is an independent, student-run publication. We exist to provide the greater Gordon College campus community with a rich array of opinion and journalism covering faith, theology, culture, and student life. We are dedicated to promoting, preserving, and defending Gordon College's historic mission as a Christian liberal arts institution.

As an organization, we publish a print magazine once a semester and regularly post submissions from members of the Gordon community on our website.

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 Scripture says to us about the human person, the nature of sin, and redemption.

Our hope is to help make Gordon a healthy place for civil dialogue, and we welcome you to join us in this endeavor...

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

“The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” - John 10:10

John chapter 10 opens with a warning from Jesus. “Very truly I tell you Pharisees,” he says, “anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.” Climbing the fence to set foot on private property or tunneling under a boundary to get to the other side are signs that you have something to hide—they signal that you are trespassing with selfish intent and without an invitation.

In contrast, the very presence of a gate indicates an intentional entrance. Gates exist to be walked through, to be swung open and break the barrier between “in” and “out.” Again and again the Pharisees refused to recognize Jesus as their only Gate, wide open and swinging toward the Kingdom of Heaven right in front of their eyes. They opted for their own self-righteousness instead. I know I have always been quick to call out these religious leaders’ lack of trust. But, oh how often we fall into these same ways.

Throughout this semester, we have published a variety of pieces on the *Gordon Review* website centered around the question of identity. This is especially poignant in college—how can we plan for our futures when compound sleep deprivation, overcommitment, and mental or emotional turmoil cause us question who we actually are? In this confusion, we strain to define life for ourselves. We take matters into our own hands, climbing fences to grasp at feelings and glimpse the pasture without fully entering it.

But does this not only make us like the Pharisees—thieves who cheapen and kill what could be fully ours?

We have to let go of the lie that we can give ourselves a full life. Because when we do finally relent, we find there is a Shepherd Whose voice we *can* know, even when we don’t know ourselves. He deeply knows His sheep, and He is their entrance into strength not their own, joy not their own, and rest not their own—because He offers them *His* life as their own.

This semester, our contributors explored the simultaneous challenge and joy of surrender. I hope you are encouraged to know that you are not alone in your searching and wrestling. It is hard to let go. But I pray God never stops reminding us that full life waits just through the Gate.

MAISEY JEFFERSON
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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STUDENT LIFE

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FINAL SEMESTER REFLECTIONS

BY JULIANA LEACH

This semester may be my last in college, at least for the near future. At first, I thought it would be easy to say goodbye to a campus that has been the canvas of my very messy life for the past two and a half years. I was wrong. Anticipating what is to come has led to a host of reflections on the past.

After one semester in Music Performance, I changed my major to Economics, which was mostly unfamiliar territory to me. By God's grace, and much to my relief, this alteration played out swimmingly. I enjoyed the formulas and graphs that comprise social sciences, and the "rules of the game" associated with economic study made it easy to derive clear-cut answers from basic models.

You might already see where this mentality trips you up if you apply it to everyday life: The real world does not operate in such simple terms. It is complex, beautiful, sorrowful, and broken. When allowed to fade into the backdrop, the assumptions posited by basic economic models—assumptions that individuals are self-interested and that interpretations are and should remain objective—are strong enough to warp the results of analysis to a fault. This is not to say social sciences are not useful, but it *is* to say that they cannot produce all-encompassing results—they cannot play God. Most economists very clearly understand the limits of their field, and yet, judging from my experience, the aforementioned assumptions are deeply underemphasized. Economists, including myself, are guilty of becoming numb to our models' assumptions. We revel in predictability—certainty. But, as the recently popularized adage goes, "The opposite of faith isn't doubt; it's certainty." In essence, we still try to play God.



Photo by Dylan Taylor

Sadly, I would posit that this flaw is not specific to economics or to the broader field of academia. Oftentimes, you and I carry around our assumptions for so long that we become desensitized to them. At what cost to us, though? At what cost to our neighbor? By assuming someone else will pick up the empty McDonald's cup on the sidewalk, we live out the very idea Dr. Kerilyn Harkaway-Krieger warned against in chapel last year: "Everyone wants a revolution. No one wants to do the dishes." Reframing this idea: Everyone wants a brighter future. No one wants to live in the present.

As the philosopher, inventor, and mathematician Blaise Pascal notes in his *Pensées*, "We are so unwise that we wander about in times that do not belong to us, and do not think of the only one that does ... Thus we never actually live, but hope to live, and since we are always planning how to be happy, it is inevitable that we should never be so" (43).

Pascal's rather bleak description of this tendency is all too accurate for this mopey college senior. More and more, I find this sentiment resonating with earlier reflections; my core assumptions have deposited me outside of my current situation. Forgetting to live in the present, I reflect on what could've been, and dreaming about the future I consider all that could be—*Why did I stick with dance, rather than branching out more in high school? Was switching majors the right decision? Is graduating this May the best path to take?* While I still grapple with these past and forward-thinking questions, I want to use my present circumstances to offer

some perspective to students who still have time to more fully appreciate what college has to offer.

Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, I long to be living in your present! I wish I had more time to forge deeper relationships and love my community better, especially having learned so much throughout my time at Gordon. As I must move forward, though, and continue to live in my present, I implore you to fully engage in yours. Consider this: What assumptions are you taking for granted? Do the dishes. Don't assume change will come in the future; live it out now. Make eye contact when you pass by fellow members of your community because let's face it—you have to see your neighbor to love them well. Authentically pursue God; get to know the Author of the Good Book. Finally, in tandem with the previous two points, act with mercy. We're a bunch of sleep-deprived young adults living in pretty cramped quarters—i.e., things are bound to get ugly sometimes. But let's start by amending that statement: We're a bunch of sleep-deprived young adults living in pretty cramped Christian quarters.

Unfortunately, things are still bound to get ugly sometimes. Mercifully, Jesus calls on and loves not only the righteous, but also the sinners. We all make mistakes. But one of the biggest mistakes of all is forgetting that your enemies are also your fellow image-bearers. Love well, let God do the judging, and please—live in the present.

Harkaway-Krieger, Kerilyn. "Everyone Wants a Revolution. No One Wants to Do the Dishes." *Creating Ripples: A Legacy of Faith*, 2 November 2022, A. J. Gordon Memorial Chapel, Gordon College, Wenham, MA. Chapel Address.
Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin Books, 1983, p. 43.

ART LESSONS FROM ORVIETO

BY CAROLINE HELMER

When I first signed up to study abroad in Orvieto Italy, I mostly pictured an idyllic experience of eating pasta, drinking cappuccino, and walking amongst the art I have studied my whole life. While this is sometimes true, I have found that my experience here has been much different than I originally anticipated.

Even as an art history major, I have never considered myself an artist. I have always enjoyed studying art and learning from it, but never in the context of a studio. When I found out all Orvieto students must take a drawing class during the study abroad program (even if they are humanities majors), I felt many emotions, and excitement was not one of them. I always thought my drawing skills were mediocre at best, and, coming from a family of many artists, I never even wanted to try thanks to the fear that my art wouldn't measure up. I told myself that I would "just get through" the drawing class and then move on to the Art History courses where I belonged.

The studio class was fast-paced from the start, and I began to feel overwhelmed quite quickly. Our first assignment was to simply "make a drawing." I was so unsure of what to do and ended up restarting three times. By the end, I was discouraged and felt ashamed to pin up my drawing in front of the class the next day at our mini-critique. However, instead of hearing what I did wrong, I was told by my classmates that my drawing was beautiful. They also gave me feedback, but each person in the room saw something meaningful in my work.



Photo Courtesy of Caroline Helmer

The next drawing proved to be even more difficult, as I found myself wrestling with proportions, scale, and frustration. Instead of making marks on the page, it was almost like I had to carve the subject out of the darkness. When it came time to show my drawing to everyone, I felt even more discouraged as I compared it to my fellow classmates' final products. The critique I received, however, was even more encouraging than the first time. Everyone's observations were so thoughtful, and, although their comments addressed my drawing, they also helped me learn more about who I am as a person. That's when I realized, maybe being an artist isn't about art at all.

In the words of Professor Doll, to understand a place, you need to go deep. Art isn't just about what's directly in front of you—it's about understanding a place. To do this, you need to take the time to learn about all the layers. Even then, there will still be more to understand.

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understanding a place. To do this, you need to take the time to learn about all the layers. Even then, there will still be more to understand.

This is even more prevalent in a world where the opportunity to study abroad is often pursued to fulfill personal desires, rather than to give back to the places you are invited into and understand other cultures. This is why Professor Doll encourages us to hold ourselves to a high standard as Americans in Italy. We are to practice moderation and temperance in all things. Practicing these virtues helps us respect a space or place. Instead of consuming everything at a rapid pace as the practice of tourism sometimes demands, we are encouraged to truly grasp the depth of a place. These virtues teach us to contemplate spiritual truths for God's glory or to resist the knee-jerk reaction of pulling out our phones for a picture. They remind us that, in order to represent our schools well, we must also represent Christ well, as He is the author of creativity and joy.

In my quest to understand Orvieto to the best of my ability, I have begun to notice things about this place that have affected me deeply. There is nothing fake or "put on" about Orvieto or its people. The big cities of Europe nowadays are so engulfed by tourism that it can be hard to distinguish between what's real and what isn't. In Orvieto, this is much less difficult. There is a kindness and authenticity here, and I feel blessed that the people welcome us like they do.

As I finish my "Disegno" course this semester, I take on the challenge of making a large drawing, bigger than anything I've ever made before. But I have the courage to do this because of all I have learned about the uplifting environment I am in, and because Jesus has freed me from fear. I hope to continue discovering more about this place, and in turn, more about myself.

COMMENTARY

Photo by Canva

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ATWOOD

BY CHARLOTTE MCNAMEE

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* has never failed to produce controversy. As required reading in Gordon's Jerusalem and Athens curriculum and many high schools, it elicits extreme and diverse responses from each reader. Set in a speculative fictional dystopia of New England which has fallen back under an oppressive Puritanical rule, the reader follows the unreliable narration of Offred as she chronicles her daily life as a Handmaid, one of the last remaining fertile women assigned to produce children for the elite class. Readers experience the trauma this oppression elicits firsthand through this narration perspective and how it affects the people Offred encounters throughout the novel. The book has often been criticized for anti-Christian messaging. From a shallow reading of the novel, it is easy to draw this conclusion. Gilead, the new Puritan regime, quotes biblical passages at every turn to justify their actions. However, a closer reading of the text reveals quite the opposite sentiment. *The Handmaid's Tale* is critical of weaponized religion, not religion itself.

Atwood herself addresses this concern in the introduction of her book, clarifying that her book "is not 'anti-religion.' It is against the use of religion as a front for tyranny; which is a different thing all together" (Atwood XVIII). critical thinking that Atwood invites through her novel is an essential attribute of the Christian life. Although Gilead claims to be Christian, do its actions support this claim? This analysis is vital for anyone to engage with the novel, and particularly for Christians who seek to live into the story of the Gospel and share the message with others. We are constantly faced with institutions and belief systems that clash with one another yet still claim to be Christian.



Photo by Pierre Bamin

So how do we proceed forward amidst this confusion?

In a world, like Gilead, claiming to know him whenever it supports their agenda, Jesus knew that this is a struggle we would constantly face as his followers, living in the tension of the "all ready, not yet" of life after his resurrection and before his return. In the gospel of John, Jesus counsels his disciples and all future believers with how we can discern what is of God and what is of the enemy. In response to the questioning of the Pharisees, Jesus says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10 NIV). How different from the powers of Gilead who claimed that their destruction was all for the best. In our stress and confusion, Jesus calms us and clearly points us to the path of life. All that seeks to steal, kill, or destroy is of the enemy, while all that brings life is of God. No masquerade can fool those who walk in the path of life. All those who claim Christ and leave destruction in their wake, who cause pain and suffering, follow a false gospel. This temptation has been a threat to believers since the beginning of the Church. In warning the church in Galatia against this temptation, Paul exclaims,

"Evidently, some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!" (Galatians 1:7–8 NIV).

Paul minces no words here, clearly demonstrating how essential it is to the life of the Christian to be vigilant in analyzing all messaging and institutions that claim to carry the Gospel.

Rather than being “anti-religion,” Atwood’s work encourages Christians to follow the teaching of Jesus Christ. We should never merely accept someone or something simply at their word that they follow the Gospel. We should analyze their actions and always look for the life promised by the Gospel. Gilead is the exemplary demonstration of a religious institution devoid of the Gospel. Rather than bringing the life that they may claim in the literal reproductive sense, they leave abuse and destruction in their wake, dismantling the freedom and livelihood of both the women and men under the regime.

Let Gilead remind Gordon what institutions can become when we lose sight of the Gospel. The critical thinking that we hone as students at Gordon is not for show nor simply for the academy, but is an essential aspect of the life of a Christian who seeks to follow the Gospel. In order to contribute to kingdom-building work in this world, we must not lose sight of the Gospel. This warning should not produce fear, but rather encouragement. Jesus himself has shown us what is good. Go forth and walk with confidence. He has promised you life to the full.

EXISTENTIAL LESSONS FROM THE BACKYARD

BY IRIS MARK

One day, my dad was driving me home from Irish dance class. It must have been a Wednesday because NPR's *All Sides with Anne Fischer* was playing.

We were probably in the old, got-it-for-free Nissan XTerra as opposed to the hand-me-down 2004 Chevy Suburban because my dad always liked the red car better. I was in sixth grade, a newly minted middle schooler, and I was eager to change the world.

Consistent with my professor-of-a-father's idea of post-dance talk, tonight's discussion was about coral bleaching. At that point in my life, I thought I understood the extent of climate change's ever-reaching, problem-multiplying tendencies. But as my dad told me more, a slow chill crept down my back that had nothing to do with the dried sweat coating my "Mid-America Oireachtas 2014" t-shirt. It felt like something had gripped my heart and was squeezing it like a boa constrictor does to a mouse.

When I got home that night, I could think of nothing else but the picture on my dad's phone screen; ghostly claws like grave markers in a calcium carbonate cemetery underneath the waves.

It is hard not to spiral down a road of despair when one does not want to live in ignorance. Just like my fixation on the impending doom of coral



Photo by Casey Horner

bleaching, I have also found it hard not to think about the apocalypse.

I have dreamed multiple times about all the different versions: A meteor, environmental catastrophe, nuclear war, something akin to *The Handmaid's Tale*. It is a challenge to go about our lives and not worry—to balance the uncertainty of what comes next with the certainty of our salvation in Christ.

It is hard to live in the promise of the Kingdom of God when it feels like nothing we can ever do will right the wrongs of the world.

And, it is hard not to feel guilty for feeling at peace while the Earth demands restitution from an unrepentant population.

How, then, do we go on? What is the secret to balancing engagement in the world, and the assurance we have in Christ? How do we reconcile our desire for control and the very real problems we face, with the faith that there is a far bigger plan beyond any of our comprehensions? For it would be worse for us to live in manufactured ignorance padded by our disproportional faith in the institutional Church rather than in the Lord Himself.

That night, after crying over the fate of the ocean, I stared at the ceiling of my bedroom, stewing in the heavy silence that always follows tears. Never had I felt so helpless. Never had I felt so *angry*. I wanted to hit something, or *someone*.

I instead decided to write a letter. I'll admit, I did not expect a response and the White House never gave me one, despite signing it "Sincerely" and making sure to only insult the president once.

However, this minor act gave me the energy to get up the next morning and compel my classmates to write letters, too. And I realized that I was stumbling upon something far greater than just a balm for my concern.

As we sit in our dorm rooms, or in chapel, or in class, how do we act on our convictions? Furthermore, and perhaps this should happen first, what are our convictions? What do we want to leave behind?

Again, I do not have answers. Besides, I don't think you want that from me.

But we're talking about life to the full, not existential questions like how we're going to change the world. My proposition, therefore, is rooted in this notion of a life fulfilled by Christ—a life satisfied by Jesus in its entirety. Our great commandment is to love God and our neighbors, so instead of living in crippling fear of the future, we might strive for complete fulfillment in Jesus and His great love that catches all despair. A life that embraces this frees us from whatever burdens we may carry; worry, hopelessness, apathy, even ignorance, giving way to a path that is not easy, but satisfies us in ways that coffee shops, or even Trader Joe's, never will.

I would argue that this solution is impossible in the same way that perfect sanctification and realization of the Kingdom of God cannot happen without the return of Jesus. Christianity has many of these already-not-yet ideas, so this may not be new to you. But, you want concrete answers, not more bumper-sticker slogans.

So what does living to the full look like? My thoughts turn to the environment, as they so often do, and I picture a people who love their neighbors enough to sacrifice their convenience, perhaps comfort at times, for the sake of children they will never meet. I see a people who do not brush aside pollution in favor of saying that Jesus will be back one day and make it all better. If that is your argument, then I ask you what of war? What of famine and poverty? What of injustice? These things will all be made better when Jesus comes back, and yet we pledge thousands to non-profits and missionaries to heal these wounds. Not that these are poorly intended, but as the Jordan dries up, and the wet season brings catastrophic floods, we pay to fix the damage, but are slower to react to the root of the problem, leaving a growing population vulnerable to the climate crisis.

I read a book recently about soil, but its goal was not to just talk about salinization or erosion as if preaching to a vacuum. Underneath the graphs and long passages, the author traced a story of humanity's overindulgence in natural resources. It asked the question that if we awoke to our surroundings, if we truly awoke to the people and places around us, could that perhaps foster a constructive humility towards nature? An attitude driven by the perfect love given to us by God and shared amongst His creation.

How could we not love something that God declares good? His Kingdom has not yet come, but perhaps we might begin to see glimpses of it in our own backyards. The redwing blackbird once again graces the Gordon woods, a morning dove coos and reminds me of childhood, and unseen from the trees come the sounds of spring peepers, hundreds of tiny voices raised in unison against the backdrop of dusk.

Find the not-yet in the already here, and find it within you to protect it, for it is there, in stillness and in lowliness, where we learn to live, and love again.

A REFLECTION ON TECHNOLOGY

BY LIAM SIEGLER



Photo by Robin Worrall

We are creatures of a technological age. Technology, especially internet technology, is the air we breathe. And before you think I am saying something controversial, just consider how we travel, communicate, eat, and make our coffee. Oftentimes, technology is a good thing. It makes life easier and more efficient. It collapses strenuous limitations of distance, time, and location. But we take for granted how much it shapes us, how dependent we are on it.

In his book, *Digital Liturgies*, Samuel James discusses how the digital world, like other technologies before it (think cars, trains, and planes), has radically changed the way we live. He argues that with internet technologies, the message is the medium. Digital tech, by our very use of it, shapes our habits, desires, and ideas about relationships, what it means to be human, authority, learning, and even profound things like love itself. It creates systemic changes in society “so that people begin to think and feel and act in ways that are permanently shaped by those changes” (44). The internet is not a neutral world, he argues. You will become a certain kind of person by using it.

I was a very busy person in college. I committed to clubs, participated in student government, played intermural sports, took several credit-heavy semesters, ran a magazine, etc. I used my phone and computer for everything. Of course, this was a necessity. It wasn't until after graduation, however, that I started to realize all the ways this dependence impacted my lifestyle.

It was in the little things. Social media would eat away at so much time—I had to know everything going on. This led to things a lot of normal people experience, like comparison, anxiety, stress, procrastination, and information overload. But it also led to a kind of franticness inherent to the medium itself. With constant information, constant reaction, movement, and busyness automatically follow. When you live in a digital world, sometimes it's hard to find your way out—it's a mind in a million places. Furthermore, the internet was personalized to me—algorithms influenced my feeds, media consumption, and consequently, my thoughts. There was a self-absorbing quality to it, where at times I had difficulty giving myself to others.

Living a disembodied existence online shaped a kind of selfishness that limited the richness of my relationships. It would isolate me from being with others. It would even isolate me from finding fulfillment in my work. Social media destroyed my attention span. I had less patience to dedicate myself to learning. What I did have was a subtle and unexplainable desire to constantly be distracted and entertained. It hurt my grades, but also my sense of self-worth. I knew I could have stronger friendships, better academic outcomes, and more mental clarity, but all these things felt elusive.

More importantly, however, I knew I was hurting spiritually. I knew there was a distance between myself and God. Instead of changing my habits to draw closer to him, I would use technology to

escape. Living on the internet cultivated a numbness to the things of Christ.

When I talk about having regrets about how I use technology, I don't mean that I regret using it. (I am not a "Luddite"—basically a curse word for irrational prudishness against tech.) What I do regret is how I've let technology unwittingly shape my habits, thoughts, and desires.

There is only so much you can change about the past. Sometimes it's a thing you can sing again with a renewed knowledge of pitch and melody. But more often than not it's an ethereal thing—a discordant array of notes you can never take back. The music is always there—you can never get the bad song out of your head. What you can do, however, is sing better and hope for a more beautiful song.

Upon retrospect, and to expand the musical metaphor, many of my life's melodies—radically facilitated by tech use—are full of fragmented songs. They sing of wasted time, harmful words, lost friendships, loneliness, and other such themes. Of course, I cannot blame the technology itself for these things. I decided to use it. But there are real ways that my very use of technology cultivated and shaped me—often unknowingly, that contributed to a lot of real struggle.

Since graduating, I've had the space and time to step back and reevaluate my relationship with technology. I certainly don't hate the internet, don't get me wrong. However, I have been more and more drawn to examine the ways it has unconsciously shaped me. One of my biggest regrets is that I haven't done this sooner. If I had, maybe the struggles I experienced in college would have looked different. But I will never know.

I've realized that despite all these regrets, I want to sing a more beautiful melody. One more real, lively, awake, curious, and joyful. I don't want to be shaped by something that is actively undermining what should matter. I want to be formed by good things.

For me, this looks like taking a step back from social media. It means spending less time on my phone. It means being more aware of how I spend my time online. All of these things are important, I believe, because they impact the type of person I am becoming.

If any of this applies to you, I encourage taking a step back as well. You will be the better for it.

A full-page photograph of a peaceful landscape. A narrow, grassy path leads from the bottom center towards a small white bench in the distance. The path is flanked by tall green grass and white wildflowers. In the background, a calm lake reflects the sky, surrounded by a dense line of green trees under a soft, hazy sky.

FAITH

Photo by Canva



Photo by Birmingham Museums Trust

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SUFFER WELL?

BY JOSH DENORONHA

The spring theme for this edition of the Gordon Review is “Life to the Full”—embracing the words of Christ in John 10:10. However, a bleak question comes to my mind: Well, what do we do when life does not seem full? When life seems rather empty and interwoven with suffering?

It is a dilemma that every Christian and every individual must grapple with, whether Christian, Agnostic, Naturalist, Hindu, or Muslim. As theists, we are often combated with questions similar to that of the Scottish philosopher David Hume, that in the light of all the suffering in the world, how can God be simultaneously all-powerful and good?

This is the philosophical problem of suffering. However, all the knowledge and theology in the world *about* suffering often goes out the window when life crumbles before us. It is easy to think about suffering in theory, but reality will bring us to our knees. Where are we to find an all-powerful and perfectly good God in the midst of a tsunami that has destroyed thousands in an Asian country? How are we to understand God when a cancer has stricken someone close to us? What are we to make of mass injustices around the world, or reconcile the 20th century as the bloodiest century in history?

Much of the questioning and doubt surrounding this seeming paradox of evil within a world sovereignly controlled by a good God comes from our preconceived notion of retribution. When disaster strikes, we are quick to

question what we did to merit such peril. We question the standards of justice in this world, arguing and fretting over what has come upon us when, in reality, it was never about what we have done. Many have made their attempts to answer these questions, most brighter than I, but I still hope to add new understanding.

To begin, I have something I can assure you of: There is an absolute, 100 percent chance that we all will die. That might put you off or seem like a taboo topic. Yet, if I were to pose a question or make a political statement, that would be more comfortable no matter how much you disagree with me. The good news for the Christian, in regards to the guarantee of death, is that this is nothing a good old resurrection can't fix. Perhaps the resurrection of the Son of God Himself, Who conquered the very death we all fear. However, that alone cannot be placed upon our suffering like a bandage. That alone won't help us *feel* "okay" when life implodes.

The archetypal figure of suffering in the Bible is Job, the innocent and righteous sufferer. Many of us relate to him when we ourselves suffer. When disastrous trouble comes Job's way, his wife nags him to "curse God and die," asking him "What do you have to live for?" His friends also arrive and attempt to present a solution to his problems with theological arguments. They question Job's beliefs regarding God's justice and sovereignty, eventually accusing Job of blaspheming against God. However, in his interaction with his wife, Job recognizes the sovereignty of God, asking her, "Shall we receive good things at the hand of God and not bad things?" Even later on to his friends, Job acknowledges the aforementioned guarantee of death, but showcases his consistent trust in the Lord, confidently saying "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." But I still have some things I want to raise with him"(A paraphrase of Job 13:15).

Job is comfortable acknowledging the sovereignty of God over both life and death, trusting in the Lord no matter what. This is exactly where I have found peace with the concept of suffering. The approach is a theory called compatibilism—the

idea that in a mysterious way, God is entirely sovereign over *everything*, but at the same time, human responsibility is not reduced. Essentially, humans are responsible for their actions, but the sovereignty of God is not diminished or unpredictable.

The sovereign hand of God over suffering and evil should serve overwhelmingly to remind us that things will never be out of His control. We can rest in peace knowing that God is working out all things for our good, and that we can bestow our suffering upon him. Suffering is nothing out of the ordinary for the Christian, rather it is exactly what we are prescribed in this life. However, we know that God never loses. There are no intractable problems for Him, and no surprises. It is not always beneficial to slap a verse on our suffering like a bandaid, and act as though it will make everything okay—this can come across as unbearably insensitive. Often the best practice to delight in God within suffering is through quiet confidence in Him that will then breed stability amidst the rocky ground.

I do believe that it is important to learn and train ourselves how to think about suffering, while we are not actively in any strife. That way we may be adequately prepared to take suffering head-on when we experience it.

My prayer is that I have shed some light on these issues so that anyone who reads this can be better equipped to become a better sufferer. Paul states in Philippians 1:20 that "It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20). Are we not to embrace this same thought—that we are not to be ashamed and with full courage to have Christ honored in our bodies whether in life or death, whether in bliss or suffering. We should walk this way even now, dead in our flesh, finding joy in our salvation and our Lord through all suffering and trial.

BEAUTY IN PERSPECTIVE: HOW FEAR KEEPS US FROM DISCOVERING TRUTH

BY SOPHIA HEFNER

Don't read that book. Don't watch that channel, don't be friends with them, don't listen to what they have to say. You know what the Bible says—these people are clearly not Christians.

This was the message I heard every Sunday morning proclaimed from the pulpit of my childhood church. It was firmly ingrained in my brain, like a disease that permeated every aspect of my thinking. I was unable to turn to the right or left, seeing nothing except that which was straight in front of me. These blinders kept me from experiencing the world, or anything beyond my narrow line of vision. Fleeting moments when I wondered if there was something more were simply the result of worldly passions that must be controlled. None of us dared to take our blinders off, because to do so meant to lose your protection. To do so meant to cease being a Christian.

The leaders of this church had subscribed to a very narrow view of what living as a Christian looked like. A Christian who was “truly saved” should dress a certain way, read only church-approved books, and watch only church-approved movies. They must only act as the church elders instruct them to act, and only expose themselves to writers and thinkers who agree with the church, for fear that a member might develop “doubts” otherwise. The ever-present danger of encountering ideas considered unorthodox was to be avoided at all costs. Doing so might present you with incorrect ideas and, heaven forbid, arguments for which you may not have an answer.



Photo by Rowan Heuvel

Ridiculous as this may sound, this anti-thinking lifestyle was not limited to a small group of people. In fact, the church I grew up in was a mega-church with three separate campuses, located in the heart of one of America's major cities. The pastor went on to become world-famous, traveling the globe and publishing his ideas. He is now known among the majority of American Christians as a household name, and his ideas have shaped many churches.

Sadly, many Christians today are in a situation similar to my own, and many of them don't even realize it. This is largely because of one powerful weapon which enables these churches to intellectually enslave so many. Ironically, it is most often used by the enemy to paralyze and trap the people of God. What is this weapon?

Fear.

Fear comes in many different forms, and is often so subtle we don't even recognize its presence. Yet, it has the power to control our thoughts and actions. Fear can take the form of blaring alarm when we are in danger, or a little voice inside us that stops us when we want to try something new. As humans, we were created with this instinct to protect us. However, irrational fear shuts us out from the world and the people around us—it hinders our ability to grow.

I was afraid to ask hard questions, afraid to listen to anyone with a different point of view. Why? *Because they might be right.* I was told that

Christianity consisted of these narrow sets of rules and beliefs.

My faith was dependent on what this church said it meant to be a Christian. So, if other people who believed and lived differently were right, if they also had valid points of view, that meant my faith was somehow wrong. I chose to live in my protective shell of ignorance rather than, as I saw it, sacrifice my faith.

I graduated in a class of six, from a tiny high school in small-town Wisconsin. This community consisted of one subset of people, those who lived by two mottos: always keep a well-stocked supply of beer, and have nothing whatsoever to do with the government. These old-fashioned country folk were so set in their ways that anything with the label “liberal” was inherently bad, and anything “federal” was inherently worse. The underlying assumption behind all of this was the same as my church: That Christianity consisted of believing in a certain set of values—and if you didn’t have these values, you weren’t a Christian.

It wasn’t until I came to college that I was exposed to an entirely different mindset. I was suddenly surrounded by people with very different opinions and very different values. What’s more, this was actually celebrated and encouraged. I was shocked to realize that there were other opinions out there which were just as valid as the ones I had left behind, and ironically, most of them even more so. But the true wake-up call for me was when I realized that these people had a legitimate, heartfelt relationship with God. The unstable foundations of my faith began to crumble as I realized what faith could truly look like. Because Christianity at its core is not a set of rules or even a certain lifestyle—it is a belief in unshakeable truths. It is a desire to grow in holiness. It is, above all, a relationship with the God of the universe.

When we are free to explore and to question, our faith is strengthened and our lives take on a deeper meaning. We encounter new ideas. We test out new theories. We form our opinions from an informed position, rather than accepting someone

Else’s because they are “what a Christian should believe.”

When our definition of faith is living by certain rules, we have missed the point. Our eyes are so focused on doing “the right thing” that we miss the beauty God is doing all around us. True Christianity at its core is about love. It’s about living our lives out of love, not fear, and letting that love guide our actions towards others. It’s about following God because of our love for him, not because we are trying to do things “the right way.” And it’s about the love God has for us, a perfect love that casts out all fear.

Fear, especially of the unknown, is never from God. Fear is a weapon the enemy uses to manipulate us and to keep us from growing. If we truly believe in the truths of our faith, we should not be afraid to expose ourselves to new ideas, because we know that nothing can ever prove the truth of the Gospel wrong.

There is true beauty to be found when we approach new ideas with wonder and curiosity. When we seek to understand the opinions of others, it allows us to connect with them in a whole new way. We should never be afraid to listen and consider—gems of truth can be found even in the most unlikely places.

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love” (2 Timothy 1:7 ESV).

FRIEND, GOD IS NEAR IN YOUR GREIF

BY EMMA CARROLL

I'm sure you've experienced that burning sensation in your lungs, the tears stuck burning in your eyes, and the realization that your body cannot move. If you were to move, you would be brought back to face the reality that they are no longer here, and that nothing can fix it. Your mind looks for a reason for it to not be true, but there is no morphine to numb the pain. There is no magic spell to bring them back, and your God is far away, nowhere to be found.

Within three years, five people who had a great impact on my life passed away. Meanwhile, close friends of mine—who had experienced great losses of their own in that time frame—were expecting a baby. I thought “Finally, God is giving us some life after all this death. About time.” I felt God owed us—that He owed my friends and me joy and life. I was wrong. God owes us nothing. He can take nothing from us because we have nothing to offer Him except that which He has given to us. God took back my friends' precious baby, and all I felt was anger. I was angry with God because of my losses, and I felt extreme guilt. How could I be angry with my Creator? I thought my anger was a lack of faith—until I realized that I was angry because I did have faith. I *know* my God can do all things, and if it were His will, the situation would be different. I was angry that His will was not my will, and that my will was not His. My anger was my unsundered will, but my anger was also my faith.

If we continue to look at the world and our situation, we will never be satisfied, and we will only focus on our own misery. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul says, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above,

where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (3:1-2, NIV). Yes, our miseries are real and painful, and—on this side of heaven—will always be present; however, we are not the only ones suffering, nor are we suffering alone. There is peace when we look to God and the friends and family who mourn with us. Peace is made present in little things that remind us of our beloved. Peace is carried to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. It does not fix the pain, or make us stop feeling sad. Rather, it gives us hope in the permanence of not going back; hope to finish the race, where our loved ones and our God are waiting at the finish line.

With loss, sometimes we feel we lose parts of ourselves or that there is less of ourselves without the person we loved. My grandmother was one of the loved ones I lost within the last three years. When she died, I thought I lost so much of who I was: The reason I became a musician, teacher, and Christian. However, although she may have inspired me and challenged me in those areas, she was not the reason for them. Those parts of my identity are not gone because my Nana is gone—they are gifts from God that He used to connect us. My identity is in Christ. He gave me my identity, and I have chosen to give it back to Him. He is the one who makes us whole. I am not trying to minimize the size of loss, but rather emphasize how big God is in the midst of it. Even in the midst of such hurt, it is important to be clear: If we let the loss of our loved one become our identity, we have made them an idol. Do not hide idolatry behind grief. There is a balance of feeling and living through our grief while continuing to submit it to the Father. It is not a linear process, so do not lose hope or patience.

Christians might let death sting them—for a moment. But then we remember Paul quoting Hosea: “O death where is your victory. O death where is your sting?” For those who hope in Christ, He gives us victory and takes away the sting, despair, and death itself. He weeps with us and over us, because our Redeemer came to be one of us. The Bible gives us an account of Christ's own

grief for a reason—Jesus wept over the death of His friend Lazarus. Grief is not the sting of death. It is love, hidden by a distance we are not able to travel. Therefore, we cling to our Savior, or more accurately, He holds on to us. We do not need to do the work of trying to make ourselves “right” in the eyes of God in our grief. All we need to do is put one foot in front of the other toward where He calls us. Corrie Ten Boom, a Holocaust survivor and author, reminds us that “Every experience God gives us, every person in our lives, is the perfect preparation for the future only He can see.” The experience may not be perfect, but God’s preparation is.

With each loss, I have experienced great pain in feeling left behind, and simultaneous peace in the knowledge that death is not our end. That is why God has given us grief, to let us feel the full extent of our love and bring us nearer to a Father waiting to wrap His everlasting arms around us. It seems impossible, but our God sits with us in patience and love. He does not expect you to “get over it.” He does not expect you to put on a face for others and force yourself to be happy for the sake of their comfort.

Share your grief with God. He delights in you and desires to be nearer to you—as near as you will let Him.



Photo by Annie Spratt

IN DUE TIME: HE REMEMBERS THE SPARROWS

BY REBEKAH SWENSON

Upon reading the story of Hannah in the book of 1 Samuel, I was struck by this three-word phrase: “In due time” (1 Sam. 1:20 ESV). This promise comes after a long period of waiting and crying out for God to give her a child; just when she thought God had forgotten her, He *did* give her a son. Not in her time though—in *His* time. In due time.

There is an “in due time” we don’t think about so often. In due time, the gray-brown branches of trees, wet with sleet, find themselves growing luxurious green leaves and fruit. In due time the sun rises and sets. These things and everything else are governed by the Maker of the universe. As Christians, it’s easy to trust that God’s timing is how it should be regarding these things because His wisdom in them has been proven time and time again. We want His order. We are happy to let Him govern the lilies and the sparrow, with the knowledge that He is God, and that we are not.

That is, until His order isn’t what we wanted. Then another three-word phrase takes over, and it’s a villainous beast: “Why not me?” She has a boyfriend—why not me? He got a scholarship—why not me? She got the job—why not me? Those three words are the acid reflux of the soul. It’s Satan himself poking you with a stick, making you question whether God really does care, and if He *really* knows what’ll best make you happy.

It is this posture that makes us think that we can fight God and win. We scream into our pillows until the veins in our necks stick out and our faces

are red and we are gasping for air like a child that's thrown a tantrum. This anger consumes any shred of contentment we have, and it destroys the restfulness we are commanded to have in Christ.

We don't hear a ton about Hannah in the Bible, but I'll bet that she knew exactly what this experience felt like. She wept. She surely had her fist-shaking moments, raging at God for withholding the one thing she thought she needed to be complete. She knew the discontentment that runs infinitely deeper than wanting a new car or iPhone. It was buried deep in her heart, so much so that her husband thought she was drunk (1:13). She hadn't been drinking at all, she explains. She had been pouring her soul out to the LORD (1:15).

Job also knew. He lost everything dear to him, and experienced some very real, warranted rage. Job lists every reason why he is so miserable, and we really can't blame him. Chapter 19, however, takes a surprising turn. After listing the numerous trials God has providentially allowed to come upon Him, Job utters these profound, and rather jarring words: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God" (19:25-26).

Job, Hannah, and many others in the Scriptures knew what it was like to not understand the timing of God. But even in their lack of understanding, their angst, and their fear, they cried out to God, pouring out their souls to Him. Admittedly, I rarely pour my soul out to the LORD. And then if things turn out the way I want them to, I thank God (if I remember). But I rarely ever thank God when He has answered my prayer with a "no," or a "not yet." Job and Hannah are excellent examples of what we should do in those moments—but even more so, there is One who cried out to God *without* sin.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Savior prayed to His heavenly Father, "if You are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

I am convinced that "thy will be done" is the hardest prayer to pray sincerely. It forces us to give up our fears, doubts, hesitations, and control to the God of the universe—the one who makes the trees bloom, makes the sun rise and set, and cares for the sparrow and lily.

Logic indicates that this should be simple. Our heads say that God is the Ruler of all, and that He knows exactly what we need. Evidence dictates that ceasing our foppish attempts at control is the best solution to this jaw-clenching anxiety we all face. So what do we do? We hold on to the jaw-clenching anxiety, and allow our bitterness and frustration turn our genuine prayers of petition into prayers of "why not me?"

But even so—He hears those ugly prayers, too.

He hears our desperate, gasping cries. He hears our envious sneers. He hears all. And still, He sent his only begotten Son to die on our behalf, the Son who was tempted to question the providence of God, and yet trusted His heavenly Father perfectly in all things. He obeyed even when it meant being hung on a cross.

Submitting to the will of God is no easy feat. Our sinful natures make us want to hold onto those unpleasant emotions because, often, they seem like the only thing we have any say over. But the truth is that doing so will shrivel us like slugs under salt, putting a damper on the joy of Jesus that should be at the forefront of who we are and how we live.

In the midst of her struggles, the LORD remembered Hannah (1 Sam. 1:19). God never forgets us in our sadness and anger, and Jesus Himself knew these feelings just as well. In due time, all will be made well, and He will return again. But in the meantime, he cares for the lily of the valley, and for the sparrows in the air. And take heart! After all, are we not worth more than many sparrows (Matt 10:31)?

ARTS

Photo by Canva



Photo by Yaroslav Shuraev

LUX

REBEKAH SWENSON

In each other.
We see the light of
the Lamb in
each held hand,
each tear-welled eye,
each drawn-
out goodbye.

Goodbye. Dread
word, sputtered
through crowds
and moving trains.
Life pulled from life,
heart from heart,
expectance of eternity erased.

But something
shimmers just above
the surface. This trace
of gold. The city. Of
forever written
on our hearts.

We know sorrow
because we know joy;
we know goodbye
because of hello.
Things must die, here,
for the crocuses
to bloom.

But we want things to
last forever, don't we?

When the last embrace
cannot be enough,
and you can't relive it
enough.
One day, there will be
no more goodbyes.
An everlasting embrace,
eternal leaning.

The hand will be held,
the teary eye dried,
the widow cared for,
the orphan beloved.

WOUNDWORKING

JOHNNY PAUL-FAINA

Burning, dry, and calloused palms;
smell of turpentine rises up to the heavens.
Here he is, ready to break his back again
(working on that same table)
In the beginning was pain.

All the same. Two: chisel and scalpel, one mother.
Father dragging son up, an altar, crying
(another chip away, off the table)
Cedar of Lebanon, born in a stable.

Would you build a house that crumbles in
three days' time?
Tables turned upside down. (He knew the sweat
and grime
tables take to sculpt when working with a rotten
stump) Oh, he knew
putrefying smells all too well: grains and fibers
split in two

as the axe blew to the bloated roots. (Now the fig
tree stands cursed)
So, why is there now talk of a vineyard
laid bare and desiccated,
desecrated with blood, this traitor's guts?

(He wore a crown of thorny twigs for us,
that carpenter) His raspy, sickly hands held
down
and crushed into wood consecrated, sprinkled
with blood so divine
on an old, rugged vine.

RESTLESSNESS

ABRAHAM ANTONELLI

A sleepless night
With no end in sight
A heavy load
I carry alone
To what end is this pain?
I long for rest
To be known and loved
by the One who knows me best. I've heard it said:
"To thine own self be true"
But I know my heart will be restless until it rests
in you

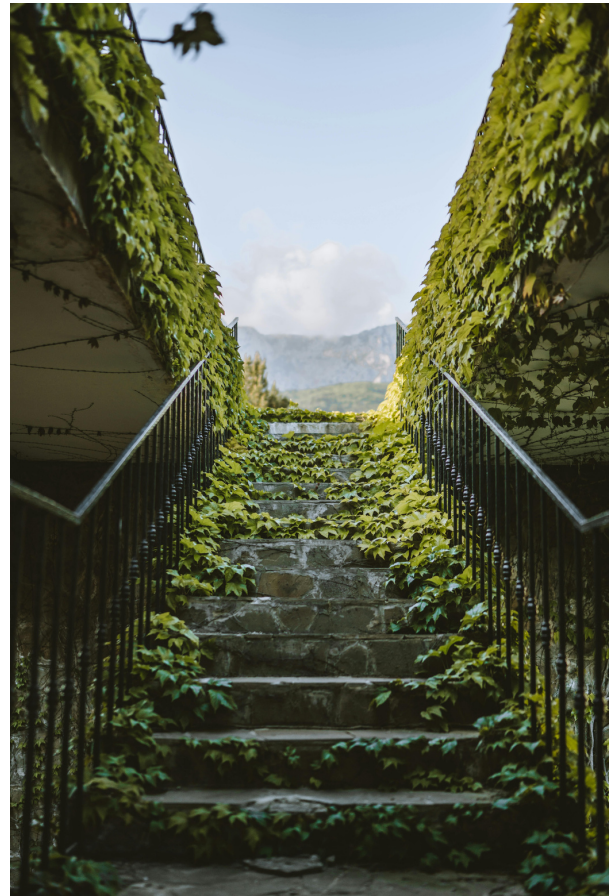


Photo by Yaroslav Shuraev

THE LOST SWAN

MAISEY JEFFERSON

A reflection
Of sophistication and wealth
with head held
Arched upward
While looking down;

Wings folded in a
Violin-under-the-chin
Sort of fashion—
While gliding through the mirror of some grand
estate
During a Summer-golden
Old-English
Noonday.

Until winter—
The end of winter—
And returned from migration,
When the pond is wet
Yet
Unthawed;

For there is nothing
More confused-looking
Than elegance
Standing
In the middle of a frozen lake—

Feet exposed and looking
For the water that waits
Just below.

INSPIRED BY EDEN

CAROLINE HENNINGER

it's hard to pay attention to such a solemn thing as
verb tenses
when the baby is drooling over herself and smiling
at you.

how much does our poetry differ from baby
babbles, though?
are we not just blowing raspberries of tone and
meter and rhyme

out to each other, waiting for a response
to affirm what is felt?

there is a poetry to living that can't be grasped in
words,
but can be seen in the baby's dark eyes.

does she hear the poetry in the cadence of her
mother's voice?
do we hear the poetry in the enjambment of her
laugh?

our office floor offering of fellowship
was broadened in the language of poetry tonight.



Photo by Tiago Muraro

A RETURN TO THE FAMILIAR LADDER

GIOVANNA JOHNSON

Thoughts on Genesis 28-32

My cup is empty.
My honey and manna have run out in the desert lands.
From where does my help come?
I seek the pastures and sweet waters alongside the flock- where is the hallowed promised ground?

Perhaps I could take Jacob's hand, or he mine, and we could return to the ladder together.
I could hear with my own ears the promises of old from the tongue of the Holy.
I would sit at the tender hip of he who wrestled until daybreak, that I may see God.

To lean my weakened body against the anciently oiled stones while the twice-renamed second-born
gazes in similar wonder –
every tear blotted out while the Everlasting's mercies spread through my veins as I turn my face to the
dwelling place.

To dust I will return, for the glory of the God of Isaac.
I will sleep in the starlight and tread boldly in the wilderness, for the glory of the promise spoken from
the ladder.

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As an organization, we publish a print magazine once a semester and regularly post submissions from members of the Gordon community on our website.

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