

TERRAIN
VOL.II | DESCENT

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Terrain, Volume II: Descent

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

The Christian faith is famously one of paradoxes. God is merciful, but also just. He is both a shelter for the weary and yet a dangerous, destructive force. He is the beginning and the end. In His kingdom, the first will be last and the last will be first. These are to name only a few. Ours is a God who disrupts what is comfortable to us. He consistently challenges our understanding by transcending our instinctively categorical observations.

Heraclitus has said that the universe functions through the harmony of tensions. The machinery of movement, of change, of life's forward motion, is the generative potency that lies between what seem to be opposites. It's no wonder, then, that the Christian God, in addition to frustrating many into faithlessness, has been the source of centuries of inspiration.

This issue is no exception. Volume II of *Terrain* explores the tension between the two aspects of God that are most often pitted against each other: love and power. The God of the Old-Testament and the God of the New Testament have been said to better represent one over the other, and for many it is impossible to reconcile the difference. In fact, there is an entire field of theology dedicated to resolving the apparent conflict between these attributes: if God is both all-powerful and all-loving, why is there so much evil in this world?

In this issue, we are not so bold as to attempt to grapple with this question head-on. That said, in reading, you might find that these attributes are not so contradictory as they appear. As Noah Thomason has aptly put it in his sonnet, love is God's power. They are the same. And they have been revealed to us in Jesus Christ—God in human form who walked the earth with us. For the contributors of *Terrain*, the life of Jesus is the roadmap for what it means to lead, to learn, to create, and to love each other well. Wielding both love and power in tension, Love, in its most potent form, descended.

Faithfully,

Madelyn Hajovsky



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Ava Malcolm, 2025, *Pedernales*, film photograph, shot on Olympus OM-1, 35 mm.

On the Nature of Virtue

by Joshua Chung

What is Virtue?

EZEKIEL: What is virtue?

BARTHOLOMEW *is surprised. He pulls out his phone and searches for the definition.*

BARTHOLOMEW: Behavior showing high moral standards.

EZEKIEL: Well, surely it's more than that, right? Virtue is just the way we act?

BARTHOLOMEW: Maybe not—I have heard it said that “patience is a virtue.”

EZEKIEL: So virtue isn't just another character trait or method of action. It's gotta transcend that somehow.

BARTHOLOMEW: Maybe it's a set. Like a group of traits that are...

EZEKIEL: No, no. It can't just be a set. It just seems like a reduction of the... perceived value of the idea to call it only a set. Even then, would the things in the set be defined by what virtue is, or would virtue just be the sum of what's in the set?

BARTHOLOMEW: It has to be the first. How could we know what to put in the set if the set itself were defined by its contents?

EZEKIEL: True.

BARTHOLOMEW: So... all we know is that virtue is defined in itself, and that it has to be more than just a set of things.

What is Goodness?

EZEKIEL: Virtue is that which is good.

BARTHOLOMEW: Alright. Then what distinguishes good from virtue?

EZEKIEL: Well goodness is the... untouchable standard by which all men strive to abide. And when this standard is adhered to, it results in the flourishing of all.

BARTHOLOMEW: And virtue?

JOSUHA: Virtue must be a descriptor ascribed to that which approaches or resembles goodness.

BARTHOLOMEW: Makes sense. That's why you can call both a man virtuous, and something as abstract as patience a virtue.

EZEKIEL: Yes. But if virtue is that which approaches goodness, then what is goodness? Besides just a standard of action.

BARTHOLOMEW: Well, goodness is just... goodness. I don't know. How about that which is morally right?

EZEKIEL: You know what I'm going to ask. What is morally right... I suppose what is morally right is what benefits the most people at the lowest cost.

BARTHOLOMEW: Really?

EZEKIEL: Yeah.

BEAT

BARTHOLOMEW: Do you suppose this would be morally right? You're standing on a bridge next to a very fat man. A train barrels along the track under the bridge toward five unknowing workers. Realizing that you have the option to save five at the cost of one, you push the fat man off of the bridge, stopping the train and saving the workers.

EZEKIEL: Something about that doesn't sit right with me.

BARTHOLOMEW: Well yes, you have saved five at the cost of one earthly body. But you've also sacrificed something else. Something of infinite value. Your soul... your clean conscience.

EZEKIEL: So what, am I to let the five perish?

BARTHOLOMEW: Maybe the answer is to throw oneself off of the bridge.

EZEKIEL: I guess the metaphor breaks down a bit there.

BARTHOLOMEW: You get the point.

EZEKIEL: So ultimately, you still save five at the cost of one, but the soul is not tainted.

BARTHOLOMEW: Yes, that's right.

EZEKIEL: So that means that what is morally good is not only what benefits the most at the least cost, but it also must not taint the soul, which is the ultimate cost.

Taint the Soul

BARTHOLOMEW: True.... What exactly do we mean by "taint the soul?"

EZEKIEL: Somehow, I feel like we just *know* when something does.

BARTHOLOMEW: Maybe... it's not something purely intellectual. The soul yearns to be untainted. It pokes and prods at us, does it not?

EZEKIEL: You mean guilt?

BARTHOLOMEW: Yes, guilt. And regret. And anger and sadness when others taint their own souls.

EZEKIEL: How can I be sure that what your soul longs for is the same as what mine longs for?

BARTHOLOMEW: It's got to be that way, no?

EZEKIEL: I suppose it must.

BARTHOLOMEW: Yes, otherwise, we would have many more people who truly believed in things opposed to what others believed.

EZEKIEL: But people in politics are always opposed to each other's ideas?

BARTHOLOMEW: What is politics but the collective striving for man to create an optimal society?

EZEKIEL: That's true. And I guess no one wants an "optimal society" that consists of child sacrifice or stealing or murder.

BARTHOLOMEW: Well, I'm actually not so sure about that. Take the Aztecs. Didn't they sacrifice themselves and eat each other to keep the sun in motion?

EZEKIEL: Yes. That's kind of tricky.

What is the Natural State of Man?

EZEKIEL: What is the natural state of man? Virtuous or not?

BARTHOLOMEW: I think man is virtuous by nature.

EZEKIEL: So do you reckon that you are a virtuous man?

BEAT

BARTHOLOMEW: Well, if you put it like that... I'd say that I'm in pursuit of virtue.

EZEKIEL: Ah. Would a virtuous man *need* to pursue virtue?

BARTHOLOMEW: I suppose not. If it were the natural state of man to be virtuous, it would only be natural to act virtuously.

EZEKIEL: Precisely. So man is by nature *not* virtuous, but in pursuit of it.

BARTHOLOMEW: So of course it would be natural for some, or many, or all, to fall short of being virtuous.

EZEKIEL: Hence, societies like the Aztecs.

BARTHOLOMEW: Mm.

Universal Morality

EZEKIEL: How could it be the case that man collectively strives for the same goal? We don't really communicate our values and morals to each other, yet we seem to know what each other wants.

BARTHOLOMEW: It has to be that the origin of morality is outside of ourselves. And it must be a rigid standard.

EZEKIEL: But couldn't the origins be individual, if they just all happened to be the same?

BARTHOLOMEW: Well, that's just the result of an external standard, is it not?

EZEKIEL: I suppose so. Well actually, you're right. If it truly were up to us, we'd all pick standards differently I think. The only way for it to be universal is either an extremely improbable coincidence, an external, eternal standard.

BARTHOLOMEW: Whence does the standard come?

EZEKIEL: That's the burning question, I guess.

BEAT

BARTHOLOMEW: God?

EZEKIEL: What is God?

BARTHOLOMEW: If God is the standard, then he must be good. He must be willing to save five at the cost of one. At the cost of himself.

EZEKIEL: What is love but the sacrifice of self in service of someone or something else?

Love

BARTHOLOMEW: So God is...

EZEKIEL: Love.

BARTHOLOMEW: And to love is virtuous. Virtue ultimately approaches love, which is goodness. And acting in love is *always* morally right.

EZEKIEL: In that case, I think that saving many, or even one, at the cost of oneself—to put others first—does not leave the soul untainted. It does taint it. With a spark of an eternal good. With a glimpse of real purpose. The soul yearns to love.

BARTHOLOMEW *begins fiddling with a pencil.*

BARTHOLOMEW: People have been writing about love since the dawn of time. In some sense, love is an idea that transcends time, space, and physical reality. And our idea of it has remained largely unchanged.

EZEKIEL: Maybe love is more real than things we can see and hear and feel.

BARTHOLOMEW: Interesting. How come?

EZEKIEL: Would you bet your life on that pencil's existence?

BARTHOLOMEW: I don't think so.

EZEKIEL: Would you bet your life on the fact that you have experienced love?

BARTHOLOMEW: Yes. But how can we be sure that love isn't just the result of material, chemical processes in the brain?

EZEKIEL: How can we reduce the layers of complexity, sincerity, and connection that culminate in our love for others to just biological processes? Isn't it illogical and against self-preservation to sacrifice yourself to save someone else?

BARTHOLOMEW: I guess. But I still think that it could just be neurons firing and chemicals reacting in your brain.

EZEKIEL: Have you ever loved anyone?

BARTHOLOMEW: Yeah.

EZEKIEL: What does it feel like?

BARTHOLOMEW: It doesn't really feel like anything else I can put words to.

EZEKIEL: It feels almost like your entire body and soul and mind are... towards that person, right?

BARTHOLOMEW: Yeah.

EZEKIEL: You think that's just chemicals and stuff? Really.

BARTHOLOMEW: No, I guess not. It's too visceral.

EZEKIEL: Exactly. Why do people do irrational things for love?

BARTHOLOMEW: It's a conflict of reason and intellect with... something else.

EZEKIEL: So there is something else.

BARTHOLOMEW: A raw desire.

EZEKIEL: Something like that. It's only a conflict of reason and intellect with that desire if those two are based on preservation of self.

BARTHOLOMEW: Right. If you approach reason and intellect from some other angle, then it could be ultimately logical and reasonable to give your own life for someone else.

EZEKIEL: So reason, intellect, virtue, and morality all converge and point to something else, something ultimate, to be defined themselves.

BARTHOLOMEW: It's got to be love, right?

EZEKIEL: Yeah I think so. I'm tired. Let's define love and be done.

BARTHOLOMEW: Alright.

EZEKIEL: Complete mental and physical devotion toward the wellbeing of another?

BARTHOLOMEW: Even to the ultimate point of sacrifice of self.

BEAT

EZEKIEL: Have you heard of Jesus Christ?

END



The Arachnid

Isaac Basil

“Do you remember there being this much grass last year?” He turned to me.

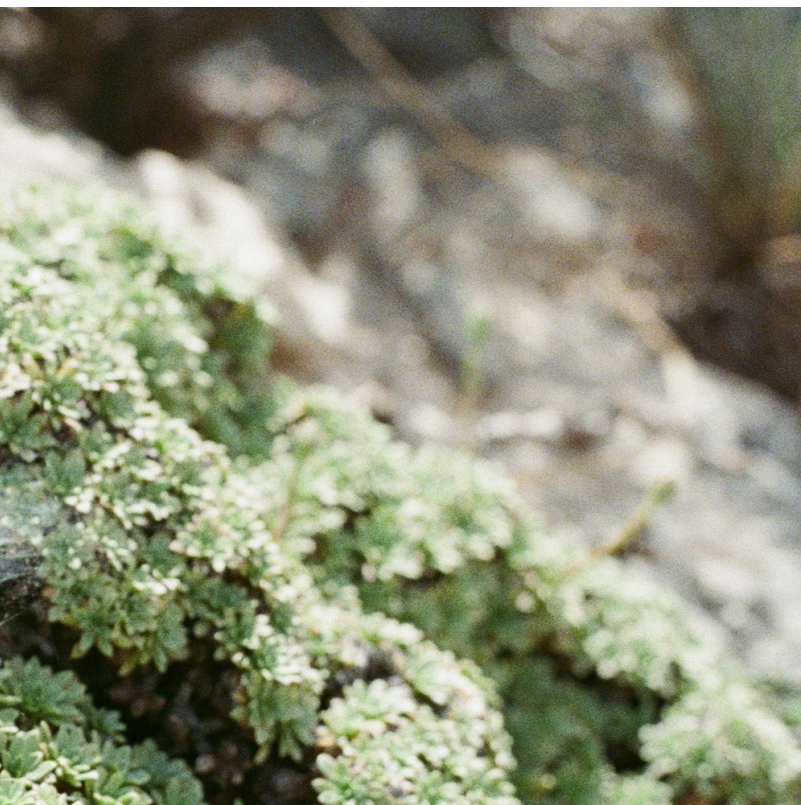
“Looks like there’s more water.” The gentle noise of streams flowing into the caldera murmured as we stared at the lake.

“It’s warmer this year.”

“You think?”

“Look at yourself.” He gestured to the sweat stain left by my pack. I could feel its coolness around me, a breeze from the water pressing the damp cloth against my body.

“It was hailing last year. Do you remember the wind?” The image of our party walking single file, under assault from the elements on the South face of Mt. Siyeh came to me.



Madelyn Hajovsky, 2024, *Funnel Web*, film photograph, shot on Olympus OM-1, 35mm

“It must just be a warmer summer.” We nodded. A simple conclusion—digestible. We took up our packs and began the trail back towards our camp in Cut Bank, East Glacier.

I barely slept that night. Meandering the border between rest and reality, I found myself recalling those words: “It must just be a warmer summer.” I hadn’t spoken at all on the way back—couldn’t. The setting sun against the Blackfeet reservation made the plains look as if they were ablaze with wildfires—beautiful reds and oranges being devoured by the fatal shadow of the continental divide. It evoked in me a quiet fear, permeating my thoughts and driving me into silence. I recalled a similar dread crystalizing in my veins upon viewing the remains of Sólheimajökull: the “climate glacier.” Small fixtures of ice jutted from the black earth outlining the skeleton of the once stoic glacier. As I walked among the spires, the tedious beat of melting ice falling into enclosed puddles beneath droned like a dental drill etching closer to the root—a sterile sense of disquiet. I felt, in that moment, the sense that the earth

was baring its teeth against its ruthless inhabitants; a future of ash-covered skyscrapers and canoes on Wall Street lay before my imagination.

I cannot entirely attribute, however, this particular dread to the fear of changing climate: I recall waking on an irregularly cold morning in Houston to the news that Ukraine had been invaded, feeling the same numb dread as I had sweating on the Canadian Border. It is a placeless, all-encompassing fear that stands monolithically against the other concerns of the 21st century.

I winced after he said it: “I can’t really see myself getting married soon. I also don’t think I’d want to have kids in a world like this.” I found it cliché—a dead and well beaten horse of sentiment.

“I just don’t think it’s as easy as it used to be, financially you know?” He looked at me hoping for agreement. It was September in Austin; I could see the sweat beading in his hair as he waited for validation. My eyes must have been vacant as he quickly changed the subject—coffee with a friend turned sour and bleak.

Yes, it was cliché, but I saw in that moment, months after returning from Glacier, another manifestation of that unnamed dread. While it was the uncanny heat in December and rising foreign conflict that had paralyzed me, it was the volatility of his accounts, his various credit lines, and his investments in a declining American market that rendered him incapable of hoping for a prosperous future. We were possessed by distinct fears. We finished our conversation, however, entangled in the same web—one spun by a subtle enemy: fatalism.

Subconsciously pervading our conception of reality, fatalism is the philosophical position that our individual and collective futures are predetermined and entirely out of our control. This philosophy does not discount the

supernatural but rather suggests that whatever divine powers may be do not have humanity's interests at heart. Fatalism attacks almost every aspect of our society, eroding our trust in government, economic security, and—the most detrimental—relationships. While the effects of this insidious philosophy can be seen throughout The West, it has chosen relationships to target with concentrated effort; the most undermined being romantic ones.

Like a hopeless diagnosis, the promise of fatalism is a bleak and uninhabitable future—but a future you will learn to accept. This notion seems to completely invalidate the pursuit of romance as it stunts its intended progression, obscuring the future and discouraging a couple from investing in it. Fatalism utilizes our social concerns—visions of a hostile world in my case or economic distress in my friend's—as venom, populating our minds with anything but hope. Compromised in this state, the idea of committing to another soul for the rest of our lives seems absurd. Within this crisis however, a distortion in our understanding of romantic love becomes clear.

Solomon, an ancient ruler of Israel, considers the intensity of romance and commemorates it in his writing, exclaiming, “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy as fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord.”¹ Both lofty and evocative in delivery, this passage presents a crucial truth about the nature of love: it is inherently

aggressive. Presenting it as “the very flame of the Lord,” Solomon is inferring that love is not passive, not simply a circumstantial affection, and most importantly not at the whim of circumstance. While this may be evident in theory, it has sorely lacked representation in practice. How then has Solomon's view of romantic love been distorted to allow for fatalism to render it obsolete?

In recollecting that hollow, desolate fear I felt walking back from the caldera—the sweat against my body, the sun burning the plains—I used to ask myself a simple yet grave question: “Is it worth it?” Worth it to love, worth it to invest, worth it to trust? But I've realized, to some extent, the futility of this question. We have distorted romance by making it contingent on the future—this is why fatalism has dealt such damage. It has convinced the West that love is like any other investment: without time to mature, it is futile and ill-advised. Decoupling from this economic posture towards romance is essential for both the religious and secular West if we are to restore what fatalism has corrupted. If we only pursue lifelong commitment to another when the future is secure, then we will forever remain ensnared in its hostility. If romantic love is separated from our insecurity, however, it will always be worth it. Even if it is cut short, strained, made virtually impossible—it will always be worth it. While it may be a tenuous denial of pragmatism in some sense, maybe romance was never meant to be a pragmatic endeavor to begin with.

1 Song of Solomon 8:6, ESV.

The Ontology of a Heart Sparkle: The Myth of Love at First Sight

Zach Lacy

The idea of a “heart sparkle” has spread through various cultural platforms and social media sites, but taps at a much earlier tradition and concept, that of love at first sight. Dante famously fell for Beatrice at the age of nine from a chance encounter at the Portinari house—whether they even spoke is unknown—devoting lines of poetry and prose to a woman he once crossed years after she married another and passed. Romeo falls the same way for the beautiful Juliet. Love at first sight may be the grandest motif in literature and art, but is it a reality or just a great coincidence?

A heart sparkle is characterized as the vibration of the soul when one first sees a lover and falls for them at that instant, making their heart beat and swell. *Di rigori armato il seno*, a Strauss aria, cries out,

*With one stroke I was slain
on seeing two lovely eyes.
Ah, how feebly an icy heart
resists such fiery arrows.*

Like a blazing arrow, the heart is pierced and the soul is entrapped in a trance of love, at least how the romantics describe it. This love is a mere feeling that can be found in the blink of an eye, it is uncontrollable and unwilling, but is found with the perfect alignment of factors and glances, and once it is won it cannot be let go or forgotten. I believe that this is the love we all wish to experience, this devouring love that is decided in a moment and met with reciprocal feeling and whimsy, but a Christian idea of marriage and romance tells a far different story.

Love like that of Romeo may be what many yearn for, but whether it is true love or a mere object of idolatry is an important question that must be considered. C.S. Lewis says, “Our loves do not make their claim to divinity [or to the possibility of idolatry] until the claim becomes plausible;” love does not threaten to become an idol until it has some sense of plausibility or possibility. Romeo got lucky that Juliet fell in that same encounter, but he never would have loved to the degree he did if that possibility of being worshipped wasn’t there, at least not with Lewis’s definition. Sure, Dante writes stanzas and stanzas for a married and dead woman, but the plausibility of reciprocity is still present in some sense because it allows him to deify his love. Unlike the love of one’s supper, romantic love is ontologically different, its very being is composed of something deeper and grander: some shared attribute of God. “[This love] does not become plausible until there is in them a real resemblance to God, to Love Himself,” continues Lewis, asserting that the character of this love is distinctly divine, at least in a sense.¹ Thus plausibility is only present when a love can be characterized like the love of Christ toward us or be given attributes like God’s love, explaining Dante

1 C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2017), 9.

and Romeo's obsession; however, as Lewis worries, both of these cases are idolatry. This claims that human love is unique, it is reliant on the *imago dei*, and thus it models the relationship of Christ to us even among the staunchest atheists and deniers. Love may be the only thing humans idolize as an end in itself for this very reason, this very similarity to God. This love also serves as a great warning against idolatry and the false presentation of divine love in human love.

To avoid appearing as a fatalist or pessimist, I cannot deny some metaphysical reality that occurs when one feels such a movement of the soul, but it certainly does not implicate love—though perhaps a social and appetitive attraction, infatuation, or feeling of goodwill. Love is the central commandment given to Moses, and must not be taken lightly. The Second Vatican Council writes that “Sacred Scripture...teaches us that the love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor” and quotes Paul in his claim that “love is the fulfillment of the law.”² The Council writes that “the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, “that all may be one. . . as we are one” opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God’s sons in truth and charity.”³ Love for a neighbor is thus modeling the relationship between the Father and His Son, or the Son and His Church. When we are commanded to love our neighbor, we are thus loving God through the immediate ends of a neighbor. When we are in matrimony to another, we become one flesh, much like how the church becomes one flesh in marriage to Christ; to love is to model that relationship. It is well established then that love is characteristically divine and that by loving a neighbor we are fulfilling the Law and serving God, but it is not all that clear what this love looks like.

According to Aristotle, “to love is to wish good to someone.”⁴ Thomas Aquinas, probably the greatest student of Aristotle, furthers that this love has a “twofold tendency: towards the good which a man wishes to someone...and to that which he wishes some good.”⁵ Thus for St. Thomas, a movement of love is directed toward the good of an individual, and by that good, to the individual himself. He states that where goodwill is a simple act of the will toward wishing another well, to love “denotes a certain union of affections between the lover and the beloved, in as much as the lover deems the beloved as somewhat united to him, or belonging to him, and so tends towards him.”⁶ This

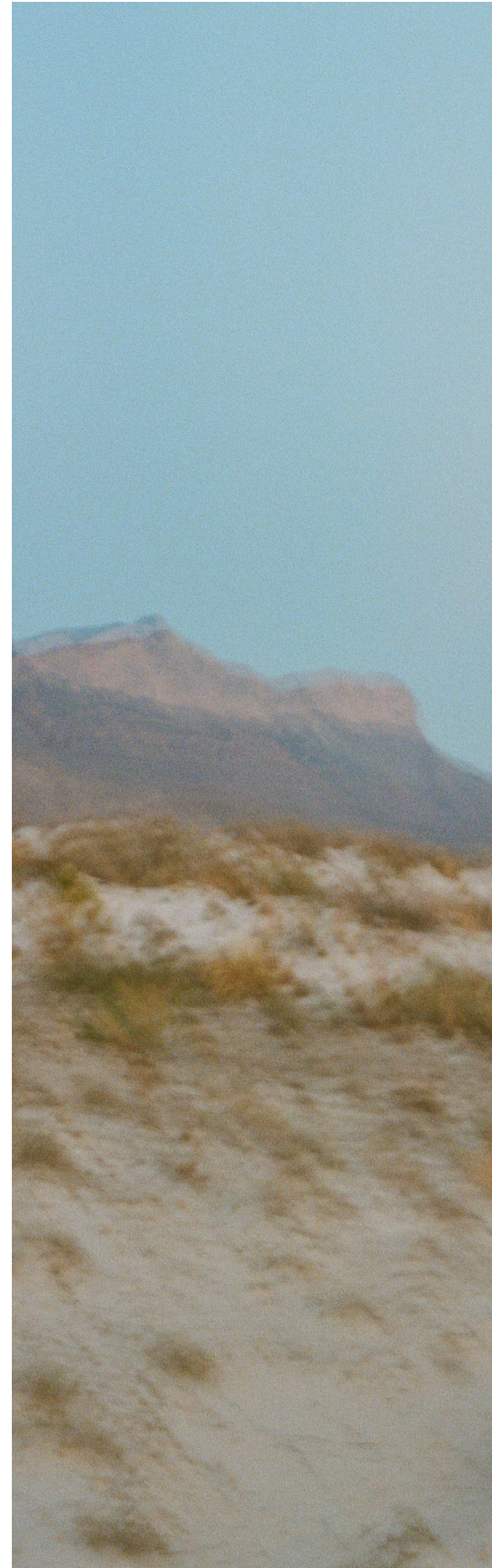
2 Romans 13:10, ESV.

3 Gaudium et Spes, 24. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, sec. 30-2, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, new rev. ed., vol. 1, ed. by Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), 24.

4 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, ii, 4.

5 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 26, Article 4.

6 *Ibid*, Art. 2.





definition seems to model the Christian charity, for while we have goodwill toward all made in the image of God, we love those to whom we wish the good and have some union to. This true love is not intermediate, but loves as an end in itself; Romeo must love Juliet not for her beauty, but for the mere fact that she is Juliet, or that she is. Aquinas asserts this simply by stating that “the love with which a thing is loved, that it may have some good, is love simply.”⁷ Love is to will the good of the other, and to love the potentiality for good. Lewis’s potentiality is helpful here, for we love by willing toward the image of God and behaving in the likeness of God incarnate: Christ.

Perhaps one may argue that this definition is still compatible with love at first sight; perhaps the heart sparkle allows one to perceive the perfected nature of an individual and thus will that nature, but this is a dangerous assertion and seems impossible, for it is far more likely that one perceives an illusion of the good as given from their own imagination and not from the Image of God. Boethius posits the aphorism, “Therefore it is not your nature which makes you appear beautiful, but the weakened eyes of those who look upon you.”⁸ Beauty, according to Boethius, or at least according to his character Philosophy, is nothing but the weakened perception of he who looks at you. Love at first sight is a flawed perception, according to this, for true love is from the will and reason as given by the Creator. Beauty comes from the image of God, and thus any distinction of beauty purely by sight in an individual is from the flesh, not the reason or will. If this is true, then perhaps love can only be found through knowledge of the good and likeness to God; it is distinctly rational and willful, rejecting any idea of love at first sight or the validity of a heart sparkle.

A heart sparkle may reveal a desire for charity or giving affection, but it cannot be characterized in terms of true love. Romeo certainly felt this desire, but the object of his love was a mere chimera, without that knowledge. The way that one perceives beauty in an individual is certainly the way that one perceives God, so the heart sparkle may certainly be a perception of general good and, by the grace of God, albeit rarely, of God; however, it is not a feeling of love but rather of general goodwill and recognition of the image of God in all. Love, true love, requires a knowledge of the perfected nature of one’s being and their good, Christ, and a likeness to Christ which comes from a cultivation of virtue and righteousness.

Madelyn Hajovsky, 2024, *Traveler in White Sands*, film photograph, shot on Olympus OM-1, 35mm

⁷ Ibid, Art. 4.

⁸ Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, iii, 7.

More Heard, Less Hurt

Hannah McAnally

All humans crave love. At the root of every action is the desire to belong, to be known, and to be loved. In a healthy marriage, love is one spouse serving the other and striving to be the hand of God to their spouse. God created marriage “so that man would not live alone.”¹ Marriage is the beautiful and trying dance of two humans seeking the Lord together and honoring Him by honoring the other. God designed marriage for the purpose of giving oneself to another in heart, mind, and body, receiving them in the same, and being intimately known in those realms. One aspect of power in marriage results from knowing the depths of light and dark in the other person. The signs of a healthy, God-honoring union are a shared love for the Lord and the use of power to serve your spouse.

Love and power disrupted

But God is perfect and humans are not. Marriage is meant to be the reflection of God’s union with the church, as Paul writes in Ephesians, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her.”² But even the best human marriages are dim shadows of the perfect marriage between God and His bride. And living in community, people are hurt deepest by those closest to them. Those people that you share your life, time, mind, and body with are the ones whose betrayal, anger, distance, and abandonment can shatter your reality. When one spouse betrays the love and uses their power to hurt instead of help, the marriage breaks.

God’s redemption

Yet God did not leave us to mend our wounds alone, without help, hope, or comfort. His plan for your restoration may not be what you desire or expect. He does not always redeem a marriage or restore a relationship. Sometimes, healing comes from saying goodbye. Sometimes, comfort is found when you break so deeply, cry so hard, and know that you have no strength left of your own. That is where Jesus finds you and brings love that will stay and not betray, and a power to keep going and love deeper that could never come from another person.

The cross

The greatest display of love and power in the history of the world was on a rough, wooden cross. It was the action of the all powerful, deepest loving Son of God coming to earth and dying. Using his infinite power to display his infinite love by saving his people. Jesus’ love moved him to give up his most precious possession—his union with the Father—and use his almighty power to bring his children home.

1 Gen. 2:18, ESV.

2 Ephesians 5:25, ESV.

Boundaries

If the cross is the all-encompassing spiritual mending of the world, then personal boundaries are one way it is evident in our lives. There is an idea, especially in Christian circles, that boundaries are not Christ-like, and Christians need to be giving their time, resources, and hearts to the service of others without hesitation or reservation. Serving is a wonderful way to embody Christ, but we are only limited human beings. Boundaries protect against over-giving and being depleted of time and resources, and provide safety for the heart. Having boundaries, whether in thought or deed, depends on the level of responsibility and trust that the other person has proven. Over sharing too soon can lead to a false sense of closeness and commitment, so having emotional boundaries can aid in not being hurt as deeply if the other person walks away.

In a recent interview with Focus on the Family Ministries, “Setting Boundaries in Your Most Difficult Relationships,” Lysa TerKeurst talks about her book, *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*. TerKeurst is a Christian author and the President of Proverbs 31 Ministries. She was married for 30 years before divorcing her husband due to infidelity and addiction. When asked about the Scripture of Jesus laying down his life for his friends, TerKeurst responded, “Jesus laid down his life for a holy purpose, but not to enable bad behavior to continue.”³ Sacrifice and the giving of yourself is noble, until it allows someone else to do harm.

The topic of boundaries may evoke dread if they have not helped in the past or have felt like manipulation and punishment. Scripture, such as Proverbs 31:14, can even help feed hesitation and guilt.⁴ Really though, boundaries grant freedom, enable greater love, and empower yourself. They allow you to see where the line is, what not to cross, and how much to give. It shines the light of freedom on the relationship, instead of allowing you to stumble blindly in the darkness. Biblical confidence for boundaries can be seen in God’s first conversation with Adam about not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God’s motivation is not to restrict but to protect and originates from His love for Adam and Eve. Setting boundaries can be uncomfortable, but ultimately are the way to fight for deeper love, freedom, and ease in the relationship. Setting limits empower you to care for your own needs and recognize how much you can meet the needs of another. It enables freedom to be more heard, less hurt, and less disappointed. In talking about her own story and the journey to being honest with herself, TerKeurst realized this profound and raw truth: “We will always want from other people what we fear we will never get from God.”⁵ We all have expectations of others that will be disappointed, so setting boundaries with others aids in clarifying those expectations.

But what is the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy boundary? The answer: access and responsibility. TerKeurst illustrates this using the tabernacle, which possessed different degrees of access depending on the person. The greater the access, the greater the responsibility, and the greater the consequences should the boundary be violated. Motivated by love, boundaries are placed on yourself, not on the other person. Without boundaries, there is chaos, which wears down oneself and the ability to love like Christ. TerKeurst emphasizes, “Boundaries are not to shove others away but to help hold us together and open up communication.”⁶ Boundaries are a gift and a tool to help us live lives of love, freedom, and safety. The degree of the boundary may change, but the need for it never will.

3 Lysa TerKeurst, “Setting Boundaries in Your Most Difficult Relationships,” *Focus on the Family*, Interview by Jim Daly, November 8, 2022, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/setting-boundaries-in-your-most-difficult-relationships-part-1-of-2/>.

4 Proverbs 31:14, ESV: “Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.”

5 TerKeurst, “Setting Boundaries.”

6 Ibid.

To Take from God

Noah Thomason

The Son of Isaac grappled God alone.
The stubborn one, with dust upon his chest,
Swindler, trickster, birthright-stealer, thrown,
Refused to go until he had been blessed.
A sickly woman, by her blood beset,
Pushed through the throng, and touched the Lord God's fleece.
Her bleeding ceased, the illness gone, and yet,
He would not let her go without His peace.
Both sought to take from God. One, full of pride,
Demanded blessings from th'Almighty One,
The other, healed and humbled, purified,
Repented, faith in God her healing done.
Yet God both blessed with Pow'r, one named, one healed,
For God is Love, and Love's His Pow'r revealed.

Godly Politics: An Oxymoron? A Biblical Examination of Political Leadership

Deborah Chu

Introduction

Liar. Felon. Corrupt. These were some of the most popular keywords circulated in media headlines and public discourse during the controversial 2024 Presidential Election cycle. Once again, America found itself a house divided as a chaotic electoral season unfolded. American voters had two options: a presidential candidate who secured her nomination without a democratic vote or another on trial for a string of serious crimes. One question troubled many Americans: How did we get here?

Presidential elections were designed to select the most qualified individuals to steward America's political, economic, and social well-being. Ideally, the president would represent America's "best of the best" and serve as the moral figurehead of the nation. The 2024 election epitomized the breakdown of this hope for moral leadership, with many citizens grappling with voting between policy and personality. In particular, many Christians faced a dilemma about deciding who would utter "So help me

God" at the end of their presidential oath on January 20th. For Christians, the decision not only determined the future administration's policies but also the espoused moral values for the next four years.

The following case studies of Biblical leaders demonstrate how as believers, Christians can exemplify a type of political leadership that could remedy our current generation's disillusion. God uses ordinary, flawed individuals to fulfill his good purposes for his people, and these Biblical figures' lives indicate that perhaps Christians were never meant to self-isolate themselves from political affairs. Perhaps, we are meant to lead.

1. Moses: (God's) Power, Purpose, and Preparation

Moses stands as one of the Bible's foundational political leaders. Beyond leading Israel's exodus from Egyptian slavery, Moses rose above Israel because he recognized God's power would suffice

where his human capabilities fell short. Moses initially struggled with feeling incompetent due to his past efforts at punitive justice for the Hebrew people through murder. When appointed as the emancipator of Israel, Moses became afraid. He protested, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent," and, "Oh my Lord, please send someone else."¹ Yet, once more, God asserted His intention to work through Moses, promising, "I... will teach you."² Despite continuing to struggle with doubt, Moses finally chose to comply and successfully freed Israel from the most powerful nation in the world. Moses further exemplified leadership by training Joshua and imparting his spirit of wisdom, ensuring the enactment of God's purpose would continue. Moses recognized that God's plan to bring Israel to the Promised Land would not come to total fruition within his lifetime, so in an act of faith, he prepared the next generation for the fulfillment of God's promise.

¹ Exodus 4:10-13, ESV.

² Exodus 4:15, ESV.



Analise Pickerrell, 2025, *A house at dusk*, oil on canvas.

When political leaders turn their eyes away from their human limitations and toward the omnipotence of God, they accomplish far more good than humanly possible. A good political leader acknowledges their limitations and avoids seeking power to glorify themselves while not letting their limitations hinder God's purpose. Moses' life displays how embracing positions of leadership requires spiritual preparation, regular recommitment to God's purpose, and resilience in the face of potential failure.

2. Esther: Strong, Smart, and Servant-Hearted

Being an orphan, a member of an ethnic minority, and a woman in the Persian Empire would ordinarily condemn an individual to a life of oppression and servitude. Such an individual would never dream of becoming the queen of the world's most powerful empire and saving her entire ethnic group from genocide. However, by winning favor through her God-given extraordinary beauty and charm, Esther found herself the Queen of Persia and encountered a plot to massacre the Jewish people.

Esther was faced with a difficult choice. She could hide her identity as a Jew, evading almost certain death. Or, she could rise to the occasion and put her people's lives above her own. Her cousin Mordecai pushed her to put aside her fears and utilize her position to save their lives, stating, "For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"³

With this reminder, Esther demonstrated three of her greatest strengths as a political leader: resolve in the face of adversity, the ability to strategize for success, and self-servitude for her people in their time of need. Her willingness to self-sacrifice and strategize led to the Jews' salvation and the execution of their political enemies. Esther's rise to fulfill the call of her times teaches us that when political leaders are placed in high-stakes situations, they should respond with strength, strategy, and a servant's heart.

3 Esther 4:14, ESV.

3. *Daniel: Immaculate Integrity*

Integrity is the last word Americans think of when describing our current politicians. Yet it defines the life of one of the Bible's most prolific political leaders: Daniel. Even after witnessing the destruction of his nation, being exiled to Babylon, and being stripped of his identity by his captors, Daniel demonstrated incredible strength of character. When training for the king's service, "Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself...Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself."⁴ Daniel refused to compromise the right way of living to the jarringly extravagant culture of sin he was thrown into. Nevertheless, he managed to preserve his integrity tactfully by humbly negotiating his requests with his masters. He is repeatedly characterized as prudent, discrete, and wise when discussing sensitive cultural topics with important figures. As a result, "God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the eunuchs."⁵

Daniel's integrity distinguished him from his surroundings. When a group of jealous politicians tried to accuse Daniel, "they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him."⁶ They could only persecute him for his faith, but Daniel still "got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave

thanks before his God, as he had done previously."⁷ Daniel's life of conviction and devotion enabled him to remember his true Lord and engage fearlessly in civil disobedience when confronted with unjust laws. Daniel provides Christian leaders with an ideal for leading in counter-cultural environments. Living humbly with impeccable integrity before an audience of One inevitably incurs God's blessing, and absolute commitment to God over men results in true success not contingent upon popular opinion.

Through the lives of Moses, Esther, and Daniel, among many others, we can identify non-negotiable qualities for leadership. While many current politicians fail to exemplify such traits, we as citizens can fulfill our duties independently of their choices and character. Firstly, we need to pray for our leaders, especially those with whom we disagree. Paul writes, "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."⁸ We should also refuse to compromise the principles of justice and righteousness in our politics that underlay God's purpose for establishing human governments.

While followers of Jesus should not be of this world, we should still engage with its broken politics, defend the weak, and uphold justice for all people in our society.

Finally, some of us will be called to become the political leaders that we want to see in America. Like Moses, we should answer the call to fulfill God's purposes despite our insecurities. Like Esther, we must rise to the occasion and remember that we are called to serve others selflessly. Like Daniel, we must live with integrity. In the near future, I hope we will see a revival of faith and political leadership rooted in Christian principles where every Christian lives as a leader should. I pray that when a new generation of leaders who truly love and serve our country emerges, citizens will reflect back upon our current times and ask once again, "How did we get here?" God has provided us with the tools we need to overhaul our broken politics. With His guidance, we can get it right this time.

4 Daniel 1:8, ESV.

5 Daniel 1:9, ESV.

6 Daniel 6:4, ESV.

7 Daniel 6:10, ESV.

8 1 Timothy 2:1-2, ESV.



Madelyn Hajovsky, 2024, *Cliff Face on Guadalupe Peak*, film photograph, shot on Olympus OM-1, 35mm

God's Love and Power, a Necessity for Morality and Moral Society

Braxton Bullock

In modern Western society, there are two domineering worldviews. One of them is Christianity, which teaches that Christ is God, the law-setter of the universe, and the giver and creator of all creation. The other is modern secularism, which often garners a reputation of being relativist or even nihilist, but in reality, most people who would be classified as secularists claim to at least believe in some morality. In fact, almost all of them do. About 98% of atheists and 97% of agnostics report it is possible to be moral or have good values without religion.¹ Yet, a common objection yielded by the Christian or theist against this secular morality is to assert that morality cannot possibly exist in any true sense without God. They usually mean this in both a practical and philosophical sense, for the power of God is essential for the practical existence of any enduring moral system, and the love of God is required for philosophical existence; the secularist comes up empty at both ends.

The English Enlightenment philosopher John Locke wrote in his *Letter Concerning Toleration*, an influential treatise on the notion of religious freedom, that one of the few religious beliefs that ought not be tolerated is atheism because the “[p]romises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist,” for the “taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all.”² Locke said this even while himself proclaiming that morality could be deduced from reason alone without the need to invoke God Himself, but he remained convinced that it was “too hard a task for unassisted Reason, to establish Morality in all its parts upon its true foundations; with clear and convincing light.” According to Locke, the “surer and shorter way” to make a functional moral system is to say it is “one manifestly sent from God, and coming with visible Authority from him,” because this grounding is clear to the “Apprehensions of the vulgar, and mass of Mankind” by not requiring “the long, and sometimes intricate deductions of Reason, to be made out to them.”³ It is impossible to know empirically whether this is true at this time, in part, because a large majority of modern secularists were raised Christian anyway, and they likely retain behaviors and beliefs from a Christian upbringing and a broadly Christian community. However, Locke’s point is highlighted in some social science research. One study showed that believers of a moralizing God were less likely to cheat someone out of their money and more likely to be impartial. However, in societies with strong law and order regimes, the discrepancy decreases.⁴ This suggests that people behave better when they believe they are subjected to an external divine enforcer of justice. Thus, Locke’s practical arguments in favor of a God-dependent moral society must lie in the power of God. Practically speaking, society’s perpetuation of morality is directly related to God’s omnipresence,

1 Gregory A. Smith et al., “Religious ‘Nones’ in America: Who They Are and What They Believe,” *Pew Research Center*, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/01/24/religious-nones-in-america-who-they-are-and-what-they-believe>.

2 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 246.

3 John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (London: Rivington, 1824), 139, <https://archive.org/details/thereasonableness00lockuoft/page/138/mode/2up?q=>.

4 Dimitris Xygalatas, “Are Religious People More Moral?” *Sapiens*, December 6, 2017, <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/religious-people-moral/>.

omniscience, and omnipotence. So, even if morality can exist without God, a secularist must provide a power structure to enforce morality for the masses who, without God, are more likely to cheat the system; so, they turn to the government.

Historically, powerful atheistic states have been far from ideal and, many, downright tyrannical. For example, the leaders of Nazi Germany were extremely moralistic and attempted through government force to replace the Christian ethical tradition with a home-grown one that served the ideologies of the regime.⁵ The terrifying part is that this worked. Their new “morality” was adhered to by enough to commit atrocities at a scale never seen before or since. The citizenry found their moral standard in the power of the government. This is markedly different from Christianity, where the Christian views governments to be reliant on the power of God and morality to be fixed. This fixed morality established by Christianity has built the West for the past centuries, but a widespread adoption of atheism would likely change this, and leave a moral vacuum that would be filled with something quite different, and if history says anything, it would be something much worse.

Many secularists are willing to concede that a belief in a powerful God amongst the masses is at least somewhat important or even essential for a moral society. However, this does not answer if God is really needed for morality to be true. All this proves is that people are not very moral without fear of retribution and that regimes make dreadful moral systems, but it is still to be contended that God is required for morality at a philosophical level as well.

The answer lies in the love of God. For God created man, and He “created mankind in His own image,” and He made man and the rest of creation in a state of perfection.⁶ Creation would remain in perfection until man exercised his freedom of the will to corrupt it, and this dynamic is where morality exists. Basing morality in perfection sets it in the essence of everything in the universe because it connects morality to wider creation. This principle explains why morality has logical properties like physics and other natural forces, and also why it can be said to be objective, just like arithmetic or the existence of matter. This is so because morality—and its parts, the good and bad—are connected to an objective and measurable deviation from the original state of perfection. But, perfection could only have existed

5 Thomas Kühne, “Nazi Morality,” in *A Companion to Nazi Germany*, edited by S. Baranowski et al. (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118936894.ch13>.

6 Genesis 1:27, NIV.

if the Creator had enough love and care to make such principles. Thus, it was God having a genuine love for man, for him and the rest of creation to be in a state of perfection, that created the pillar for the good to exist on. An uncaring or unloving deistic creator would not have bothered to have such a notion of perfection. It follows from these principles that morality is also not an arbitrary edict from God or merely a byproduct of his power. Hence, the Christian conception of morality is not prone to allowing clearly immoral things to be merely decreed as good by God because such things are intrinsically against the perfect state that God created in the garden. If God did not have this transcendental love for man to desire him remaining in the perfect state, morality could not exist at any objective level because there would be no transcendental notion of perfection that ought to be preserved, the good, and an imperfection that ought to be avoided, the bad.

If God's love is removed from the equation, there is no aim to creation and no measuring stick of its faults and excellencies, as such things can only exist when created with an ideal in mind. Since secularism cannot appeal to an ideal state of creation, any secular morality will always fail to build a framework wherein it could be considered objectively true. Hence, secular systems can lead to a wide variance of beliefs regarding morality. For that reason, divorcing morality from God can lead to potentially horrific moral systems forming, as seen in Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, none of this discussion of secular ethics is hypothetical, as atheism and secularism continue to grow in influence. Thus, there is a battle in the West today: a battle between an ever-encroaching worldview that creates no stable, consistent basis for morality and one that manifests morality to all through the love and power of God.



So You Want to Know What I Did with My Summer?

McKay Lawless

Every student at the University of Texas at Austin has felt it—the pressure following the most asked question.

“What are you doing this summer?”

People threw this question around my freshman year. I didn’t think much of it, not until I returned to UT after my first summer break and asked my peers about their time off.

“Mine was so fun! I worked under Vivek Ramasamway to create a think tank,” one said.

“It was great! I traveled to farmers markets and sold pieces from my recently launched recycled clothing business,” said another.

I stared blankly at Handshake applications that asked for three of my best clips. I didn’t know what a clip was. Google came to the rescue, but the answer seemed to suffocate me even more. A “clip” is a sample of my best published work. In that case, I had a no-clip summer. Instead of generating clips, I worked on the media team at a Christian summer camp—an experience I loved. But it didn’t manifest itself into a clip, so it didn’t seem to matter.

“You wasted your summer,” UT’s standard of success whispered to me.

According to US News & World Report, the University of Texas at Austin ranks as the seventh best public university in the nation, naturally attracting highly ambitious individuals. Already accomplished by mere acceptance into the university, UT freshmen’s default is academic success.

A high GPA loses its competitive significance, so research opportunities and internships become the new offense.

I asked students to anonymously share their opinions on UT’s internship culture. One student confessed that, although they felt relaxed going into college, they immediately felt behind once they realized how many of their peers had already completed multiple internships. Another student admitted they had worked three to four internships at a time since high school. What had begun as resume-builder to gain admission into UT became a high-speed treadmill they could no longer dismount from.

I’ve witnessed UT’s steep standard of success plague the student body and create an environment similar to “the inside of a pressure cooker,” as one of my friends said.

I am no stranger to these feelings. After returning from summer break, I was utterly swarmed with comparison. I was behind the pack. I let it get to me.

I asked my respondents to indicate how much of their headspace is occupied by thoughts of their future career and the path there. I gave them three options—less than 50%, about 50%, or more than 50%. Exactly half reported that career considerations fill more than half their headspace. Another 42.9% said it was about half, leaving only 7.1% who feel less than half of their headspace is focused on career planning.

Nostalgic graduates refer to college as the best years of your life—a time to explore interests and experience one last taste of freedom before entering the workforce. But

when at least 50% of our headspace is spent thinking about how we are going to achieve greatness, it feels like the most stressful years of our life and our last taste of uncertainty.

I found myself wanting time to go faster. I wanted to be in the stage of my life where I was successful. I couldn't wait for the seeking to end and contentment to begin.

One day, I found myself working on my resume on the floor of UT's Student Activity Center while a blur of suits paced around me about to enter the engineering career fair next door. Nearly 6,000 well-dressed students were about to encounter 300 engineering firms, and their one job was to get an interview.

I was safe on the floor knowing I didn't have to join the pageant. But as I sat on the floor in my hoodie developing the first draft of my resume, I looked at my roommate, who wore a suit and carried 10 printed resumes in a folder. Maybe these students weren't entering an auction, but actually a safehouse, a place one step closer to the certainty and contentment I longed for. My relief morphed to jealousy in an instant.

One of my favorite professors later told me she was going to leave UT and work at another university in a few months. My jaw dropped. An attorney, journalist and professor, I admired her and felt inspired by each title she held. But she was about to add another as she accepted a more distinguished professorial position. She was already a distinguished professor and I couldn't fathom there being a better job. Among other things, she told me the new position would give her money to support her research efforts—her new job was objectively better. That's when I realized that there will also be a better opportunity, no matter how high up you get. Graduation was not the end of seeking, but merely the beginning.

Even if we stop chasing titles and positions, society will tell us we're not enough. Even if we pursue the chase, our souls will always want more. Maybe contentment is a desire that will never be fulfilled.

Scholar and theologian CS Lewis has said, "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."¹

In November, I found out I would be studying abroad in Vienna, Austria. Just like my time at summer camp, my life would be enriched by this experience. But it wouldn't result in a tangible accomplishment. It wouldn't give me a clip.

I was giving my future too much power. It ruled me and I was crushing under its weight. I was so caught up in determining the worth of my experiences by the experiences of my peers. I was seeking contentment in my surroundings to no avail. As Lewis said, my contentment could not be found in accomplishing as much as my peers. Something had to change.

Romans 8:6 says, "For to set the mind of the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."²

At the Christian summer camp this past summer, I spent most of my time editing content in the office. However, as I walked alongside my team in the towering woods of Tyler, Texas, I saw the extensiveness of this world and understood how little my capacity for power was. But even more so, I was reminded that I had access to the greatest power in our Lord. The very experience that I found myself doubting and comparing was the one that showed me where true contentment is found.

I found freedom in the fact that finding contentment in this world is not in my hands, and it doesn't come from becoming the greatest power, but by submitting to it.

¹ C. S. Lewis and Walter Hooper, *Mere Christianity: An Anniversary Edition of the Three Books, The Case for Christianity, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality* (New York: Macmillan, 1981), page 119.

² The Holy Bible, ESV.



Now I Know in Part: Georg Cantor and the Limits of Human Reason

Lance Cartwright

In 1895, the great mathematician and logician Georg Cantor published the first part of his defining work: *Contributions to the Founding of the Theory of Transfinite Numbers*. In it, he solidified much of his career's work by studying the nature of infinity and fathering the field of set theory. He helped establish the foundations of mathematical logic, along the way proving that there are an infinite number of infinities, distinguished by size. For Cantor, the importance of his mathematics extended far beyond his academic career: his understanding of infinity determined his understanding of



Madelyn Hajovsky, 2024, *Gypsum Dunes at Twilight*, film photograph, shot on Olympus OM-1, 35mm

the divine. During periods of discovery he wrote that ideas were revealed to him by “higher energies.”¹ In his 1895 publication, he included the following quote from Seneca’s *Naturales Quaestiones*: “The time will come when those things which now lie hidden will be brought to light by the day and the diligence of a future

age.”² Through Seneca’s words, Cantor envisioned the divine light of reason being sustained by the glow of human ingenuity. Therefore, when his own faculties were insufficient to reveal a way past the uncertainty of his conjectures, Cantor began to despair. He began questioning God.

In 1897, his contributions to mathematics essentially ceased when his efforts to win over the broader scientific community fell short. Tormented by his inability to prove a conjecture called the Continuum Hypothesis, Cantor seemed to feel humiliated by the opposition to his work levied by mathematicians, philosophers, and even theologians. Simultaneously, his life’s work and his understanding of the world seemed to be crumbling around him. Soon, he applied for a leave of absence from his university and attempted to leave the study of mathematics altogether.

Cantor’s condition worsened when his son Felix died in 1899. He wrote to a friend expressing that his thirty-year-long love for mathematics had vanished. For the next few years, he taught at the University of Halle as much as he could manage. Then, in 1905, while attending a conference with his wife and daughters, he was humiliated by a paper that claimed to disprove the Continuum Hypothesis entirely.³

As he watched the upending of his life’s work, dismantling the very foundation of his worldview, his mind collapsed.

Although the 1905 paper was later debunked, restoring his reputation, his mental faculties never recovered. Cantor spent the rest of his life in increasingly long periods of hospitalization—the final of which occurred in 1917. He died of a heart attack the next January at the age of 72.

To this day, the Continuum Hypothesis remains unproven. Later research on the hierarchy of logical systems demonstrated that Zermelo-Frankel set theory, the framework which Cantor helped develop in order to prove his most influential theorems, was unable to prove or disprove the Continuum Hypothesis. The mathematical world his hypothesis inhabited was unable to prove an axiom upon which its consistency relied. Later, Kurt Gödel and Paul Cohen proved its independence from Zermelo-Frankel set theory and believed that it might be impossible to prove entirely. Since then, attempts to prove or disprove the Continuum Hypothesis have shown more about the logical systems in which theorems are expressed than the theorem itself.⁴ It is an illustrative example that no matter how high the human mind reasons, there will always be truths that are beyond the limits of provable comprehension.

1 Joseph W. Dauben, “Georg Cantor: The Personal Matrix of His Mathematics,” *Isis* 69, no. 4 (1978): 534-50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/231091>.

2 Georg Cantor, “Beiträge Zur Begründung Der Transfiniten Mengenlehre,” *Mathematische Annalen* 46, no. 4 (November 1895): 481-512, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02124929>.

3 Dauben, “Georg Cantor: The Personal Matrix of His Mathematics.”

4 Peter Koellner, “The Continuum Hypothesis,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, May 22, 2013, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/continuum-hypothesis/>.

*For my thoughts are not
your thoughts, neither
are your ways my ways,
declares the Lord.*

*For as the heavens are
higher than the earth, so are
my ways higher than your
ways and my thoughts than
your thoughts.*

—Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)

An understanding of the limits of human reason can spare us from Cantor's fate. In order to have any true grounding in the world—especially in mathematics—we must recognize that objective truth exists. But we must not expect the limited systems of reasoning our minds employ to fully comprehend the Truth to which we aspire. Not only is it impossible for the human mind to know everything—it is impossible for the human mind to know how to know everything.

This is the limitation conveyed in Isaiah 55. If we can't truly store absolute truth in our minds, how can we understand an absolute God? And if we can't understand God, how can we hope to know Him or to love Him? If the mind of God is above any logical system—both infinitely complex and perfectly sound—then how can we hope to rise to the level of His thoughts in order to pursue Him? Even before our morality enters the picture, we have no way of knowing God by our own power. Even if His attributes are apparent to us, what our eyes see will not be understood fully in our minds.

This futility is a testament to the profundity of the incarnation. When He was born in a human body, Christ stepped down from Heaven, not only in a physical sense, but also in a mental sense. And by being in perfect communion with the Father, and making Himself known to men, Jesus allowed man to commune with the Father in a way that we can never fully comprehend, as long as we live in an earthly body. The futility of our cognitive capacity necessitated that God acted first, of His own, incomprehensible, perfect love for us.

*For now we see only a
reflection
as in a mirror, but then face
to face.
Now I know in part,
but then I will know fully,
as I am fully known.*

—1 Corinthians 13

Georg Cantor's quotation of Seneca in 1895 has been misattributed to 1 Corinthians 13.⁵ However, the Spirit through Paul gives us a hope that Seneca cannot. By knowing Christ as both man and God, our knowledge is made complete in the hope of eventual unity with Him. Here, again, the example of Cantor serves as a cautionary tale. After his hospitalization in 1905, Cantor wrote to an English colleague of an "inspiration from above" which he experienced during his time of solitude. According to Cantor, this inspiration showed him that Jesus of Nazareth was

not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph of Arimathea. This apostatic revelation shows us the tragedy of Cantor's intellectual confusion. When Cantor lost his faith in the divinity of his mathematics, he lost his faith in the divinity of Christ, and soon, his hope altogether.

Both crises of faith were underpinned by a desire for personal intellectual completeness. Yet an understanding of our own incompleteness ought to motivate an even greater desire for completeness in Christ. More radically and beautifully, we can rest in our incompleteness, knowing that, by faith, we can hold fast to truths which are hard to reason about. For, "we know in part [...] but when completeness comes, the partial will pass away."⁶ If our lives reflect this hope, then we have confidence that "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ."⁷ For it is not by knowledge but by faith and steadfastness that we are made "perfect and complete, lacking nothing."⁸

5 "Dangerous Knowledge," directed by David Malone, 2007, on BBC.

6 1 Corinthians 13:10. ESV.

7 Philippians 1:6. ESV.

8 James 1:4. ESV.



Analise Pickerrell, 2025, *A house lit by the morning*, oil on canvas.

Tertullian's Response: A Liturgy for Resting in Divine Paradox

Avery Crowley

Tertullian was an early Christian author and apologist from Carthage whose work contributed greatly to the formation of early Christian theology. Most remembered for his writings against Marcion, he and some of his contemporaries sought to protect the church from heretical teaching. Marcion taught that Jesus Christ came to earth as a different God than the God of the Old Testament, and in 144 AD he was deemed a heretic and excommunicated from the church. This liturgy is meant to make us aware of our own tendency to misunderstand our God's nature and to allow us to dwell in the paradox of His character.

Tertullian's Response

From everlasting to everlasting You are God.¹

You are the God who made the seas to roar and swell, and
You are the God who calms them.

You are the God who breathes life into lungs, and You are
the God who empties them.

You are the God who rescues men, and You are the God
who became them.

You, God, are familiar and yet unfathomable.

You, God, are tender and yet fierce.

You, God, are unmistakable and yet mysterious.

You, God, are merciful and yet just.

Through the Flood, You used a sea of destruction as a vessel of
mercy.² The creatures that bore Your Image began to worship
that which You despise, and out of unexplainable love for them,
Your wrathful rain poured down from the heavens.

The land was ruled by chaos, and the downpour restored order.

For while humanity looks on the flood and calls it cruel and
callous, You used it to remind them of their Maker.

The Israelites wandered and died in the wilderness for a
reason.³

They were delivered into the hands of their enemies for a
reason.⁴

The king they pleaded for failed them for a reason.⁵

Even when Your people cannot see it, God, You do all things
for a reason, for Your glory and for their good.

1 Psalm 90:2.

2 Genesis 6-9.

3 Exodus 16.

4 Judges 2:14.

5 1 Samuel 13.

You were the same when You took on flesh, changing the world forever and yet remaining unchanged. Your love, O Lord, remained rooted in the mission of restoring the earth, for You fulfilled the law but did not abolish it. How could You, God? You have revealed your extraordinary nature through the law, showing Your people how to love.

Just as You rebuked Cain for the murder of His brother,⁶ so too did You reprove the pharisees of their hypocrisy.⁷

Just as you commanded Your people to plead the cause of the rejected,⁸ so too did you defend the foreigner and tax-collector.⁹

Just as You commanded Moses to destroy the golden calf,¹⁰ so too did you wreck the marketplace in Your temple.¹¹

Just as Your commandments remained the same, so too did You.

Forgive us, God, when we fail to hold your mercy and justice in tension. You have shown Your love for us in the giving of Your law, and so often do we demand that You choose one. Give us hearts that see the law as You do, that we would live not out of worship of the ritual but out of worship of You, for we belong to You in body, mind, and soul. When we fall into disobedience, Lord, may we be reminded of the freedom offered in Your sacrifice, that we are no longer bound to sin but bound to You. While we must change to become more like You, God, You remain the same.

From everlasting to everlasting, **You are God.**

6 Genesis 4.

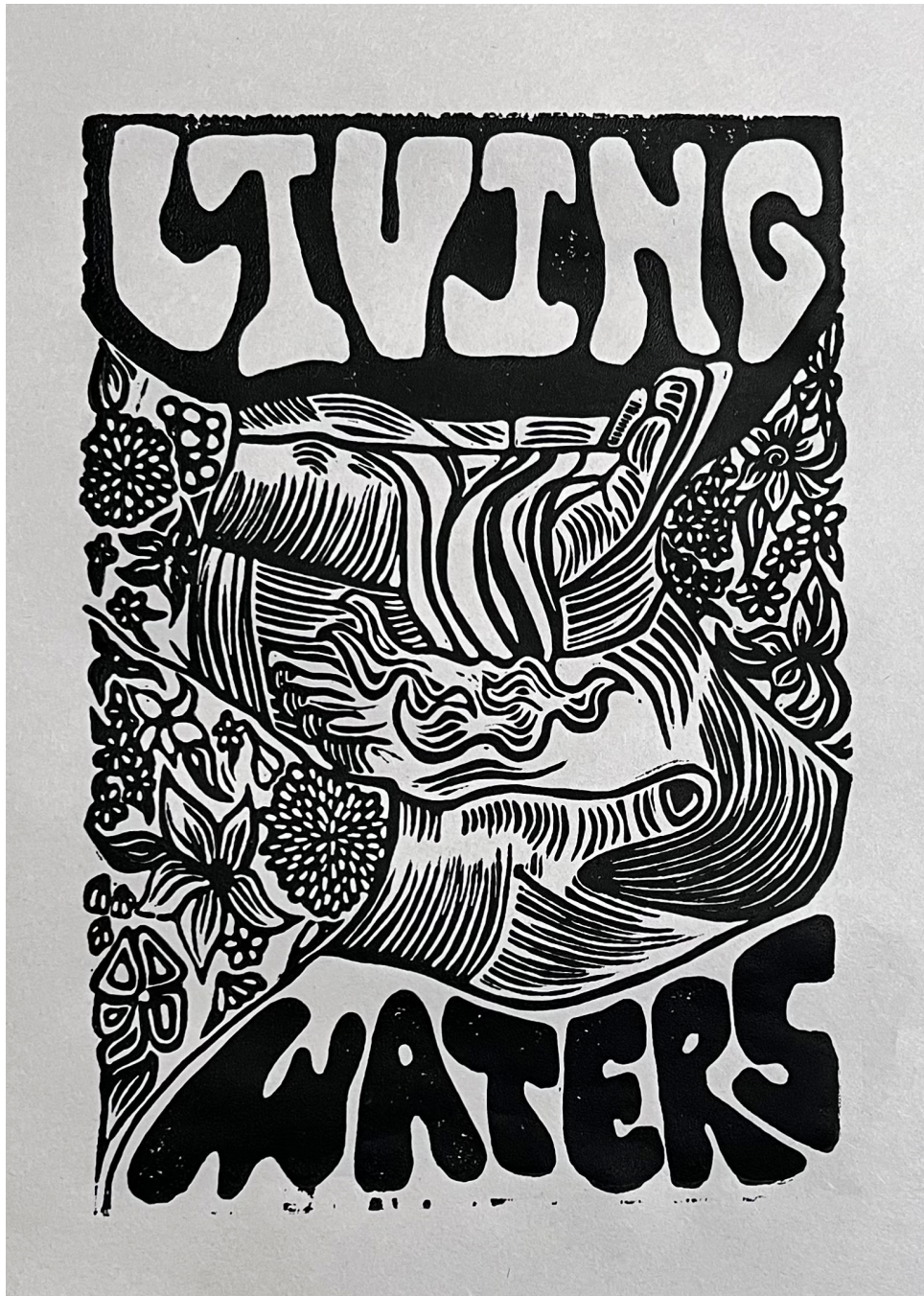
7 Matthew 23.

8 Isaiah 1:17

9 John 4, Luke 19.

10 Exodus 32.

11 Matthew 21.



Faith Tucker, *Living Waters*, 2025, linoleum print, ink on paper.

The Unexpected Reason for Masculine Religious Revival

Mitchell Schultz

Going to church has always been a statistically feminine activity—more women attend on average than men. This gap has been well-documented since early Greco-Roman churches, where women were given higher social standing and domestic protections than in secular society. Contemporarily, the phenomenon is still known and accounted for, with a book coming out as recently as 2018 entitled *Why Men Hate Going to Church*. As the gap seemed to widen in the mid-2010's, there was real panic about this issue. Since then, however, something has shifted. A recent New York Times article outlined a staggering new trend: within the United States, Gen Z men

have not only returned their proportional attendance to pre-2010 numbers, but they have also almost closed the gender gap entirely. What has caused this?

The masculine religious revival has been left largely without satisfactory explanation, with reductive answers understating the complex cultural origins of this very significant demographic change.

I believe that this movement has occurred in response to an actively shifting power dynamic between genders. We

live in a fundamentally patriarchal society, as has been the case for most of Western history. The idea that a man is a powerful figure within his family and social sphere is baked into most of the modern world's institutions, a prime example being the US government, where the development of women's rights has historically lagged far behind those of men. Obviously, modern society has tried to amend itself of this. Third and fourth-wave feminism made important social strides and, along with modern empowerment movements of other marginalized groups, created an awareness of implicit and institutionalized biases against women in countless industries, cultural settings, and social

dynamics. These efforts allow greater social, legal, and professional mobility to women that want to take advantage of opportunities that have been afforded to their male counterparts for decades.

This modern climate of equality, however, does not exist in a vacuum.

Men have been on top of society for too long to level the playing field immediately, so one strategy taken to mitigate the harm that can be inflicted on still-marginalized women is that of increased accountability. With the advent of social media and generalized female empowerment and solidarity, crimes that had been perpetrated by men and endured in silence by women for years came to light. The #MeToo movement exemplifies the bolstering of channels by which men have been held more accountable to the office of their power than ever before.

There are many different ways that popular consciousness has defined the office of power. Spider-Man's "with great power comes great responsibility" has been parroted in three film adaptations since 2001, giving us a modern folktale of what happens when the office—the responsibility—of power is upheld. We look up to Spider-Man because of his integrity; he can quite literally do anything he wants with very little consequence (he has a secret identity and superpowers with which to evade any sort of social or institutional repercussions) and yet chooses to do good *purely because it is good*. Spider-Man is our conceptual model for power used

properly. The unshakeable integrity of Spider-Man contrasts with the real-life newsworthy faces of high-profile scandal and embezzlement, the powerful figures that seemingly inevitably abuse their power. We click our tongues and shake our heads at the headlines, repeating another cliché property of power: absolute power corrupts absolutely. It seems true. What else could explain the correlation between the power a person holds and the odds of having skeletons in their closet? I posit that power does not corrupt absolutely. It merely grants the agency to act on what is already an absolutely corrupt human will. With greater power, we are accountable to no one, and the depths of our desires can finally be realized. Indeed, there are no deterrent guardrails keeping the powerful from committing offenses, only reactionary punishments when they do. Where the average person does not even have the position to embezzle millions of dollars, the powerful CEO does, and so their profile of potential offense is far more expansive.

This is the dynamic of a post-feminist, pre-total-equality cultural landscape. Men still hold more cultural power than women, but they are guarded by vigilant accountability channels, ready to catch them in any abuses of their power. For malicious men this system works well, administering proportional consequence for blatant and intentional abuses of their power. For a well-meaning man, however, the power of a patriarch becomes like an unwanted firearm. Because he has never carried a gun before, he is a total beginner at gun care and gun safety, and he has

no definitive model for how to use it the way it was designed to be used—to protect and empower the less powerful. With no intention of abuse, he carries it gingerly everywhere he goes, taking special care to try not to set it off and hurt someone. The people around him are terrified of being shot, and he is just as mortified at the prospect of shooting them.

In this cultural moment, we have corrected and continue to correct the abuses of patriarchal power that proliferated for so long without a system of accountability, but the new paradigm has not existed long enough to produce bona fide role models in contemporary pop culture.

Gen Z men are growing up constantly bombarded with examples of what not to do with their cultural privilege, without a definitive and practical example of what post-feminist masculinity *should* look like. This means that the contemporary model of a man must be developed through trial and error, a terrifying proposition for a beginner holding a gun with a head full of pictures of the atrocities it can cause.

These men have divided into three camps in response to this situation that can be analogous to the responses of the servants in Matthew 25:14-30. Three servants are entrusted with money while their master is away. The first camp is not even mentioned by Jesus because of the blatant immorality

of their actions. This camp steals the money and uses it for their own benefit, disregarding the responsibility that came with the money that was entrusted to them. These men embrace the power of their masculinity, but wield it self-servingly, without care for those it harms. For these men, it is too difficult to be a good man, so rejecting the newly established channels of accountability and proudly returning to self-serving misogyny is the logical course of action. This is a rejection of accountability and embrace of power.

The next servant buries his money. The men in this camp shy away from traditional expressions of their masculinity and gravitate towards expression that signals that they are not dangerous. They successfully mitigate any unintentional harm, but reject the gifts of strength, protection, and leadership endowed to them. In doing this, they avoid causing harm with their power

but steward it poorly because they are afraid of causing harm. This is a fear of accountability and subsequent rejection of power.

The third servant turns the five talents entrusted to him into ten talents.

These men recognize that they cannot possibly navigate masculinity from adolescence to death without mistake.

They recognize both the consequences of their mistakes in this endeavor and the necessity that the endeavor continues to be undertaken. Most importantly, they recognize their moral inadequacy, and their inability to succeed on their own. And so, they fall at the knees of the only man to be sinless. The only man to have all power, and therefore every opportunity to sin, and yet remain blameless. Giving up control to Jesus

is the only way that these men can execute the office of the power entrusted to them, and when they do, they are gradually shaped into men after God's heart. Because of the Spirit of the only perfect man, they can be strong and tender, courageous and meek, forgiving and just.

The current masculine revival may find its roots in cultural developments borne out of injustice and deep injury, but has been transformed into a breathtaking display of God's ability to guide his children through the face of the certain failure they would face on their own. The same circumstances that have driven men to misogyny and shirked responsibility has led others to the loving arms of the Father and the vibrant eternal joy of His Kingdom.

True Worship in the Midst of Traditions and Trends

Audrey Hughes

Consider what worship services in the early church must have been like: dirt floors, stone walls, handcrafted stringed instruments, and humble hearts lifted towards God. Such services in the ancient church bore a beauty and simplicity that fostered an environment wholly fixated on Christ. Yet churches have slowly evolved, specifically in the way worship services are structured. What began in humble rooms of Hebrew homes, now inhabits massive sanctuaries with large bands and flashing lights. When comparing modern worship services to those of the early church, one can't help but wonder if certain trends in contemporary worship have turned church services into a production; a time of manufactured emotional experiences, rather than a time of turning our eyes back to Jesus and glorying in who He is. It seems C.S. Lewis had a similar concern. In his work, *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis says, "It looks as if [Anglican clergymen] believe people can be lured to go to church by incessant brightenings, lightnings, lengthenings, abridgements, simplifications and complications of the service."¹ Lewis seems to condemn the distractions of these kinds of services. This provokes the question, what is God's desire for times of worship in our church services?

Though Scripture does not have a flawless "how to" guide when it comes to worship services in the context of meeting together in the local church, it does have a few things to say. We learn from Scripture that we ought to worship

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (Project Gutenberg Canada, 2004), <https://www.gutenberg.ca/ebooks/lewiscs-letterstomalcolm/lewiscs-letterstomalcolm-00-h.html>.

God; we ought to worship Him together; we ought to worship “in Spirit and truth.”² But perhaps the best way to understand the ways God desires for us to praise Him is to examine the ways praise is discussed in the Psalms, as this book overflows with songs of praise and adoration. The Psalmist uses many different Hebrew words for the English “praise” or “to praise,” each with a slightly different English translation. Each translation of the word exhibits different aspects of a multi-faceted concept. We will examine seven of these words used throughout the Psalms. Understanding each of their nuanced definitions will help us to see what it looks like to worship in Spirit and truth. Perhaps if we can begin to understand God’s vision for what praise is, it will help us to further understand what He desires for our church services.

The first word used for praise is *halal*, which literally means “to praise, to boast, to shine, to celebrate, to glory,” and it is the root of the word ‘hallelujah.’³ The second word for praise is *yadah*, which demonstrates the physical response that praise entails. It is not just singing praises to God but literally throwing up your hands to worship Him. Strong’s Lexicon says, “the act of *yadah* was not merely verbal but often involved physical expressions, such as lifting hands or bowing, symbolizing submission and reverence to God.”⁴ The next word, *todah*, is similar to *yadah*, but a bit more specific. It means “an extension of the hand,” especially in the context of thanksgiving.⁵ The fourth word, *shabach*, has to do with volume of worship. *Shabach* “conveys a sense of exuberant and vocal praise, often associated with public worship and declarations of God’s greatness and mighty works.”⁶ The fifth term, *barak*, also entails a physical response, but instead of having to do with lifting arms and hands, it entails a kneeling posture. Strong’s Lexicon says, “the act of kneeling, associated with *barak*, was a physical expression of submission, humility, and reverence, often

performed during prayer or worship.”⁷ The 6th word, *zamar*, “encompasses the act of playing musical instruments and vocal singing,” especially in Israelite worship services.⁸ Finally, we have the word *tehillah* which “primarily refers to a form of praise or a song of praise directed towards God.”⁹

We learn from these words what is good and true about worship. It is good to praise the Lord (*halal*). It is good to have a physical response when praising him, whether by lifting hands (*yadah*, *todah*), or by kneeling in submission (*barak*). It is good to praise him loudly and jubilantly (*shabach*). It is good to praise with musical instruments and singing (*zamar*), and it is good to praise alongside established hymns and songs of worship (*tehillah*). These seven words demonstrate what is fundamentally important in a God-glorifying worship service. That is not to say that all of the other things such as the song choice, the size of the band, and the special effects are always bad, but they can easily become dangerous distractions. Lewis says, “The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God. But every novelty prevents this. It fixes our attention on the service itself; and thinking about worship is a different thing from worshipping.”¹⁰ Every service will have these distractions in some form or fashion. But the goal should be to structure our church services in such a way that our eyes are directed towards and transfixed on Jesus’ face. Perhaps the best way to do this is to imitate what the Kingdom of Heaven will be like. At the end of Revelations, John describes the Kingdom of Heaven as a place where “no longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.”¹¹ It will be bright, it will be glorious, it will be joyful. It will be us, face to face with Jesus, worshipping Him. It will not be about the kind of emotional experience we have, but about Him and our relation to Him. The local church bears a special place in this strange waiting period between

2 Psalm 150, Hebrews 10:25, John 4:23, ESV
3 James Strong, *Strong’s Lexicon*, Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1984.htm>.
4 Strong, *Strong’s Lexicon*, 3034, “*yadah*,” <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3034.htm>.
5 James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, Biblehub, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3034.htm>.
6 Strong, *Strong’s Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3034.htm>.

7 Strong, *Strong’s Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3034.htm>.
8 Strong, *Strong’s Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3034.htm>.
9 Strong, *Strong’s Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3034.htm>.
10 Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*.
11 Revelation 22: 3-4, ESV.

Jesus' First Advent and His Second Coming. As we linger here in a time that can often feel bizarre, exhausting, and painfully mundane, churches ought to emulate the kind of undivided and glorious worship that we foresee coming to fruition upon Jesus' return.

Finally, it needs to be said that it is natural for us to have our preferences. But above all else, we ought to seek unity with one another and imitation of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is far too easy to fall into criticism of a certain type of church service. Rather than this, let us seek to worship in unity and to imitate the Kingdom of Heaven in the way we worship and the way we structure our services. With that in mind, I offer no objectively right or wrong kind of worship service, but rather, elements to look for or to avoid. Consider if the service fosters the kind of praise demonstrated by our seven Hebrew words. Consider if it imitates what Scripture says the Kingdom of Heaven will be like. Consider if it pushes your gaze away from yourself, away from this world, and towards Jesus' radiant face.



Analise Pickerrell, 2025, *A house without time*, oil on canvas.

On Catholic Social Teaching

Isaiah Pyle

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is a set of Biblically-based guidelines on how Christians are called to participate in society. It originated in 1891 when Pope Leo XIII published *Rerum Novarum*, an open letter advocating for a significant change in the exploitative treatment of the working class at the time. The letter first compares and contrasts the flaws of socialism to those of “unchecked competition” in the form of unregulated Capitalism, and then it advocates for a reasonable middle ground. It claims that the ability to hold private property is a fundamental and Biblically-supported human right, but that society must also provide public aid to those who find themselves facing hardships, economic or otherwise, that they likely will not be able to overcome on their own. Among other things, it makes the case that it is the duty of society to both provide a space for individuals and families to exercise independence and to provide aid to and care for those who cannot do so for themselves.

Pope John XXIII proceeded to expand upon some of the concepts explored in *Rerum Novarum* in *Mater et Magistra*, including the central theme of giving aid to those without privilege while also putting emphasis on preserving and respecting the cultures of the societies being aided in cases of international efforts. Advocacy for human rights, social justice, and global unity is stated to be a definitive and crucial part of being a Christian. *Mater et Magistra* drew heavily from *Rerum Novarum*, which it referred to as “a complete synthesis of social principles, formulated with such historical insight as to be of permanent value to Christendom.”¹ Over time, the principles were narrowed down into seven themes that were widely accepted as the core tenets of teachings:

1. Life and dignity of the human person
2. Call to family, community, and participation
3. Rights and responsibilities
4. Option for the poor and vulnerable
5. The dignity of work and the rights of workers
6. Solidarity
7. Care for God’s Creation

As stated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the first theme revolves around the fact that “human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society” and threatening a life in any way goes against this principle. This extends beyond the baseline of murder to any action on an individual or corporate level that negatively impacts a person’s life. The reasoning for this is that “the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human life.”² Failure to carry out the proper treatment of others inevitably leads to inequality and injustice.

This is one of the supportive materials for the arguments against unchecked capitalism, as harsh and degrading working conditions such as those endured during the Industrial Revolution were directly criticized by Pope Leo XIII. According to this argument, a corporation and those involved in it are morally responsible for holding life and dignity in contempt if they do not actively enhance them in some way, and the intentional refusal to ignore the sacred status of those made in the image of God is a sin.

1 Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, Article 15 (1961), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html

2 Dennis M. Schnurr, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

In addition to creating environments that encourage growth and respect individual dignity, Catholic Social Teaching argues that to be fulfilled and fully active within society one must acknowledge the call to be an involved member of community and family. Countless Bible passages assert the importance of being a part of a local community; for example, there's Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, which reads, "Two are better than one, / because they have a good return for their labor: / if either of them falls down, / one can help the other up... Though one may be overpowered, / two can defend themselves."³ This backs up the third theme, which makes the case that all people "have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable," indicating that holding community for others is good for both the individual and those they interact with.⁴

The first three themes create a striking contrast when compared to contemporary Christian culture. As American Christianity has become more blended with political and social identity over time, it has become neglectfully individualistic. It has drifted away from the community-focused, social-justice-minded Christianity lived out in the New Testament. Too often, we have believed the message that because our faith is between us and God, we do not owe it to ourselves, God, or anyone else to devote ourselves to the improvement of society. We have viewed social justice as a good thing, but not one that we are necessarily called to, and as a result we have left much undone that should be done. We have been content to live in our cultural bubble, to accumulate wealth, and to look upon the sorrows of others with unmotivated pity. We offer thoughts and prayers, but God did not only create us with a mind with which to think and a mouth with which to pray; he gave us hands with which to act, reach out, build up, and protect.

What does this look like on a practical level? The answer can be found in the next theme of Catholic Social Teaching: option for the poor and vulnerable. The Conference of Catholic Bishops states that "Catholic teaching proclaims

that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring."⁵ A society cannot be judged by the successes of the upper class; the only true indicator is the living conditions of the working class. As a result, all members of society face an obligation to provide aid for vulnerable populations through means ranging from investing in charity to supporting social welfare programs for the homeless, single parents, people experiencing poverty, refugees, immigrants, and all others who face "exceeding distress... without any prospect of extricating [themselves]."⁶ Giving to charity can be done financially, but it could also be done by actively volunteering and engaging in missions or outreach programs. Join a nonprofit organization. Donate. Build homes for the homeless with Mobile Loaves and Fishes in Austin. Help refugee families adjust to life in America with Houston Welcomes Refugees. Research volunteer opportunities in your area; no matter where you are, there are always ways to get involved. As long as a genuine effort to provide meaningful aid to those who need it is reflected in intentional action, this element of social investment can be fulfilled.

Devoting our time, energy, and resources to the improvement of society is not an optional element of the Christian faith. Jesus, who we are all called to imitate, got his hands dirty to help others; he washed his disciples' feet and laid his hands on the sick. Jesus states in no uncertain terms that our faith is reflected in how we treat others, declaring in Matthew 25:40 that "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."⁷

Regardless of what denomination of Christianity we hold to, Catholic Social Teaching provides Scripture-based guidelines for how we are called to live and interact with society in a way that accurately reflects the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Contemporary Christian culture must recognize these principles as essential to the faith and act on them, armed with the knowledge that we are doing it for the Lord.

3 Holy Bible, New International Version.

4 Schnurr, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*.

5 Schnurr, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*.

6 Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, Articles 3 and 14, (1891), https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

7 Holy Bible, New International Version.

That I Would Know Him

Jessica Jang

I have been embraced by God
With soft sweet arms
And fiercely tender, open hands.

Mom's fingers, not often manicured, Hold
tight to soothe innocence and fear, Heavy and
secure.

Dad's hands, daily clasped white
knuckled, chapped and red.
Enveloped in praying,
Typing
Dish-washing
Blowing drying hair
Tickling

I have heard God's glory
Waking to large blithe hymns on Saturday mornings. Dulcet keys
playing and bowls of steaming oatmeal A fragrant
offering,
Music, her chorus of rest, And
cooking, his verse of praise.

I have been taught truth from God,
Out of narrow bedroom hallways, in the glow of night lights. In her patient
words outside my slammed, sticker-covered door, Her refrain:
“I love you”
In anticipated bedtime stories and pretty pictures of a parted sea:
“Daddy, who’s Moses?”

These strongholds of affection so that I would come to know
The taste of both honeyed oats and tears
And the yearning of a victorious “The End” I could not yet read.
Even in my greenness,
Threads of assurance began their
Weaving through my instinctive worship,
For “*Jesus loves me, this I know.*”

That I would one day, too, have calloused hands and
Fingers, not often manicured,
To hold onto little ones,
The “*little ones to Him belong.*”

Creative in the Image of God

Lydia Demlow

Humans are creative. We paint, weave, sing, and invent, among a litany of other processes. The process of making something out of an idea, transforming abstract inspiration into reality is deeply fulfilling and integral to our status as image-bearers. Our creations can show care—a knitted blanket recalling the love of the mother who made it; our creations can be practical—clothes and houses to keep us safe and warm; or, they can be expressive—a child’s artwork that speaks not only to our minds but to our hearts. We imitate the breadth of the creative nature of our own Creator.

In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth; later, He created us in his image. As the Old Testament progresses, we see God as Creator again and again. We see God show care for his people, from David to Hannah. During the Exodus from Egypt, God sends down manna to sustain His people, providing for their practical needs. After the great flood, God places a rainbow in the sky as an expression of his promise, a symbol that speaks to both our minds and hearts. In these cases the reason, the process, and the product are all good and reflective of God’s nature.

By nature, we create. However, by nature, we are also sinful. We see this sin in how we consider our creations and the process of making them. From impatience, wanting to finish a boring project quickly; to fear and anxiety that our ideas or execution are lacking; to pride, considering the work of our hands as better than others’ or rejecting the need for improvement, our creations reflect our sinful nature. Again, we see the narrative of our sinful creations from the beginning of the Biblical narrative. When humanity built the Tower of Babel, it was a representation of our pridefulness. Although the bricks that built the tower were not inherently sinful, the intention behind this creation was antithetical to God’s sovereignty, as we sought to “make a name for ourselves” to uplift ourselves to the same status as God (Genesis 1:4). We can also see this sin in our creation themselves—we turn care into disregard, seeking the next product with no concern for the environment or means of production; we turn practicality into deadly utility, creating weapons of mass destruction, and we turn expressions of beauty and community into prideful endeavors for personal validation.

The process of creation is just as important as the finished product. Like all things, the creative process can be a source of worship and sanctification, a counterbalance to the brokenness we sometimes create by our very nature. If we view our creativity as a facet of our status as image-bearers, then we can better reflect the creative nature of God through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. According to Galatians 5, acts undertaken with the power of the Spirit bear specific spiritual fruit. With prayer and intentionality, we can sow the seeds of the Fruit of the Spirit in even our most mundane acts of creation. Projects of utility become gifts of creative kindness—a mother’s prayers stirred into a hot meal. Projects of expression reflect our joy in creation—a painting displayed not because of its physical beauty but because of the feelings it evokes in its creator. Projects of care show the selflessness in creation—the time and effort invested when we create for another person without the expectation of payment.



Joshua Chung, Study of Michaelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, 2025, graphite on Kraft paper, 30 x 63 in.
Joshua intended this piece as a testament to expression as an antidote to twenty-first century consumerism.

Similarly, our works can reflect the original Creation—the beauty of the earth reflected in paintings, songs, and writing as a response to God's wonders and a means to share that wonder with others. Again, we see this throughout the Bible and the history of the church. From the Psalms that expound on the intricacy and care of God's creation, to classic hymns like "This is my Father's World," to writers like C.S. Lewis illustrating God's goodness through stories like *The Chronicles of Narnia*, we see humans using creativity as worship for millennia.

Thomas Aquinas explains the necessity of God for goodness in human creation; "because good is convertible with being, as one is also; he called God the absolute good, from whom all things are called good by way of participation."¹ As created beings, we receive our goodness from God; we receive this goodness by actively participating in our ongoing spiritual sanctification, seeking to reflect God's goodness in our action and intentions. By extension, the things we create are only good through participation; if we depend on our efforts, either the product or the process will be flawed. Through divine dependence, we can sanctify our efforts and creations, offering them up to God as worship. Through prayer, we can invite the Holy Spirit into our creativity as a means to better our creations. Through His goodness, we can use art to imitate the breadth and wonder of His creation to demonstrate the wonder and awe it inspires.

Humans have a heritage of creativity, as we are made in the image of the Creator. Our society tells us that what we create is only good if it is worthy of money, praise, or use. God answers with the Spirit, giving us a way to sanctify our creativity as a means of worship and to fulfill our status as creative image-bearers.

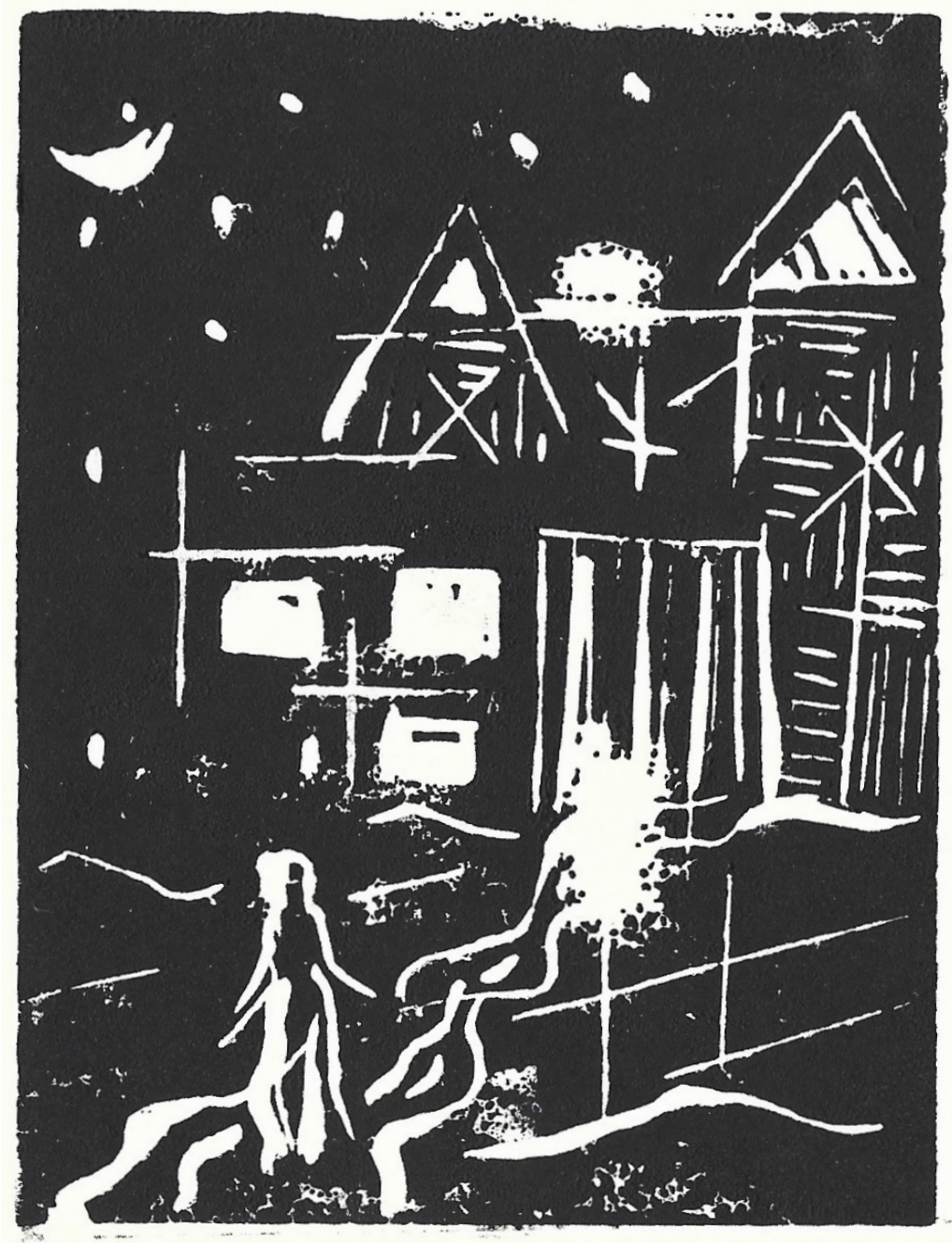
1 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.VI.4, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New Advent, 1920), www.newadvent.org/summa/1006.htm.

Ezekiel 47

*This contributor has chosen
to remain anonymous.*

I.

Commence blindness, invisibility,
A woman fleeing the temple in search
Of a sea in which to drown in.
Arbitrarily the feet cry, “Eastward!”
The Sun not yet risen compels her so.
Soles strike against something unstriable—
A stream of one weary thousand cubits.
Frustration climbs unbidden to her throat,
And the body tugs itself onward, tripping,
That it may collapse in darker waters.



Anonymous contributor, *Wherever the River Goes I*, 2025, linoleum print, ink on paper.



Anonymous contributor, *Wherever the River Goes II*, 2025, linoleum print, ink on paper.

II.

A thousand cubits crossed, and change conquers
The stream, now knee-deep and encompassed by
That which felled Eve. The half-sun reveals fruit trees
With golden faces turning on thin stems.
Reflected in their suspended delicacy,
She accepts her state on the grass-ridden bank,
Makes a treaty with the disappearing darkness,
Promises to enjoy the soft light a while longer
Instead of seeking - well, she can't recall.
Among gilded trees, she wanders a thousand cubits more.

III.

Water begins to rush, then roar with pride.
She takes fruit for the journey, plunges,
Giggles as her feet are swept from grounding reason.
Bobbing along, grandiose velocity
Numbs her body to the cold, rocks, and teeth.
Her mouth devours golden fruit endlessly
Because the stomach is invincible,
And the full celestial sphere adores her
Uncontrollable and ceaseless grinning.



Anonymous contributor, *Wherever the River Goes III*, 2025, linoleum print, ink on paper.



Anonymous contributor, *Wherever the River Goes IV*, 2025, linoleum print, ink on paper.

IV.

A downward rush hushes her round-cheeked laugh,
And her stomach senses mortality as
She, a thing, moves impossibly downward,
Deposited by the fall Into the Dead Sea.
The tongue tastes blood and salt.
Wounds now sensed and seen burn,
Yet her mind feels only the need for rest.
The choice: Permanent, or that of transitory smiles and terrors?
She opts for the first, dives and strains
Only to unwillingly surface again and again.
To float.
This is what it leads to.
Follow the feet, the water, the smell of salt,
And find not a deep finality or Carpenter's boat,
But a basin of unsinkability.

The Sun now hides its gentle face behind a cloud,
And she sets herself to wounds cleansed, but not yet healing.



Madelyn Hajovsky, 2024, *Sunlight*, film photograph, shot on Olympus OM-1, 35mm

Anchor

Mollie Walters

Margot was gone for two years before she found me at the lagoon. At the deepest point, its sandy foundation bore two fathoms of water, and beyond the reef, the ocean carried thousands, traversable by my family's catboat. For now, I stayed on shore, not wanting another lecture from my eldest sister, Dylan, about the dangers of the riptides. With my Polaroid camera, I snapped a photo of the bullheaded sunset, which glared on the water's surface.

"I knew I'd find you here."

I jumped and turned toward the voice, which belonged to a woman surrounded by swaying horseradish.

"Never change, Fish," she insisted. Her face was bare without make-up and an undercut had usurped her golden curls. Only because of my nickname and Dylan's denim jacket did I recognize my sister, Margot.

I was stunned. As my picture began to print, I stared at her and the jacket, which was ratty from overuse. When I was three years old, Mom and Dad passed away, so, unlike my sisters, I remember almost nothing about them. For me,

our family had only ever been just Dylan, Margot, and me—at least until Margot got a scholarship to Juilliard.

When she did, hardly anyone was shocked, and least of all me. Even before she was a ballerina, I saw Margot as the marbled Aphrodite. Margot's stone-faced beauty belonged in the Louvre. Margot's hard-won excellence never waned. Margot's star-struck ambition guaranteed victory.

I thought that Margot never visited, wrote, or called because she condescended to the lighthouse, Dylan, and me. The shell of my consciousness had long since shrunk to accommodate her absence. She became but a headstone, carved with an unsolvable riddle. But now that she stood in front of me, alive and transformed, my progress relapsed. I was eleven-years-old again and silenced by Margot's power.

Suddenly Margot collapsed, and my reflective paralysis broke. She was a chopped lizard's tail, writhing. Terrified, I ran to her and screamed for help. Atop the weedy knoll, the door of our family's lighthouse burst open. Two braids ribboning, Dylan sprinted to us, turned Margot on her side, and ripped off the jacket. The bowling ball in my stomach swelled and swelled until, after minutes that felt like centuries, Margot came to.

Dylan hauled Margot to her feet. "I'm taking her to the hospital."

She dragged Margot to the truck and I followed. With methodical precision, Dylan pushed our sister's body, which was pale and limp as a corpse, into the passenger seat.

Before getting in, the impulse to run back to the shore to retrieve Dylan's jacket overcame me. By the time I returned to the driveway, the tail lights had already dimmed. I swallowed my frustration and I looked over my possessions: my Polaroid camera, check; Dylan's jacket, check; and Margot's lighter, check—this last I flicked open.

Three years ago, when I was eleven and she was seventeen, Margot had reached into her pocket and pulled out

a clunky, white toothpick. "Check it out." After burning its edge, she sucked on it.

I frowned. "Where'd you get that?"

She shrugged. "Coach Brosch. She says it keeps you skinny." In those days, Margot talked exclusively about her dance coach and skinniness.

In a fixed arch, Margot tossed the lighter to me. I caught it.

"This is our secret," she told me and ruffled my hair. "If I see you showing off that flame, I'll hunt you down."

To keep Margot satisfied, I zipped my mouth shut, but visions of what secrets like these could lead to—Margot shamed, hurt, or dead—began to haunt me. I imagined strangers trying to help too late. Because I could've saved her from the beginning and didn't, for every nightmare, I was to blame.

While I waited for Dylan and Margot to return, I sat in Margot's old bedroom on Margot's old bed. After searching the pockets of Dylan's jacket, I found some cherry sours, a wallet, and Polaroid pictures of aquatic animals, the lagoon, and Dylan. For all of them, I was the photographer, except for one, which depicted me by a beachside campfire.

I picked it up. The image sparked no memory for me, but I guessed it must've been important. Otherwise, Margot wouldn't have kept it. Strange, I thought; it felt heavier than the others, so I flipped it over. Taped to the back was a baggie of white pills.

My hands turned sweaty. The room began to wobble. This is our secret, Margot had said. After shoving everything back in the pockets, I fled up the staircase to the lighthouse's lamp. The wind spat off the sea. Those pills were just Tylenol, I told myself, or calcium supplements. Resting on the horizon, the dot of Bucky Island—the sight of which almost never failed in comforting me—failed. I descended to my room and combed through my National

Geographics, willing myself to forget what I saw, but the pills demanded judgment.

Finally, with Dylan's jacket and all its contents, I raced to the lagoon. In a fixed arch, I threw everything into the water. It bobbed up and down before drowning.

I stayed there, sitting amongst the horseradish, for hours. The sea lapped at my ankles until every glimmer of the once stubborn sunset was lost. When the moon lifted, I understood that my family either hadn't come back or wasn't looking for me.

When I eventually returned to the lighthouse, I heard music. Peeking through the screened window, I saw food, drink, and bodies romping about. I recognized several faces: Margot's friends from either high school or church. The floods of my anger rose. They were blind to the truth I knew, fooled by Margot's faux perfection.

As the hubbub dragged on, I sat on the porch, stared at the stars, and felt small.

Half an hour later, Dylan sat beside me. "Where have you been?"

"I did homework at the library," I lied.

When she hugged me, I smelled cinnamon and antiseptic. She exhaled. "I'm so sorry, Fish. I planned on calling, but everything happened so fast."

Dylan explained that Margot had had a seizure, caused by overdose. A year and a half ago, a classmate offered Margot prescription medication to soothe muscle soreness. This led to her addiction to Vicodin, and that led to Margot failing out of Juilliard. Ashamed and without recourse, Margot had returned home.

I shook my head and scooted away. "It isn't fair," I mumbled. "I always do everything you tell me to. But when Margot freaks out, she gets a party."

Dylan laughed and pulled me back. "Yes, because Margot's alive and home." Her hand cupped and turned my face. "Come inside and celebrate with us."

I said nothing.

Dylan's lips pursed. "You'll understand one day." Then, Dylan ruffled my hair and went inside.

After the guests left, I crept into my bedroom and slept. At the break of dawn, as Dylan and I made avocado toast and scrambled eggs—enough for three, just like before Margot left—I wondered if Margot had vanished again.

Dylan sensed my thoughts. "The doctors said Margot needs rest."

I nodded. By evening, a storm began to plunder the sky and waves. As Dylan crocheted and I read, Margot stomped downstairs — finally out of the grave.

Margot's hands were fists. "Where's Dylan's denim jacket?"

I flipped a page. Margot turned on me.

"Rosemary, you had it last."

That roused my irritation. "Not my name."

"Give it back." From my hands, she took my book and launched it.

Dylan stood up. "Margot."

Because she abandoned me, Margot had revoked her rights to my secret-keeping. I met her gaze. "In one of the pockets, I found a bag of pills. So I threw everything in the ocean."

Margot seized my shoulders. Her nails drilled deep. "You what?"

I pushed her away—hard. Against every expectation, the graceful Margot stumbled and fell. On the ground, her

lovely features contorted with ugly rage.
“You little...”

When Margot stood and lunged for my throat, I surged forward like the tide, but Dylan got between us.

“Stop it, both of you!”

Dylan reached out to Margot, either to restrain or embrace; I didn’t know, but Margot reeled back. She trembled. “She’s lying. I’m better now.”

I was trembling, too, and shouting. “It’s true, and it’s gone and never coming back.” I couldn’t stop myself. “You should go, too, because no one here wants you.”

For a moment, everything was still. Then Margot’s tears poured over, and she fled upstairs. Without hesitation, Dylan followed her.

When I was alone again, that ancient bottle of resentment within me fell off the shelf and broke. Regret took its place. To this day, that was the one time I ever saw Margot cry.

The storm cackled, taunting me. I grabbed my raincoat off the hook. I rounded the lighthouse and dashed to the lagoon. Because if Margot knew dance, I knew the ocean, and if Dylan’s jacket could force Margot to forgive me, I would find it.

As I barged around, sand erupted and fish leapt away from me, but the jacket was nowhere to be found. But I never was so easily deterred. After throwing the tarp off the catboat, I dragged it to the shore and pushed off.

Waves tossed the hull. I hoisted the sails. Wiping rainwater from my eyes, I adjusted the heading. Then the catboat was running, splitting the ocean in half. After rifling through our supplies, I retrieved a spotlight. Over and over, its beam swung out across the ocean’s surface. But searching and searching rendered no treasure, only emptiness.

A riptide yanked the bow. I was no ballerina. I lost my balance. For a second, my fingers clung to the deck’s rim. Then a wave shoved me underwater. At first, I felt only shock. My helpless body twisted as grit and foam streamed past. Then, fear set in and my limbs flayed, trying to swim. The pressure mounted in my ears.

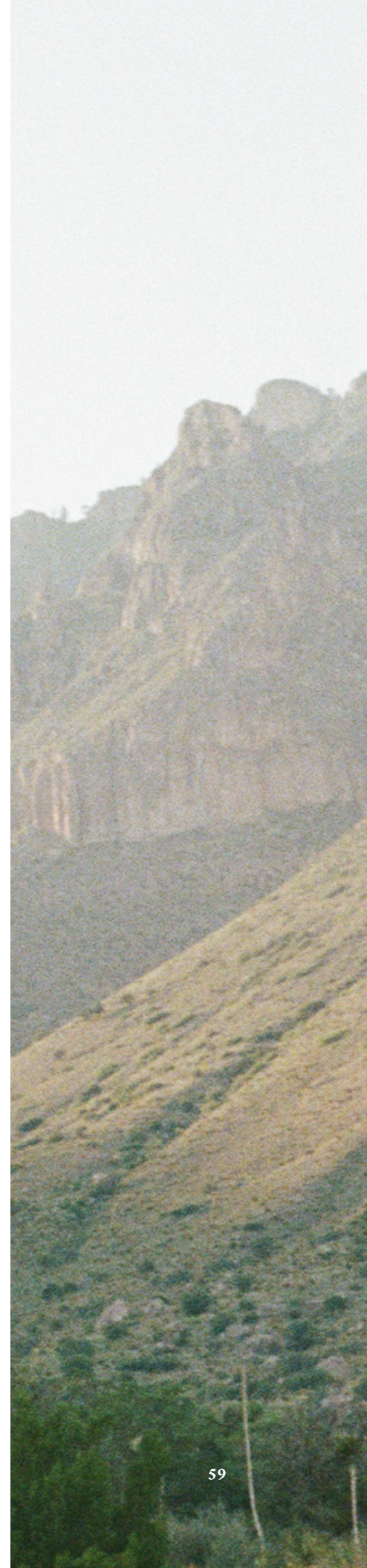
The catboat hit me.

I gasped. Underneath the blazing sun, I was splayed on rocks. As I tried to get up, my body imploded with agony. My skin was torn and bruised—ribs probably broken.

Somewhere within me, I heard Dylan say, “Come on, Fish. What do you see?”

Gritting my teeth as the blood roared in my ears, I managed to stand. I surveyed my surroundings: black granite, skeletal scrubs, and twenty or so oaks. This was Bucky Island, I guessed. The uninhabited mound had barely the circumference of our high school’s gym. A million summers ago, Dylan, Margot, and I picnicked here.

I checked my pockets. Upon feeling Margot’s lighter, I laughed out loud. It was



the loyal Mjölnir to my mighty Thor. Holding my weapon and aching torso, I stumbled over the terrain. Whatever I could find—twigs, leaves, a sock—I gathered into a pile on the shoreline. With Margot’s lighter, I ignited the fire.

I repeated the regime. Fires need heat, oxygen, and fuel. My pain was beyond endurance, but when the fire required more fuel, I endured. As lifetimes passed, I wondered if Margot and Dylan were ever coming. I selected a hefty log and began to pull. When it snapped, I tripped and fell. Against my lips, the ground tasted sweet. I found that I couldn’t get up anymore. So, I stayed there and fell asleep, wondering if anyone even noticed my absence.

When I awoke, a barefaced angel floated above. I blinked. “Are you real?”

As the angel knelt by my side, peace itself did, too. “I’m here.” She pulled me into an embrace.

I sniffled and tried to get away. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize, Fish.” Inexplicably, she turned her face toward the beach and screamed for help. I didn’t know who she was calling or why. After all, nothing hurt anymore. She smiled weakly. “I am only grateful. You brought me home.”

Clarity overwhelmed me. Every wonder aligned. Margot wasn’t a statue or an angel, but first and foremost, she was my sister and, always and forever, I was her anchor.

“If I...” I trailed off.

Margot’s voice quivered. “Keep holding on.”

There was no more fear, only love, stretching out to infinity. “Tell Dylan that I understand.”



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Isaac Basil

If he is not on the 6th floor of the Butler School of Music struggling to play Ravel, there's a good chance you'd find Isaac in one of the following places: Elizabeth Street Cafe, Emma Long Metropolitan Park, or at one of Austin's many dancehalls—at which he is simply avoiding practicing. Isaac appreciates the interdisciplinary nature of *Terrain* and looks forward to seeing the journal grow in coming years.

Braxton Bullock

Braxton is a second-year Government and Philosophy major from Lufkin, Texas. He is an editor for the *Texas Undergraduate Law Journal* and is an intern in the Texas Senate. Braxton enjoys reading books, watching classical movies, and being with friends. After undergraduate, he plans to attend law school.

Lance Cartwright

Lance is a second-year Turing Scholar from the Woodlands, Texas, studying Computer Science and Mathematics. He is interested in mathematical logic, programming languages, and linguistics. Apart from *Terrain*, Lance is a co-chair for Ignite Texas and an incoming resident at Hill House, where he can be found perfecting his celebrity impersonations and talking about his coursework (as opposed to actually completing it). Lance also enjoys painting, cooking, and playing piano and guitar.

Debbie Chu

Deborah is a second-year Plan II and Government major from the Woodlands, Texas. Besides *Terrain*, she is in the Jefferson Scholars Program, pursuing a Business and Public Policy minor, and involved in Student Government, Senate of College Councils, and Ignite. In her free time, she loves hiking, playing cello and piano, singing, laughing with friends, taking personality tests, exploring her vivid Korean and Chinese family history, and fighting for her life in Korean class.

Joshua Chung

Joshua is a freshman at McCombs studying Business, Civics, and Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. He loves to write and think about virtue, ethics, and reformed Protestant theology. When not deep in spreadsheets or reading, he's running his soap business, Higher Bar Soap Company.

Avery Crowley

Avery is a freshman Business major from The Woodlands, Texas. She is currently pursuing an additional major in Civics and is interested in the intersection of religion and politics. Beyond the classroom, she is involved in *Terrain*, Hill House, Ignite, and Providence Church. Avery enjoys reading, running, and watching the news in her free time, she is particularly fascinated by the French Revolution, and she would love to learn to play an instrument someday. As of right now, Avery wants to pursue a career in classical Christian education or law.

Lydia Demlow

Lydia is a second-year Liberal Arts Honors student from College Station majoring in International Relations, with certificates in political philosophy and statistical modelling. When she's not in class, she can be found lifeguarding at Barton Springs pool or planning her next escapade (past ones include 10 months in France, a semester on the rowing team, and taking Arabic as an elective). Some of her other passions include the color pink, crochet, and doodling. Outside of *Terrain*, she is involved with the weekly happenings at Hill House and with Model UN.

Tyree Ford

Tyree Ford is a second-year Government major from Cibolo, Texas, with aspirations in corporate and personal injury law. In addition to his work as the web designer for the *Terrain* Journal, he is an avid student pilot and day trader. In his free time, he enjoys playing golf, reading, running, and creating lasting memories with friends, always seeking new challenges on the ground and in the air.

Madelyn Hajovsky

Maddie is a third-year studying English, Linguistics, and poetry. She likes houseplants and music. She dislikes crowds above six people. During her time in college, she's been involved with Hill House Christian Study Center, worked as an editorial intern, received accolades as a barista, and done pedagogical research for indigenous languages of the Amazon.

Audrey Hughes

Audrey is a first-year English major from Houston, Texas, who really has no idea what she would like to do when she grows up, but hopes it involves learning about and loving people. Along with *Terrain*, Audrey is on prayer team for Ignite Texas Ministries and is involved in her church, The Austin Stone. In her free time, she can be found running at Town Lake, going on adventures around Austin, or chatting with her friends at a coffee shop. Audrey's goals include serving in Uganda someday, living in Europe, and learning Portuguese.

Jessica Jang

Jessica is a second-year Public Health major from Allen, TX who wants to be a Physician Assistant when she grows up. In Austin, she spends her time outside class serving with Ignite Texas ministries as a Co-chair, volunteering at the local hospital, planning and attending Longhorn IJM meetings, and attempting to “do life” with the people around her. Dinners at Hill House and swims in bodies of water are her happy places. One day, she wishes to enjoy running, be a better musician and poet, and serve the Lord overseas in whatever capacity He’ll use her.

Zachary Lacy

Zach is a second year from DFW studying political philosophy and classical languages. Zach can be found at most hours of the day deep in a book, but spends his free time in many Christian ministries and communities on campus, along with various political institutes and think tanks. He is a lover of literature, philosophy, nature, theology, and music. He hopes to pursue a career in higher education and writing, but above all wants to serve God through his family and loved ones.

McKay Lawless

McKay is a second-year Plan II Honors and Government major from Houston, Texas. She enjoys small birds and anything with more than three colors. Being spontaneous, swimming in fresh water, and discovering new music are some of her favorite things to do. Along with *Terrain*, McKay is involved in Ignite Texas, the Plan II Student Association, and volunteers at Kipp Public Schools.

Ava Malcolm

A devoted Austinite, Ava is a Neuroscience and Spanish major in her sophomore year at UT. Raised in an artistic family, Ava is always looking to make connections between science, the natural world, and daily life, and to express those observations in written and visual form. She’s excited to be serving as *Terrain*’s visual editor this year, and is learning more about the creative process each day from *Terrain*’s talented writers and artists.

Hannah McAnally

Hannah is a second-year History major from Lewisville, Texas. She is also pursuing a minor in journalism and maybe kinesiology. Outside of *Terrain* and the Hill House community, she enjoys long walks with friends and family, adventures in the outdoors, journaling, pilates, and researching natural remedies.

Cara McMillan

Cara is a second-year studying International Relations, Asian Studies, and Religious Studies. She hails from Waco, Texas and loves dunking on her hometown whenever possible. Outside of running the business side of *Terrain*, Cara dedicates her time to learning languages, exploring the great outdoors, reading whatever publication looks the most controversial, and consuming cookie dough (only Nestle, Pillsbury is treacherous).

Analise Pickerrell

Analise is a third-year journalism student from Folsom, California. She is also pursuing a minor in studio art, but mostly so she can register for painting classes. Since coming to UT, she has worked as a reporter and editor for *The Daily Texan* and interned at her local news outlet. She also coaches other students in their writing at the Moody College of Communication. Outside of school and work, she enjoys various creative endeavors, spending time in nature, and being with the people she loves.

Isaiah Pyle

Isaiah is a second year Supply Chain Management and Plan II Honors student from Houston, Texas. He is an active member of several Christian organizations including Hill House and Ignite. Some of his passions include playing sports, hiking, reading and writing, anything to do with The Lord of the Rings, and spending whatever time he can enjoying the fellowship of his friends and family.

Mitchell Schultz

Mitchell is a second-year Chemical Engineering and Plan II Honors major from Austin. In addition to *Terrain*, he researches carbon capture amines and sings in an a cappella group. He likes to cook, play sports, and make bad jokes. With any luck, his life today will be filled with more love, curiosity, and wonder than yesterday.

Molly Tompkins

Molly Tompkins is a third-year student studying English, creative writing, and political philosophy. She loves interacting with stories as both an author and an editor. Her work has appeared in *Plough Quarterly*, *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies*, and *Hothouse Literary Journal*. As an intern at the Writers' League of Texas, she has enjoyed attending the literary events that populate Austin. In the future, she hopes to continue attending school until she is evicted from higher education.

Noah Thomason

Noah is a second-year Biomedical Engineering and Plan II Honors student from Dallas, TX. He is involved in campus ministries such as Reformed University Fellowship, Ignite Texas, and Hill House, as well as various shadowy thinktanks. In his free time, he likes having extremely detailed conversations with ChatGPT, pontificating about things he doesn't actually understand, and pursuing a disembodied ideal of excellence instead of literally anything of practical use.

Faith Tucker

The work of a human hand is irreplaceable. With every aspect of life becoming increasingly automated, Faith Tucker seeks to embrace traditional, one-of-a-kind mediums such as printmaking and drawing. As a freshman at the University of Texas, she finds inspiration for her work in her faith. With the hope that others may see Jesus through her designs, she will continue to use art as a form of physical reconnection in a world where the touch of the individual's hand is slowly fading.

Mollie Walters

Mollie Walters was born in Abilene, Texas. She has two sisters, both of whom she admires and loves dearly. Currently, she is earning her B.S. in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences and Health Promotion and Behavioral Science. One of her favorite pastimes is hosting parties. Walters lives in Austin, Texas.

ABOUT *TERRAIN*

Terrain is a Christian undergraduate journal at the University of Texas at Austin. We are a collective of writers, artists, and academics learning together to engage in virtuous and meaningful discourse across UT's diverse landscape of thought.

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