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CORNERSTONE

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Mission Statement

Cornerstone Magazine seeks first and foremost to celebrate the Christian Gospel by presenting its richness and beauty to Brown and RISD students and faculty. Open to those of all denominational persuasions, we provide a literary and artistic outlet for followers of Christ. We publish works of art, prose and poetry that exhibit intelligent and creative approaches to current events, history and Christianity in general.

Each Tree Is Known
Lydia Yamaguchi '13



Letter from the Editor

When Faith Goes Public

Many of us have friends on Facebook (and in real life) who are not shy about their relationships. I'm sure you already have some coupled friends in mind: people who are very publicly affectionate, who make it easy to figure out where they are in their relationship—or, honestly, where they went on their last date. Maybe you gag a little when you see these posts, or maybe you go through all their couple photos because you are a masochist genuinely happy for their fairytale lives. Maybe you're in that relationship. Whatever the case, this is a Christian literary arts magazine, so you know where this is going.

I am not asking whether you have listed your faith background under Religious Views on your Facebook profile. I am not even asking whether you post selfies with memory verses every week. Rather, I am asking whether you live comfortably in your faith or actively go out of your way because of it. Faith is not a set of beliefs but complete a pattern of behavior, public and private, with a set of beliefs at its foundation. I often find myself frustrated by the inaction of many Christians, including myself, who seem to feel that it is sufficient to believe in a God who will restore the brokenness of this world one day. This notion is no different from the notion that love is enough to sustain a relationship without doing anything about it. In the words of bell hooks, "love is really more of an interactive process. It's about what we do not just what we feel. It's a verb, not a noun." Likewise, faith must be an action—not something we simply have.

To maintain love, like faith, and like all things good in this world, you must fight, and you must work hard. You must be public about your relationship, but not simply to prove to everyone else that you are happy. Faith is not about being recognized as a "good Christian" to all your friends. You must be more than active—you must be proactive. Go out of your way to love your neighbor, feed the hungry, and care for the broken. The next time you see someone being cruel to another human being, take it as if they were being cruel to you. We cannot ignore suffering, especially in situations where we can affect change. We cannot opt for comfort

when others are in pain. We must speak up on behalf of the silenced in the same way Jesus spoke up for women and children, stand up for the oppressed the way Jesus stood up for those who were poor and disabled, include the marginalized in society as Jesus included prostitutes and tax collectors among his chosen, and serve others with humility and compassion as Jesus healed the sick and broken-hearted. Being public about your faith isn't all about convincing Christians and converting non-Christians. Being public about your faith means living out your beliefs in a way that makes you vulnerable and uncomfortable for standing up and fighting for what's right in order to make the works of your actions visible. "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:43-44). If we bear the fruits of humility and sacrifice in every sphere of our lives, the love of Christ will manifest itself through us.

We can easily get lost in the work of producing "good fruit" within all this doing, advocating, and serving. However, in order to bear good fruit, we must take the time to reflect, learn, and make changes in our own lives. We cannot expect to change the brokenness of the world without first realizing our own needs for healing. We, as followers of Christ, have a faith that God can restore us from the inside out, and in order to be agents of change, we must first be changed for the better. What you have before you now is a public affirmation of that faith: a collection of words, photographs, and art that aims to reflect this change in our own lives, each at different points in our journeys. Each of these pieces speaks a truth that has brought us, and will continue to lead us, to a humble and unashamed faith that calls us never to stop changing for good.

With love,



Taylin Im
Editor-in-Chief

Invited to Care

MATTHEW HARRISON

John hurried to the chalkboard at the front of the room as soon as class was dismissed. He had only a minute, but he wouldn't waste the opportunity to learn something about exponential functions that had confused him in a textbook. As the other students left the classroom, I quickly answered his question and was rewarded with his "Aha" moment. What could be more satisfying to a professor than seeing an eager student finally grasp a difficult concept! In that moment I would have gladly spent hours with John, explaining exponential functions, drawing connections to what we were learning in class, sharing with him the beauty and splendor of mathematics. And then John was gone, hurrying away with the rest of the students, leaving me alone in the windowless classroom with the odd but now familiar smell. I quickly erased the board, collected my belongings and left the room.

My first impression of John was a bit sinister—something about the way he trimmed his beard, I suppose—but he was delightful in class. John was by far the best student. He was tutoring many of his classmates (a role that he relished) and was working through several textbooks that were far more advanced than ours. Those brief questions from John at the end of class always came from these advanced texts. I often had a secret desire to ignore the other students in the room and give a great lecture aimed at John. But I stuck to the curriculum, and eager John was pushed to the margins, those fleeting moments of transition between classes.

Those were the only times I ever interacted with John. As with most students I never saw him outside of class, never got to know him, don't know where he came from, nor where life has taken him. Well, that last bit, although true for most of my students, is not technically true for John. I know exactly where John is. He is within 200 feet or so of the classroom where I always taught him: somewhere within the state's maximum security prison. John (that is not his real name) is serving a life sentence for brutally murdering a stranger just for the fun of it.

When I first felt called to teach inside prisons, I assumed that my Christian faith would be what kept me going. Christ's challenge to love my enemies and to visit the least of his brethren in prison would be the mantras that enabled me to persevere in this difficult calling that would have me interacting with intimidating people in a dangerous place. I assumed that the intellectual knowledge of what Christ called me to do would help me overcome my emotional aversion to the people and situations I would certainly encounter. These assumptions were only partly correct. My faith has kept me going, but not for the reason I expected—in fact, for very nearly the opposite reason. I discovered that higher education inside a prison is, for the most part, just like

higher education anywhere else. The men and women that I have taught in prison seem remarkably normal. The variation in personalities and abilities is about the same as in any college classroom. Some are engaged in the material, some are not. Some struggle valiantly, others master the content with ease. Most worry about grades. Many are friendly and appreciative; a few, entitled or adversarial. Many succeed, but some do not. And I discovered that, just like all the other students I have taught, I cared deeply about the ones I was teaching in prison. I wanted them to master the material, to succeed in the course, to grow in intellect and in confidence, to move on to new challenges and new possibilities.

Loving these students was easy. I didn't need reminders from the Bible that I was supposed to love them. They didn't feel like my enemies. But I knew they were somebody's enemy. And that began to torment me.

*Loving these students was easy.
They didn't feel like my enemies.*

I had taught John for a month or two before I learned the details of his crime. There is a difference between knowing that someone likely committed a violent crime and reading about the details of the crime—seeing the picture of the beautiful life so senselessly ended. It changed the way I thought about John... until I was back teaching him again. Face to face, discussing math, it didn't matter. And John was not unique in that way. Ten of his classmates were serving sentences for murder. I cared about each of them. And I began to feel very guilty for caring about them. The victims came from all walks of life: rich, poor, male, female, adults, children. They had families who loved them, who undoubtedly still love them and still grieve daily. I felt ashamed to care about men and women who had caused so much pain. I wondered how I would explain myself to a heartbroken mother: I'm the one teaching and caring about the man who killed your son. I still hope I never have that conversation.

There is a tension in the criminal justice system between punishment and rehabilitation. Is it proper justice to educate murderers? Or is it better to let them languish in prison? What about those convicted of lesser crimes? Shouldn't we first provide education for everyone else? I struggled greatly with these questions when I first began teaching in prison, particularly as I began to face the stark reality of many of my students' crimes. I questioned whether it was appropriate for me to be teaching there. Was it even just? I prayed for answers, searched Scripture for answers, read many books, surfed the web, attended talks and panel discussions, had conversations with experts and ex-prisoners, watched



Isaiah 40:3
Philip Trammell '15

movies, even role-played in some image theater. But I found no answers to how society should balance punishment and rehabilitation. I did not figure out if teaching in prison was the best use of my time and talents. I still do not know.

These questions no longer torment me, though. I do not feel guilty or ashamed for caring about my students in prison, even the ones, like John, who have done horrific things. I have found my peace. I found it in my Christian faith, as I had always expected, but not in the way that I expected. I expected it to be difficult to care for these students. It was not. It was easy to care for them. Instead, it was difficult to rationalize caring for them. I expected that Christ's call to love my enemies would motivate me to try harder. Instead, it liberated me to embrace what came naturally.

Christ's call to love my enemies liberated me to embrace what came naturally.

Like in the criminal justice system, there is a similar tension in Christianity between justice and mercy, between judgment and forgiveness. But unlike the criminal justice system, where we must collectively struggle to find an impossible balance, in matters of our own hearts Christ does not ask us to find this balance. We are not invited to partake in

God's perfect judgment. In fact, we are expressly forbidden from it. We are, instead, invited to partake in God's infinite mercy. We are completely free to love and care for the people around us, even those who may not deserve our love. To be clear, I think John should be in prison. There must be consequences for murder. I do not think that putting someone in prison is violating Christ's prohibition of judgment. Prison is not a judgment of one's soul. It is a punishment for crime. The great injustices of America's current criminal justice system notwithstanding, punishment is an integral part of a just society. Jesus did not reproach prison guards or judges or policemen. Jesus did not even reproach prisoners for their crimes. Society had already done that. Instead, Jesus reproached those who refused to care for people at the margins of society, who refused to care for the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned. Jesus reproached those who refused the invitation to partake in God's infinite mercy.

I do not know why God called me to teach in the prisons. But I do know that God loves the men and women in prison just as God loves me. I also know that I am free to partake in this love. And that has made all the difference.

Matthew Harrison is an assistant professor of Applied Mathematics.

Why I Love Observing the Playground

CLARE KIM

Okay, I admit the title sounds creepy without context so let me elaborate. First, there are the kids. Most of the ones crawling around are three to six years old, and most of them are utterly flawed. One of them bellows, “Mystic ranger of thunder!” and swings his clenched fists like Wolverine. One barefoot toddler holds out her pudgy arms and hollers for “Mommy” because it hurts to walk among the scattered seeds on the concrete.

Second, there are the parents. Some of them are friends and chatter about karate classes: “He’s already double yellow belt!” whatever that means. They act as secondary commanders-in-chief for each other when counting down to five isn’t effective. Some parents don’t let their children attempt anything remotely unsafe, and others watch as their sons and daughters push their limits.

I have a particular soft spot for father-daughter relationships, probably because it gives me the best insights into how God the Father feels about me. It’s sobering to see how obtuse we can be compared to an omnipotent and omniscient God (I just saw a little boy take his ball to a trash can to check if it was a hoop). It puts my questions and complaints into perspective; maybe I’m making irrational demands and I’m simply unaware of their irrationality. We ask trivial questions like, “Would you rather use Tabasco sauce as eye drops or live without Internet for a month?” but, more seriously, “Why does my family have to be broken?”, “Will I ever find a job/spouse/happiness?”, and “How do we deal with pain and loss?” Perhaps all of my questions are trivial to God because he knows everything. He could easily disregard our unbelief, but he doesn’t treat us that way. God always reaches out to us with sincere compassion because he wants us to overcome our skepticism, trust in who he says he is.

I’m not a parent yet, but I am a pet owner—not the same, but it’s the closest I’ve got. All I want for my dog is for him to be happy, snacking on biscuits and getting belly rubs, because that’s the best I can wish for him. Children are (slightly) more capable, and parents have varying aspirations for their children: to achieve greatness through a robust career, to make a lot of money, to live long and accomplished lives, to be well-rounded and generally happy. Ultimately, as children grow and learn, they subconsciously or consciously decide whether their parents have the final say in what their goals are because they realize that their parents are imperfect humans too.

And while we relate to God as to a parent and to the Church as to our family, it’s crucial that we don’t project characteristics of our own parents and families onto God and the Church. In fact, it’s crucial that we don’t project any characteristics of our sullied culture onto what Christ means for our relationship with him and with each other. It is much too common for people to turn away from church communities because of scandal or personal distaste. I had less than favorable experiences with a certain kind of church, and for a long time I couldn’t see past the crooked culture and embrace my fellow brothers and sisters as individuals whom I should love as Christ loved us (Romans 5:1-11). Instead of being open to divine revelation, I let my heart become hardened. If we want to bear fruit, we need to be teachable, because a farmer can’t plant anything in unbreakable soil.

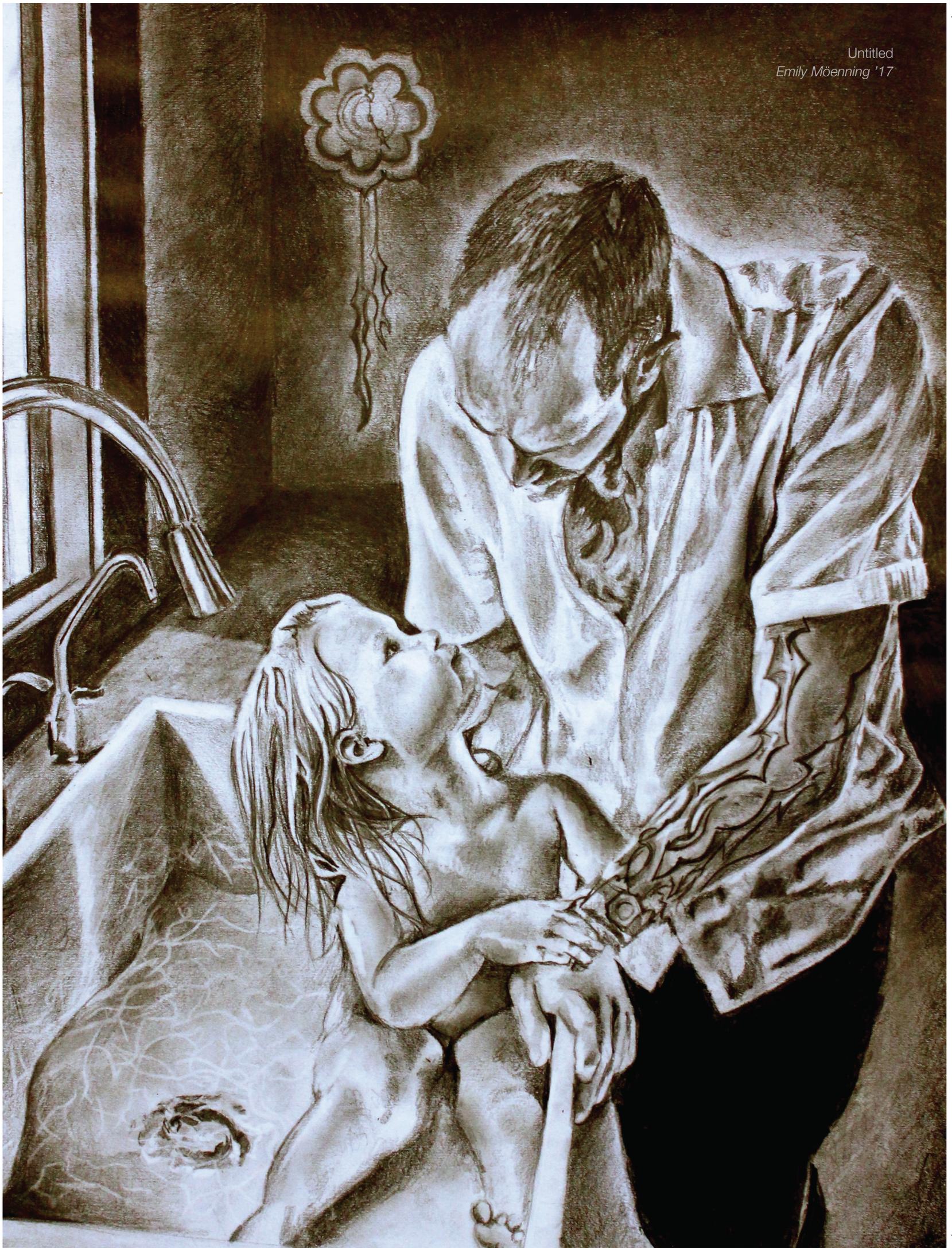
It’s crucial that we don’t project any characteristics of our sullied culture onto what Christ means for our relationship with him and with each other.

These kids on the playground, however innocuous they may seem, already have faulty preconceived notions that they acquired as soon as they opened their eyes. A white boy made a gun with his hand and pointed it at a black boy, saying, “Hey. Hey! Put ’em up. We’ve got you surrounded.” What can we do? The solution is not merely to educate children, because even educated people make mistakes (and the higher you climb, the harder you fall); it is to continue to hold fast to an authentic relationship with Christ and a community of devoted believers. In this pursuit for truth and justice, we trust that God wants and knows what’s best for us. Children aren’t embarrassed to receive help and don’t reject it until they think they know better. This kind of faith includes surrendering everything we think we know, and that’s a scary concept, especially for intelligent and capable individuals. It’s relearning how to spiritually crawl, walk, tie your shoes, say “please” and “thank you,” feed yourself, and depend on him daily.

“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”
MATTHEW 18:3

Clare Kim is a senior concentrating in psychology and education studies.

Untitled
Emily Mœnning '17





The Gift of Evolution

MITCH AKUTSU

"I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of Caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice."

—excerpt from a letter written by Charles Darwin to Asa Grey, 1860

The "ichneumonidae" that Darwin refers to is a giant family of parasitoid* wasps (about 60,000 species). Every single one of these wasp species lays their eggs in other organisms, usually caterpillars of moths and butterflies. Once the eggs hatch, they eat their host from the inside out, killing them and metamorphosing into adults to repeat the process. It's funny that Darwin mentions cats and mice. Yes, cats playing with mice is cruel. But it gets worse: there's a protozoan called *Toxoplasma gondii* that, upon infecting the brain of a mouse or rat, will cause the rodent to be attracted to cats, making them run to their own death.

If God really is a loving God, how can these cruel interactions exist? The question stumped Darwin, and actually contributed to his eventual rejection of Christianity.

I don't believe it's our job to label things cruel or not cruel.† *Toxoplasma gondii* (toxoplasma) can only reproduce in cats. If the cat doesn't end up eating the toxo-infected mouse, toxoplasma will have no chance of survival. The same goes for the wasps. The wasps need the nutrients just as much as the caterpillars do, and thus, they evolved to get nutrients in an incredibly efficient, albeit uncomfortably close, way. Why

* Ecology jargon. A parasitoid is distinguished from a parasite in that a parasitoid will eventually be the cause of death for its host; parasites may not be.

† When discussing cruelty in this essay, I only consider nature and biological systems. I do not address the cruelty of human behavior, which many find easier to reconcile with the idea of a loving God.

would either organism be more entitled to the nutrients? What does this have to do with a loving God? This is simply how the universe works. Being upset about these parasitic examples is analogous to being upset about gravity causing milk to spill from an overturned cup. Things have to die for other things to live; that's just how energy works in biological systems.

Things have to die for other things to live; that's just how energy works in biological systems.

The main idea behind Darwin's words was to attack intelligent design. Eaten to death in their caterpillar stage, parasitized butterflies never have a chance to spread their often beautiful wings. If God "designed" butterflies in the way intelligent design purports (via manipulations of A's, T's, C's, and G's‡ over time) would he have designed just as many parasitoid wasps to kill them? In this context, God seems to have contradictory intentions, and Darwin recognized that. However, believing in the inherently random process of evolution is not incompatible with believing in a very close and personal God.

One of the biggest implications of evolution is its answer to the question of human origins. The fact that our physical bodies were formed by evolutionary forces is no cause for alarm for Christians. According to Genesis, we were "dust" to begin with anyway. I can only see love in the fact that our physical bodies do come from something crafted from evolution.

Evolutionary biology is a tool, just like chemistry, mathematics, and all the other academic disciplines. Each discipline has a set of methods that are peer-reviewed and accepted as ways to explain certain aspects of our world. Just as chemists have helped us to understand the very shape of a water molecule and how important

‡ A, T, G, and C are representative of nucleotides, the baseline structures of DNA. Different combinations of these nucleotides code for different genes and, ultimately, different organisms.



Fallen but Floating
Matthew Im

that shape is, evolutionary biologists have been able to reveal why race correlates with disease susceptibility, milk digestion problems, and specific muscle growth. Evolutionary biology is simply a tool of discovery.

With the axiom that God is the “designer,” zoologists and naturalists would look at two species of animals and view them as two distinct entities specifically designed for some God-given purpose. Now, evolutionists look at two species and, using the tools and theories behind evolutionary biology, can infer the phylogenetic relationship of the species. Evolutionists have a more palpable perception of the beauty of connectivity seen in the world. In testing drugs and medicine and discovering basic principles of mammalian physiology, understanding our relationship to other mammals (especially mice) has been essential. Darwin’s discovery has helped us to understand the world better. The very fact that A’s, T’s, G’s, and C’s randomly mutate, in accordance with physical laws, has given us a chance to understand our own

genetics. Otherwise, God’s “black box magic” would have to be the answer to important questions such as: Why is lower back pain so common in humans? Or, why do we have an appendix, an organ more detrimental than beneficial?

I don’t believe God wants to keep secrets from us. He has given us “dominion over all living things.” Long before *The Origin of Species*, humans had been utilizing evolutionary forces, we simply weren’t calling them evolution yet.

Consider wild, undomesticated wheat. Wheat seeds are grouped together at the tip of their stalk. Eventually, the packet of seeds will burst, spreading the seeds so that they can propagate the next generation. However, an occasional mutation prevents this packet from bursting, which would prevent that individual plant from successfully reproducing. Long ago, humans found these mutants, with their seeds bunched together, convenient for harvesting. Humans would intentionally plant these seeds, completely



An ichneumon wasp, the species to which Darwin refers, drilling into a caterpillar fern shelter to parasitize it

photos by Mitch Akutsu

changing the direction of selection, propagating the wheat that had no chance of surviving in the wild.

The processes leading to the existence of birds, wasps, and even toxoplasma aren't meant to be secrets. God wants to be understood, he doesn't want to simply be an explanation.

This wasn't just the case for plants, though. Dogs also came to exist through human-influenced evolution. Dogs and wolves share an ancient common ancestor unlike the cute pomeranians or shih tzus of today. Well, slowly but surely, the tamer members of that ancient dog species were noticed. They would be mated together by humans, and after repeating that process over thousands of years, we are blessed with man's best friend, responsible for helping humans fight depression, walking the blind, transporting medicine

541 miles in the snow to save sick children, rescuing the lost, and even detecting bombs.

Using the same metaphor Darwin does in his conclusion of *The Origin of Species*, we do not want to be like "savages who look upon a ship as something totally incomprehensible." The processes leading to the presence of birds, wasps, and even toxoplasma aren't meant to be secrets. God wants to be understood, he doesn't want to simply be an explanation. This is well exemplified in the Gospel, as Jesus directly shows us the way, guiding us to wash the feet of others, listen to the woman at the well, and feed the hungry. The process of evolution is a blueprint for how life has come to exist in this world—and God is sharing it with us.

Mitch Akutsu is a senior concentrating in biology.

Touch of God

ISABELLA BELLO MARTINEZ

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.' ... After they had heard [King Herod], they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was... On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
MATTHEW 2:1-12

The wise men did not travel on their own—they were part of a large caravan of servants, guards and scholars. And, with the task of caring for the animals, was a young stable boy...and he never forgot the journey, or the star, or the baby...

Approximately 33 Years Later

Jerusalem.

I reined my horse and gave the city spread out below me a good look. Not the most impressive city I have seen, nor the largest. But there was something strangely appealing about the sight below me. The spires of the Temple of Solomon, the marketplace that meandered into alleys and suddenly gave way to the slums you find in all these Roman-occupied cities. There was also something very sad about it - the very fact that it looked like a Roman city. It wasn't the Romans' city. They had no right to be there and yet they were here; a war-like group that worshipped more gods than I had energy to name occupying, the heart of a land that worshipped only one true GOD. The scholar in my appreciated that it was an interesting contrast.

Jerusalem; I had been here once before as part of my master's caravan. I had waited outside of those gates while my master, Lord Balthazar, and two other magi from the East had spoken to King Herod. Jerusalem had been a rest stop on the way to Bethlehem - on our way to see the baby savior of the Jews. That trip had changed my life. I had hungered for knowledge and struggled to teach myself how to read and write. My master had noticed and, over time, had made me his acolyte. I, too, had become a Magi from the East.

Not that it mattered to the city below me. It was crumbling under the oppressive chains of a people that had lost their way, and been destroyed by war and hate. And the Romans had finally noticed—Pontius Pilate had sought my counsel on matters of security. I snorted. Considering that he was a Roman Governor, Pilate was tolerable but he tended to overlook important matters.

"Master?" My apprentice's voice interrupted my musings.



"Shall we enter the city?"

"Of course," I said. "Let us see what this Roman wants of us."

We had little trouble getting into the city – a few letters with the Roman seal and a couple of gold coins to the guards got us through the gates – but getting anywhere inside the city proved close to impossible. People filled the streets holding pigeons and lambs to offer in temples, soldiers strode down the street shouting in Latin, and men wearing the traditional robes of Jewish Pharisees ran back and forth with great crowds of angry peasants shouting in Aramaic and Hebrew.

"By the gods, what is happening here?" my apprentice demanded, bewildered.

I did a quick count of the days it took to travel in my head, thought about the Jewish calendar, and let out a groan. "It's the Jewish feast of Passover," I explained to my small party. "The city will be filled with Jews celebrating their Holy Days."

One of my guards groaned. "Pilate should have told us to wait," he grumbled. "This is a ripe area to get pick-pocketed and left for dead in some alley."

"I have more faith in Jewish kindness," I admonished.

"We're not going to get a room at an inn," another guard protested.

By the time we had pushed through the crowds, arrived at the steps of Pontius Pilate's lavish home, and explained who we were to the guards, we were all feeling hot and irritable. The Captain left us with his companion – a much younger man wearing the uniform of a centurion and sporting a small beard on his youthful face – and disappeared into the palace. To our displeasure, he didn't even bother returning, but instead sent a nervous Greek servant to tell us that Pilate wasn't receiving visitors.

"But we are expected," I insisted while my guard grumbled.

"I'm sorry, sir," the servant stammered. "But he's been quite indisposed with all that has happened in the last few hours."

"What has happened in the last few hours?" I inquired irritably. The servant got red in the face and refused to say another word.

The centurion rolled his eyes and dismissed the servant before offering, "You can refresh yourselves in one of the halls used for private meetings. I remember Pilate mentioning your visit to his wife this morning – he must have forgotten after..."



The centurion's voice trailed off and he led us to the room in silence. The servant re-appeared with some wine and cheese and the rest of my group was temporarily satisfied. However, that strange sense of foreboding that I had felt since laying eyes on this city was stronger inside the palace.

"Is the food not to your liking?" the centurion asked—and a bit anxiously, if truth be told.

"It's fine, thank you," I replied, a bit distracted. There was something in the back of my mind, like an annoying ringing in my ears that I could not stop. There was something important about this day, there was something that had to do with Jews and prophets and the end of the world...

"What happened earlier today?" I asked the centurion.

"Well... uh..." the Roman soldier shifted his weight uncomfortably from leg to leg, nervously fingering the hilt of his sword. The sense of importance and unease increased.

"Yes?" I prompted the young man gently.

"A prisoner was sentenced to death; crucifixion, actually. A Jewish zealot who got quite a lot of followers the last few years," the centurion explained. "But... well...it was the Jews who wanted him dead, you know? But he's Jewish too... and some reckoned he was supposed to be the king or something... but he was the son of a carpenter, no one important. Some Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus. Immanuel. God Saves. Messiah. Christ. I could never forget that name or the way the gold had shined as it was laid with frankincense and myrrh at the feet of a baby boy. But then rest of the centurion's words sank in and my blood froze in my veins.

Crucifixion.

"Where was he born?" I demanded.

"The zealot?" asked the centurion. "Nazareth, I reckon..."

"Are you sure?" I insisted. "Everyone was displaced by that census about thirty years ago." Everyone in the room looked shocked at my sudden frantic questions. "I know that you Romans write everything down," I told the young centurion, exasperated. "Go ask someone! If he was sentenced to die in this palace then you certainly have it somewhere!"

"All right. Calm down," the centurion grumbled. He walked away, muttering something about impatient foreigners in Latin. A few very tense minutes later, he returned looking mystified. "How did you know he wouldn't be from Nazareth?" the centurion demanded.

My heart sank. That strange feeling of danger was almost tangible. I didn't reply and he continued, "The one they're

crucifying, he is the son of a Joseph and Mary. And he was born in Bethlehem."

I turned and began walking.

"Where are you going?!" my guard demanded.

"I need to see this," I said, not really aware of the words leaving my mouth. "I need to be there. This isn't right... he was supposed to..." my voice trailed off and I left the palace, leaving my protesting guards and apprentice to deal with the equally confused Roman soldiers. To my surprise, the centurion followed me.

"You can't wander around the city on your own, sir," he said.

"I need to go," I insisted.

"Why?"

"I was there when he was born—or right after it."

"What?"

I refused to explain and began to walk determinedly in the same direction as a good number of the crowd – towards a distant hill that I had avoided seeing on our way to the palace. A hill that was covered in crosses.

The centurion shook his head and fell into step beside me. I didn't question his presence, and he didn't try to stop me. I later wondered what went through that pagan soldier's head as he led me, another pagan from the east, to watch a Jewish prophet being crucified. I wondered if the significance of the event crossed his mind. I wondered if he felt the same frantic feeling of panic within his chest, if he heard the same inner voice telling him that this was wrong.

I imagined a man being forced to carry a cross up the muddy hill I was now climbing, imagined the excruciating pain of knowing that would be his last act, to carry his own death sentence to the top of this God-forsaken hill...

"My God, my God!" a voice suddenly called out from the top of the hill. "Why have you forsaken me?"

The crowd parted for the briefest moment and I saw the speaker. A Jewish man of about thirty-three, with the strong arms of a carpenter and the lean body of someone who is used to traveling long distances for days at a time. Above his head hung a sign in three languages—Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. It read; "Here is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." That sign, and his agonized call for God, made my knees go weak. I abruptly fell to the ground.

"Sir?" the centurion asked, sounding concerned. But I waved his help away, feeling a sudden rush of anger at the uniform he wore, and the people he represented. One of the



guards at the foot of the cross recognized the centurion and called him over. With a last look at me, my companion went to see what the other man wanted.

As quickly as it had appeared, my anger left me. What had the centurion said, that the Jews had turned over Jesus themselves? That sign was a joke then—it was the Romans laughing; the irony of it! The crowds had turned over their own savior. I remembered all the texts written by Jewish prophets that had called my attention over the years. Isaiah and Elijah had spoken of a savior. And my own master had read the stars and the heavens and discerned that it was this Jesus, born in a stable in Bethlehem, that would save the Jews, and then save the world. How could it end like this? On a cross?

“Do you need help?” a very tired voice asked me in Aramaic. I looked up at the face of a clean-shaven young man with the course clothing of a fisherman.

“No, but thank you,” I replied in the same language. I got to my feet and looked back at the horrible sight before me. “I just... wasn’t expecting to see him like that.”

“We thought...” the young man’s voice shook and he swallowed hard, “We thought we were going to see the Kingdom of God on earth. But...”

“We?” I asked gently.

“I am one of his apostles,” the young man explained.

“Was,” I corrected sadly.

“Am,” the youth said fiercely, eyes flashing through the tears that began to fall. “This cannot end here. It will not end here! It can’t...”

“John!” a young woman with red-eyes and tear-stains on her cheeks came running. “John! He’s thirsty; he’s asking for water. Do you have any?”

“No,” the young man—John—said anxiously.

“I can get some though. But how...”

“Look,” I said, amazement so intertwined in my voice that they both looked instantly. It was my companion, the young centurion. He had found a sponge, soaked it in wine, mounted it on a spear, and raised it to Jesus’ chapped lips.

The centurion lowered the spear and promptly got shoved in the back by the other guard at the foot of the cross. There was a brief argument in Latin as John, the woman, and I got closer to the scene. Exasperated, the centurion approached me, much to the alarm of the woman and John who took several steps back.

“I don’t see anything wrong with giving him something to drink,” the centurion grumbled to me. “And it wasn’t even good wine... We should go, sir.”

“I’m going to stay,” I said firmly. He could tell that I wouldn’t be persuaded. So he stepped back to join a group of off-duty soldiers watching the crowd. I stood a bit apart from John and the woman at the foot of the cross.

We didn’t wait long.

With an agonizing groan, Jesus lifted himself up with his arms, looked up to the sky and gasped, “It is finished.”

And then he died.

Clouds covered the sun and the earth shook. They said later that a veil in the Jewish Temple split in two. But all I knew at the time, was that the Lord of the Jews was dead. And all I could think was of that the baby in the stables...how could he have only grown to die like this? I’d heard about this new Jewish prophet that was moving the hearts and minds of the crowds. I had even entertained the idea of seeking him out during my time in Judea. And that man had been the child in the manger... and now was dead on a cross... Where was his god? I felt angry then. Once again I felt angry and I wasn’t even part of this story. I was a bystander. No tears fell from my face like those of the women that wailed and cried in the arms of the men. John was hugging one woman tightly, tears streaming down his own face as he murmured a prayer over and over again.

The Romans were impatient. Tired of the crowd and worried by the darkening clouds, they went around with clubs and broke the legs of the two other criminals being killed on that hill. The young centurion, aware that Jesus seemed very dead, cautiously took a spear and pierced his side. To my shock, water was mixed with the blood that came pouring



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down and the centurion yelped as he was showered in the mixture. It was with a strangely dazed look that he stepped away from the cross and once again insisted that I should follow him.

Feeling like an outsider, unable to do anything, I finally did.

I stayed in that city for fifty days. I couldn't leave—something still felt wrong, unfinished. I did my best to advise Pilate to leave the disciples of Jesus alone. As they seemed to have disappeared, this wasn't difficult. Fifty day until I finally resigned myself to returning home with my questions unanswered.

Suddenly, there was a commotion in the streets. I went out and, to my amazement, saw a bunch of men from Galilee speaking in every language that I knew, and then some, including my native tongue. In the midst of them, was John.

"John!" I called his name, wondering if he would recognize me. He was confused only for a moment before his face lit up with a wide smile that was so at odds with my memory of him crying on that dark hill that I actually took a step back in alarm.

"Friend!" he greeted me warmly. "Have you heard the news?"

"No..." I said, bewildered at hearing him speak in my language.

"Jesus the Son of God has risen!" he all but cheered. "We will still bring Heaven to earth!"

A weight I had carried in my chest for many days suddenly disappeared. I felt giddy with excitement and I actually grabbed his arm as I begged, "Tell me more!"

Amid the roaring wind and the tongues of flame from the torches we used to light the streets in celebration, I let oil and water wash away my old life and I began anew. I was baptized with a crowd of hundreds and cheered with the rest as I realized that, if a baby in a manger can be the Messiah, anything is possible.

*Isabella Bello Martinez is a freshman
concentrating in biomedical engineering.*

Cloyed crucifixes ornate beyond recognition
Drooping, swinging, dangling, gleaming
A piece of jewelry, boasting not in the Lord
Taking up the cross has never been so easy

Have you ever heard of who Kanye West is?
He raps about Jesus walking and God talking
Then asks if you've ever asked your ***** for other *****es
For Christmas.

Jesus wept

Christmas is the season to give in the name of the Lord,
But now it's mutilated into a buffet of greed and envy
Waiting, wanting, expecting, valuing valueless things
The newborn king forgotten beside a shiny ring

Does God choose one team over the other?
Scoring a touchdown and taking a knee
Finger pointed up to the one who deserves glory
But does true humility parade itself?

Hungry for attention, gifts, and fame,
People turn to exploiting God's name,
Idol worship isn't bound to the past
Because the love of things is a love that won't last

2000 years ago, Jesus flipped the merchants' tables
Leave to Caesar what is Caesar's
500 years ago, Martin Luther's 95 remind us
There is no need to buy, because we have already been bought

Mitch Akutsu is a senior concentrating in biology.



Just Mangoes
Sujay Natson '16

True Vine

NICK CHUAN

Hey there, my name is Nick. I'm a freshman at Brown thinking of concentrating in physics and philosophy. I came from Singapore... Oh right, and I'm a Christian.

Does that sound familiar to you? How many of our introductions start that way? Is Christianity the core of our lives with everything else being secondary aspects or are we first students, citizens, athletes, then Christians? Here's what Jesus said in the Book of John:

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.
JOHN 15:5

Jesus says that He is the vine; in fact, He says that He is the "true vine" earlier in the first verse of the chapter. We, on the other hand, are the branches that sprout from Him. Do we hold that view? Touch your heart and ask yourself if Jesus is really your Vine and if you really see yourself as His branch. Perhaps we see ourselves as the vine and Him as our branch: just another commitment, just another intellectual pursuit, just another means for a social circle.

I am not trying to make anyone feel guilty or repentant here; that is not my goal. I just want to shed some light on how we actually feel, and juxtapose that to what the Bible tells us. Who are you? Are you a student who happens to believe in God, or a Christian who happens to be a student?

Maybe you are not sure if you are His branch, or if you view Him as your branch. Jesus told of a simple sign of those who abide in Him: "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit."

Bearing fruit is not trying harder, nor is it relying on effort. It is relying on Christ's strength, allowing the life of Jesus to come out of you. Let the Vine tell us what to do, and let Him lead us on our way. Bearing fruit is not easy. In fact, it is painful. As Jesus said earlier,

Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.
JOHN 15:2

I cannot say I know how plants feel, but pruning does not look like a fun process. He prunes us so that we can produce

Looking for Providence

VALENTINE ORA

more fruit and, I believe, to draw us closer to Him (see Hebrews 12:6 and Romans 5:3-5). But look on the flip side:

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.
JOHN 15:7

Jesus promises that we will get what we desire if we abide in Him and His words in us. “Ah, the great promise that always seems to make qualifications. Why even bother telling us this if we have to abide in Him?” Are similar thoughts going through your mind?

Who are you? A student who happens to believe in God, or a Christian who happens to be a student?

Remember, we are the branches, He is the Vine. Even as the Vine, Jesus prayed for His Father’s will, not His, to be done (Matthew 6:10). As the branch, we do not tell God what we want to do, we ask Him what He wants us to do. Asking for things in Jesus’s Name, no matter how many times we have used the phrase flippantly, does ensure us His promise if we recognize ourselves as the branches and His Son as the Vine.

In fact, Jesus expands on why God answers our prayers:

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.
JOHN 15:8

The reason for God answering our prayers is for His glory and for people to see us as His disciples. Maybe instead of asking “God please give me an A for that paper”, we should ask “God, please let me be content with any grade that is given to me so that people will see how I am fully sufficient in You.” That is a characteristic of a believer who abides in Him, bearing fruit for God to show the world His glory.

Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches. A victorious Christian life is not one in which a believer occasionally leans on Jesus’s strength in times of crisis, it is a life in which one is perpetually reliant on Him for His provision. Embracing one’s identity as a branch of Him is difficult, but it promises life that He alone can give. Is He your Vine?

Nick Chuan is a freshman considering concentrating in physics and philosophy.

Heal my heart, feed my ear
Tell me what I need to hear
Check my eyes and see despair
Recognize a beady stare

Heal my heart, bring a cure
I’m feeling smart but insecure
Administer your ministers
Diminish thoughts that sin is pure

Heal my heart, bless and aid
Save me from the mess I made
Yesterday, why yes, I prayed
And yes, I do confess I’ve strayed

I’d savor a Savior; I’d pay for a favor.
Say, are you still watching, Lord?
Or have you stopped and gotten bored?

Heal my heart, show Your face
Know me so I know my place
Homie, I can’t slow my pace
Holy moly, close the space

I know that You’ve got lots of clients
Some of whom have fought with science
I know I’m grown, and shouldn’t groan
But I’m alone with thoughts and silence

Heal my heart, take the wheel
I’m starving here, make a meal
Fake or real? My heart is bare
It’s hard to bear, break the seal

Heal my heart, save my spot
Teach me just how brave I got
Slave or not, I crave a lot
Before I’m in my grave to rot

Heal my heart, nod at me
Even though I’m not at sea,
This journey is my Odyssey
I’m turning towards the God in me.

Valentine Ora is a freshman undecided in concentration.

Four Little Words

KATIE HAY

When most people hear about those “four little words,” the first four words that may to mind are “Will you marry me?” These are four words that can drastically and fantastically alter the course of a person’s life and are often treated with intense respect and weight. As they should be. The four words to which I now refer are not a proposal of marriage, but instead, a statement. A fact. A declaration that one says just as reverently and lovingly as the former four.

These four words are, “Yes, Jesus loves me.”

Everyone knows the song. Written by a woman named Anna Bartlett Warner, whose name many don’t know, this simple song states one of the most profound, confusing, and incredibly mind-blowing truths ever set before man. We’ll take it word-by-word.

Yes, *Jesus* loves me. Jesus, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The Savior of our souls and the Lover of our hearts. The One who was, is, and always will be. The Son of God. The Lily of the Valley. He who put on flesh and lived among us, as God and man. He who came to earth to shatter tradition, turn tables, and prove the devil wrong. Jesus loves me. This is an insane thought, it really is. Who would think that God, Jesus, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, would bother to love someone like me? We get images from mythology and fairy tales of gods who sit back and observe the goings and comings of those on earth—us. They view man’s actions as irrelevant to their existence. They don’t love those they watch. Do you think Zeus from Greek mythology would have taken the time to have a conversation with his dearly beloved follower, or rain manna from the skies when his people cried out? These were gods who watched indifferently. Without love.

But our God, with a capital “G,” loves us so intensely. He created the universe with His words, a mere breath from his mouth, yet could hold it all in the palm of His hand, and He loves us. He defies death, overcomes the gates of hell, and conquers evil where it stands, yet He chooses to notice us. We who are unworthy of even speaking His name. We who have fallen countless times and will fall again. It’s crazy, right? To think that a God, the One and Only God, loves us.

Yes, Jesus *loves* me. This love isn’t just any love. It’s not a “Won’t you be my Valentine?” love or an “I love that beautiful

sunset” love or even a love that warrants the question “Will you marry me?” Jesus’ love for us transcends all understanding. Picture the greatest instance of love you can; now blow that out of proportion and you still have not yet conceived even a shadow of what Jesus’ love is. Jesus’ love for us is unconditional. It is forgiving and fulfilling. He paints with His love for us the perfect portrait of what love should be. In 2 Corinthians, Paul tells us what love is. Patient. Kind. Unselfish. Humble. Protecting, trusting, hoping. Never failing. He based this small list of what love is off of Jesus’ love. The perfect love. Jesus loves me. His love is not just words—though God’s Word alone is more than sufficient.

He sees me as his child, and He loves me unconditionally.

You know how people say that they love you, but you know they don’t mean it? You see right through their words and know that they’re simply trying to get something from you. Sometimes they are sincere when they say they love you, and you believe they mean it. But when push comes to shove, they back down, say it isn’t what they thought it was, it isn’t worth fighting for. Love is more than words. Love is action. Love is feeding fifteen thousand hungry mouths, even when they may not have believed. Love is calming a sea and healing a sick child. Love is forgiving an adulteress and embracing a diseased woman.

Love is death on a cross. Do you understand how much strength, courage, obedience, compassion, grace, and love it took for Him to do that? Jesus didn’t die on a cross just to make a political statement or even to glorify Himself. This was the Son of God, humbling Himself to a death on a cross and giving His Father the glory the entire time. He has such love for us that, even as He hung, suffering and bleeding, He cried out, “Forgive them!” Can you fathom the power it took to be able to forgive the people who had so blatantly wronged Him? That is the power of love, God’s love, the love that Jesus offers us.

Yes, Jesus loves *me*. I say it again: He loves *ME*. Me, fallen, bruised, broken. Me, the one who is disobedient, who persecutes His name, who leads people astray. Me, the wolf in sheep’s clothing, the one who pushes people down to bring myself up. The one who hurts others and is hurting inside. The wounded and the wounding. He loves me, the one who refuses

to love others. He loves me, the one who turns a blind eye to need and a cold shoulder to those who seek my forgiveness. He loves me, the one who follows her own ambition, who falls down repeatedly, who gets lost and wanders in the dark, believing she can make it on her own. Me. He loves me.

Not only does He love me, He calls me out. He pulls me up. He sets me straight. His love for me, the one who got away, the one lost coin, the one missing sheep, is greater than anything else I have ever known. His love for me is so great that, like the woman who rejoiced at her one silver coin found, He celebrates when I come to Him. The God of the Universe, the God who died on a cross, holds me in His arms and calls me Beloved and Child. Jesus loves me. He loves me, in spite of my mistakes, my faults, my wrongs, my selfishness, my ignorance, my evil actions, my hatred, my greed, my disgust, my sin. In spite of it all, He loves me. He sees the good, the talents, the smiles, the laughter, the spark, the ways I can touch people's lives, and loves me. He sees me as His child, and loves me unconditionally.

I saved the first word for last. Yes, Jesus loves me. This "yes" is a confirmation, a reminder, a shout to the heavens, that "YES! Jesus loves me!" It is a celebration, a grateful pouring out of the soul. It is relief, knowing that Jesus looks beyond outward appearances and past mistakes and sees instead what can be and who I really am. YES! It is a declaration to the world, reminding it that no matter how many times I am told "No," Jesus is still saying "Yes!" The world tries to drag us down. Satan tries to make us doubt our God. But all we have to say is "Yes! Jesus loves me!" Jesus' love trumps anything the devil can throw at us; yes, literally. YES! When we have the Spirit of the Living God dwelling inside of us, we can say YES! with confidence. We can take those leaps of faith, pass those tests of endurance, run with perseverance the race set before us. Because we know that Jesus loves us. Once we know that in our minds and feel in our hearts that yes, Jesus loves us, nothing can bring us down. Nothing can stop God from completing His work. When we're in His will, He will make a way. He is our God, our Lord and Savior.

And yes, Jesus loves you.

Katie Hay is a freshman considering concentrating in visual arts.



Begotten, Not Made

ANNA HUNDERT

old creeds
blossom into
poetry

I have learned
that love is
light from light,
begotten, not made
and incarnate through
words and gestures and
skin on skin,
true something from
true someone.

we seek truth in
old creeds,
they blossom

Holy Something

I know you don't
believe in God

but I see God in you
I hope that's okay

He's there somewhere
between your lips
or perhaps tucked away
behind your ears or
in your back pocket or
between your toes or
maybe He's there
in the palm of your open hand

I know you don't
believe in God

but I see God in you
I hope that's okay.

Iona at Sunset
Lydia Yamaguchi '13

These Days

i. let there be light:

we store away
the palms of yesterday
to be burned for next year's ashes

hosannas echo in the sanctuary
where stained glass eyes
watch the sky patiently
waiting for a miracle

ii. land and sea:

a young girl's faith on Tuesday
is an ocean, watch
my tides as they ebb and wonder
why I only sometimes
bow to the altar

iii. moon and stars:

a young girl's faith
paints the sky
with new constellations
each night, watch
them as they rise and set

I am no master of the stars
but I can
connect
the
dots.

iv. life in sea and sky:

sit down to supper
with your hands in your lap –
the disciples didn't kneel
to receive the body and blood

a young girl's faith on Thursday
is not the same as Wednesday, step
in my water and see
that doubt breeds like fish

v. life on land:

and the crowd shouted, crucify him!
because it's so easy to say,
but perhaps a young girl among them
stayed silent and wondered

greater love hath no man than this
on a Friday a young girl was redeemed
but what does it mean?

vi. mankind:

the stained glass eyes
still wait for a miracle,
they keep a silent vigil
for my sake

a young girl's faith
wavers when her heart
is broken, teach me
how to count the hours

vii. rest:

alleluias resound,
regard the cross and
ask Jesus if it was worth it

a young girl's faith
is still in progress, pray
for me if you think it
might help.

*Anna Hundert is a freshman planning to
concentrate in classics and literary arts.*

Running on Empty

ALANA FELTON

All day, you've been waiting to go to Jo's to get a salad with avocado on it. You can practically taste it as you are walking through the doors at 6:15 (you wouldn't want to seem too eager and show up right at 6:00). There is the usual long line in front of the salad station, no big deal. But when it's finally your turn and you hear the wonderful words, "What can I get for you?" you realize that all of the avocado is gone. You stand there, excitement becoming disappointment, trying to decide what could possibly make up for the creamy deliciousness of avocado and end up settling on some second rate topping. The struggle is real.

As a freshman in high school, I endured my first real struggle. I had just transferred from a tiny private Christian school to the local public school. I went from a class of eighteen people to a class of more than 200. My new high school could have held the students from my previous school, kindergarten through twelfth grade, four times over. I walked through the doors of my new school on that first day and was terrified. With the sea of people jostling me, I felt myself pulling into my shell. I was completely lost, utterly alone.

Almost comically naïve, I heard cuss words that I didn't know existed. Appalled, I furtively called my mother from a bathroom stall begging her to take me home, to return me to my old school. With her abounding wisdom and maternal kindness she told me to "deal with it."

And so I did. I found my classes, allowed the crowd to sweep me through the hallways. I made some friends, but I was painfully withdrawn and shy. Surrounded by so many new people, I began to compare myself to them, especially the other female students. The differences I saw were the initial tremors that created tiny cracks in my foundation.

I realized that I was not a skilled conversationalist. I did not know how to flirt, how to make immature, teen jokes. Moreover, I realized that I was not as thin or as clear skinned as many of my female classmates. This had to change. In order to not just enjoy, but merely survive my high school experience, I decided that I would have to lose weight, to reach that size zero or two that I thought would automatically make me fit in with my peers and the jeans they wore.

Rather than pursuing professional help, I took the matter into my own hands. It was my body and I thought I knew what to do to fix it. I subscribed to every calorie counting device, exercise regime and free weight loss website I could find. I tried to eat healthy and work out, but I was impatient. I had to lose the weight immediately. Almost without realizing, I descended into depression. My lack of success at losing weight led me to fluctuate between binge eating and starving myself. On my binging days, overstuffed and miserable, I would force myself to purge. I was sneaky.

No one had a clue what I was doing or how I was feeling. I was scared to tell anyone for fear that I would look weak. Mostly, I was afraid they would make me stop, and my eating habits were the only part of my life over which I had complete control.

I remember one evening in particular—my mom had made one of my favorite meals, and I had way too much. Seconds and thirds. Excusing myself to use the restroom, I went only a few feet away from our kitchen to our bathroom and tried to force myself to relieve myself of the guilt and the discomfort. But I couldn't do it. My parents and brother were only two doors down the hall, what if they heard me? I had done this so many times before, that I was sure they wouldn't. So what was stopping me?

I wasn't alone in that bathroom as I bowed before that porcelain god, that despite my feelings of being not pretty enough, not gregarious enough, not thin enough, I realized that I was and am enough for God. A verse I had heard innumerable times in church popped up in my mind: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

By being ashamed of my appearance, I was being ungrateful for God's greatest gift to me: my life.

Suddenly, I wasn't just hurting myself, but I was hurting the God who created me, who loved me, who made me into an image of Himself. By being ashamed of my appearance, I was being ungrateful for God's greatest gift to me: my life. I was insulting the handiwork created by his perfect hand. He died for me and loved me despite my extra few pounds. This body I'm living in is temporary, mortal, and not mine; I should be taking care of it as I would my friend's new car.

At that moment, my faith in God became my own. It was no longer the faith that my parents and church family had taught me. I decided that I believed in God by my own choice, without persuasion. With my newfound confidence in Him and my faith, I was able to admit to my mom that I had an eating disorder. It was painful. I could tell that she was scared and trying to hold back tears. I had never seen my mom come that close to crying, and I was the reason she was hurting.

I had to end her pain and my guilt. I got help and am proud to say that I no longer have an eating disorder. It wasn't easy. For months after my encounter with God, I still found myself walking into the bathroom to bow before that porcelain god that had ruled my life. But I was always able to walk back out knowing that I am beautiful in God's eyes, and nothing is more beautiful than knowing that.

Alana Felton is a freshman planning to concentrate in English and Slavic studies.



Blessing
Sunghee Kim

Conversation Corner: *How Does God View Ethnicity?*

ELIZABETH JEAN-MARIE

When I was growing up, my family and I would split our church time between American and Haitian churches. Each church held the same purpose: to create a community to worship and fellowship with God. Each church had a distinct style and approach to achieving that purpose. Haitian church services and American church services were two different worlds, two different languages, different styles of prayer, of worship, of preaching.

As humans, we use language, and race and ethnicity to better understand our existence on earth. Since the concept of ethnicity is of human construction, I do wonder: does God see ethnicity? God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, so He of course is aware of how we view ethnicity. But when we turn to the Bible, we see that as Christians our identity is in Jesus. Paul writes in a letter to the Galatians,

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
GALATIANS 3:26-28

As Christians, being a child of God is our most important identity, and I believe it's truly how God sees us. But that's not to say that He ignores our ethnicity. The same way that our human language is a vehicle to glorify God, our ethnic and cultural identities are blessings that we can use to glorify God. So I believe the differences I found between the Haitian and American churches do matter. When Jesus came to the earth, He came for all nations, He came so we could have different cultures and yet still be worshipping the same God. He came so that anyone, no matter what race, gender, or socioeconomic status, could follow Him. That's the beauty of the Gospel.

Elizabeth Jean-Marie is a senior concentrating in immunobiology.



Ministry Profile:

Asian Christian Fellowship

MATTHEW MIN

Brown/RISD Asian Christian Fellowship is one of the few ethnic-specific Christian ministries welcoming both Brown and RISD students. We are blessed to be associated with the nationwide campus ministry—InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). Under the guidance of amazing Interservice staff, we have become a self-sustainable student-led fellowship to grow in spirit and in faith. Our vision is to be a unified body in Christ reaching all Asian students for the glory of God. Brown/RISD ACF is a welcome, open community not only to Asians, but also to all ethnicities and cultures that are drawn to Asian cultural ministry, worship, or even the culture itself. In our fellowship, we turn to the Gospel to deepen our understanding of our Christian faith. Through weekly large group Bible study, we engage in student-led discussions in a vulnerable and welcoming environment to share any questions or personal concerns we may have. We are blessed to be able to have a close-knit community where we can confide in our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ while also learning from one another about God's Word.

The summer before my freshman year at Brown, I confess that I wanted to focus my life entirely on my studies, to take a break from my life in church. However, at my first activities fair, I realized how wrong this view was. An ACF senior reached his hand out to me, and I am to this day, as a senior, very thankful and blessed that I have met this person—I realized that one person could make all the difference. After attending the first ACF Large Group meeting, I found a welcoming community where I could be vulnerable with my fellow members and also learn so much more about Christianity walking alongside them. I found a group of friends and upperclassmen I made wonderful memories with, a place where I could be myself and ask others for advice, experience spiritual and emotional healing, and most importantly, engage in prayer. From a freshman now to a senior, I, along with the leadership team, yearn to provide the same open community in which both Christians and non-Christians alike can walk with God together during their college years and beyond. All are welcome to our large group meetings on Fridays at 7:30pm in Wilson Hall 302, and our small groups on Thursdays at 7:30pm in the Faunce Basement. Feel free to come hang out with us!



Doors of S. Stephen's
Philip Trammell '15

A Prayer for Brown and RISD

REVEREND AUGUSTINE MARIE REISENAUER, O.P.
Catholic Chaplain, Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design

Good and gracious Father, we humbly lift up our hearts before you.
We ask you to pour down your Spirit more deeply into our hearts.
Enliven them and enlighten them with your divine love.
Look graciously upon our communities of Brown and RISD.
Remind us always of the constancy of your eternal goodness.
When we receive and perceive your light, help us praise your eternal glory.
When we seem grey and lackluster, focus us on your everlasting splendor.
When we feel gloomy and lukewarm, enkindle us with your inextinguishable fire.
As we follow your Son along the way of discipleship, give us the strength each day to carry our cross.
Empower us to be humble of heart and generous of spirit, seeking to serve you in serving our neighbors.
May we be more considerate of the poor as you are.
May we be more compassionate toward the suffering as you are.
May we be more kind toward the lonely as you are.
As we have received so many blessings and so much grace, so may we give ourselves without calculation and without counting the cost.
In knowing how much you love each of us, in knowing how much we are loved, may we find it delightful to love you and our neighbors in return.
In humility and in confidence, we ask that you hear and answer our prayers, for we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Savior.
Amen.



Enter into his gates with thanksgiving
and into his courts with praise.

PSALM 100:4

Sacrare
Lauren Galvan '16