



CORNERSTONE

Grant Me My Wings 9
Jared Jones

John Chau's Body 20
Kion You

Two Letters 25
Chaclin Jung

Staff



President
David Shin

Editor-in-Chief
Naomi Kim

Copy Editor
Karis Ryu

Senior Editor
Jeremy Wang

Layout Editor
Liana Chaplain

Business Manager
Lisa Yang

Online Head
Mikaela Carrillo

Content Editors
Anna Delamerced
Kaitlan Bui
Joseph Delamerced
Jared Jones
Kristen Marchetti
Shannon Ryu
Haley Seo

Online Team
Cindy Won
Lisa Yang
Julius Gingles
Chris Ng
Charisa Shin
Lucy Tian
Casey Chan
Ashley Chang
Chaelin Jung
Melanie Kim
Claire Lin

Our Mission

Cornerstone is a publication that celebrates the truth and beauty of the Christian Gospel in order to glorify God, edify the Church, and reach the non-believer. We aim to provoke spiritual thought on and around the campuses of Brown and RISD. We publish works of art, prose, and poetry of all denominational persuasions that exhibit intelligent and creative approaches to current events, history, and our Christian faith.

Submissions & Inquiries

thebrowncornerstone@gmail.com

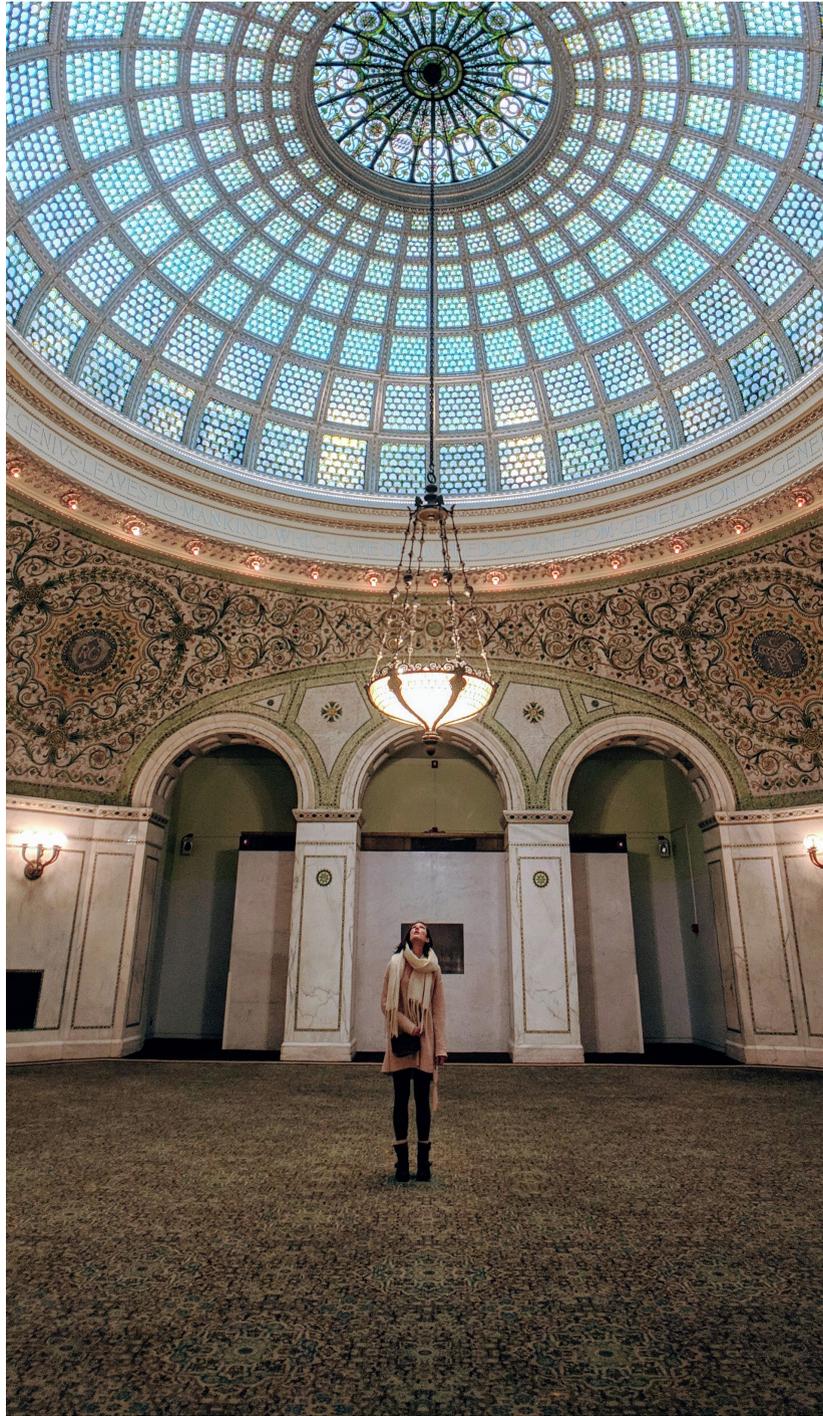
Online

brownrisdcornerstone.com

facebook.com/cornerstonemagazine

instagram.com/cornerstone.magazine

Together, Claire Lin '23



Upwards, Hope McGovern '19

Contents

Letter from the Editor Naomi Kim	6	Art & Photography
Non-Fiction		Beyond the City Kathy Luo
How We Met Joseph Delamerced	10	Together Claire Lin
To Walk Through A Doorway Hope McGovern	19	Upwards Hope McGovern
John Chau's Body Kion You	20	Mosaic Sky Kathy Luo
Two Letters Chaelin Jung	25	Birds of a Feather Kathy Luo
Prayer Reverend Janet M. Cooper Nelson	34	HOPE Ciprian Buzilla
Ministry Profile: Black Christian Ministries Julius Gingles	35	To the Greenhouse Kathy Luo
Fiction & Poetry		THE GATE Ciprian Buzilla
Grant Me My Wings Jared Jones	9	Waiting for Home Claire Lin
thaw Naomi Kim	12	Spring Path Kathy Luo
Daughter Karis Ryu	13	Reverie Kathy Luo
Through The Wilderness Mikaela Carrillo	17	Rooftops Kathy Luo
After the Apple Comes the Fall Kaitlan Bui	28	
Dreams of Skies Jeremy Wang	29	
Porcelain Butterfly Anna Delamerced	33	

Letter from the Editor

Harvest

Dear reader,

“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness” is the way John Keats describes autumn in his 1820 ode to that season. I don’t quite know about mists, but we do often associate fall with fruitfulness, with harvest, with abundance. The fall months bring with them bursting cornucopias and pumpkins fat and round as full moons, set up in grocery store entrances and on neighborhood front steps.

It’s late autumn as I write this letter, but you, dear reader, will see it published in the Spring 2020 issue. We as a staff have spent this harvest season sowing rather than reaping. Our newly created online team took a leap of faith with a blog and a new platform. Our print team has worked hard for this magazine, and now we hope to see the fruit of our labors in the spring. And as students, we’re all familiar with the feeling of investing time and energy into assignments and projects that come to fruition painstakingly slowly. Haven’t we all experienced this tension, whether we’re writing papers or repeating experiments or campaigning for change? The work is hard. The wait is long. The result is uncertain.

Whether we are Christian or not, we often feel like we sow, only to reap nothing. We often wonder if our work here and now means anything at all, or if everything is meaningless—a chasing after the wind, as the writer of Ecclesiastes laments. And for Christians, many of us wonder how we can work towards the Kingdom of God and what that even means.

Maybe it would be easier to give up. But the Apostle Paul encourages us not to “grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”¹ Can we join Paul in daring to believe that, somehow, no good we do goes to waste? From experience, we all know that even when our best

efforts don’t yield the kind of harvest we wanted, we can still reap wisdom from our failures.

And the Christian, moreover, trusts that all work—no matter how big or small, no matter in what field—will surely contribute to the Kingdom of God. Not all the seeds we sow will blossom in our lifetime, but the resurrection promises us that what is sown will be raised imperishable, in power and in glory.²

We hope that these pages offer you a look at the ways we sow and reap, harvest and hope. “Two Letters” addresses non-Christians and Christians alike, acknowledging in humility the ways the Church has failed and encouraging believers to work towards justice and restoration. “How We Met” and “Porcelain Butterfly” both show us another kind of sowing—investing in relationships and in other people, particularly in sharing the Gospel. And the poem “Through the Wilderness” is searing in its honest portrayal of the pain and despair we experience in our dry seasons, where growth and God both seem distant.

Reader, in your hands, you hold what we have sown. We hope that in reading, you will reap something of goodness in these pages.

Yours truly,



Naomi Kim is a junior concentrating in English.

1 Galatians 6:9, ESV

2 1 Corinthians 15:42-43



Mosaic Sky, Kathy Luo '19

*So is it with the resurrection of the dead.
What is sown is perishable;
what is raised is imperishable.*

1 Corinthians 15:42 (ESV)

Grant Me My Wings

Jared Jones

The Earth has confined me for too long,
I have been limited, walking and running,
Moving, but not really going anywhere.
The ground is too rough,
The desert sands scorch my feet,
The snow freezes my body.
I can barely swim across a pool,
Much less an ocean with powerful currents,
I can barely climb a tree,
Much less the mountains with their paths so steep.

Frustrated, I have cut through thorny thickets and ferocious forests,
Infested with racism and toxicity, with lies and perversion,
Those animals have claimed the lives of so many before me,
They tried to claim mine... I just manage to survive, and
I bear the scars and blisters, the boils and the festers to prove it.

I'm sick of it.
Sick of scavenging for food,
Sick of running, of trudging,
Of fighting, of barely pulling myself out of the forests of death,
All because I am limited to my feet here on the Earth.

No longer:
God,
Grant me my Wings.

I want to fly, where the sky is so free and clear.
Oh, the joy!
I can sail just above the oceans, gliding my hand across the waters.
I can soar through those forests, swerving and dodging those hellish animals.
I can fly down in the lowest valleys, fleeing quickly when trouble arises.

I can touch the summits of mountains, never having to climb them.

And I can help others. The strength that I once used to save myself

I can now use to help others, as they too wait for God to grant them their wings.

A responsibility that comes with my wings, one that I will not take for granted.

And granted, I will still have to bear the cold, freezing weather,
The dry, exhaustingly hot weather.

Granted, I will still need to rest and fly back down to the Earth sometimes,

But I can bear it... so long as I have my wings.

I can fly near the sun, feeling the warmth on its face,
Gliding on Your wind that supports me... oh, the joy! Oh the bliss!

I'm tired of being limited on the ground,
I want to fly, fly, fly...closer to you, God.
I can't wait for the Beautiful and Wonderful Transformation...

So God, this is my prayer:
Grant me my wings.

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:30-31 (NIV)

Jared Jones is a sophomore intending to concentrate in English.

How We Met

Joseph Delamerced

After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

1 Kings 19:12 (NIV)

Let me tell you the story of how we never met, you and I.

The first way we did not meet was by accident of birth. Whether you were born thirty years too early or I was born thirty years too late, I do not know. Perhaps we are both travelers out of our natural times; maybe we would both have fit better a hundred years ago, or three hundred years from now. I don't know, and I'll never know.

We did not meet as children. I often complained there was no sidewalk to reach my home. There was not even a road to get to yours. As a child, you played basketball every day, with dreams of becoming a professional athlete. I committed to burying my nose in a book, with dreams of being a half-successful writer.

We did not meet as youths. I attended college and tried to face the world alone. I struggled to find myself. I struggled more with the lie that I ever did. I would have liked to have known your lessons in strength and perseverance. You joined the militia and rarely speak of it. I've heard a few stories, little more than whispers that I could not comprehend of a life in a culture alien to me. I never could have survived in any military setting. Even as I grew older, I was still too physically weak and strong-willed for such a life. You tried to flee when the war came to you, I've been told. Your boat was told to turn around. I went on a boat when I was nine. I vomited ten minutes into the ride. No, we did not meet each other then.

We did not meet as adults. You worked on a farm, and the closest I have ever been to one is on a field trip. I am not built for physical labor; my hands are soft and my strength is lacking. I work with computers. I am not certain if you used one when you were older, considering typing may have been too difficult due to the train accident.

The train system was new, and the alarms were faulty. As you approached the crossing, there were two cars in front of yours. All of you moved forward. The train did not stop. All three cars were trapped, and then—shattered, just as your bones were. I have heard that you and your wife were the only two to survive. You like to add that my mother was the third — that is why you named her “Victoria”: victory amidst tragedy.

I wonder if we'll ever meet, you and I. Our common ground is little. There are many times I wish we could have met. There are many times we never will.

So as your memories of our times together fade, I need to know: is this how we'll meet, you and I?

I should have met you when we saw each other. I took that moment for granted.

The day was early, and I woke up to the smell of spam and garlic rice. As I entered the kitchen, your wife

handled our initial introductions. “This is your *lolo's* favorite dish,” she explained. “I think you'll like it, too.” She then led me toward the table where you were seated, urging me to reach out: “*Mano pa.*” I took your hand and put it to my forehead, hoping for some lasting connection. I retreated again, but we smiled at each other, reassured: our silent handshake. The days repeated in similar fashion, and before we knew it, the week was over. The airplane ride home was long, and the memories began to take shape. Yet I felt I did not learn much.

Though we were introduced, we did not share our stories with one another. You own a cross; are you religious? You seem to know God; who is that? You mention church but do not go; why is that?

When we saw each other again, I had grown up, and you had gotten older. I held your hand at your bedside and tried to tell you about who I've become. You called me by my father's name; the only image you associated with my name was one of a boy. "*Mahal kita,*" I whispered. I still know little of your language.

"What can we share with each other?" I would ask. I am too young to know your life, yet I am too old to claim that I do not know better. There's a light I found, something so profound that I must tell it to you in full. But what can my words mean to you? I do not know how you will respond, or what you will take away. Will you hear a gentle whisper, or witness some blinding light?

This one-way conversation often feels fruitless. I do not know what to pray for. I know less what to say. Every day, I grow more frustrated. How often do I have a chance to hold your hand and talk to you? How many more chances will I ever have? As your memories of our times together fade, I need to know: is this how we'll meet, you and I?

I know this is hard.

So for a long time, I sat—

Your lives are more alike than you think.

And I prayed—

Isn't there a story you'd like to tell?

And I tried to meet you again.

"Let me tell you the story of how we met, He and I."

So in this way, we will know each other. We will know our truths and values, those stories that have stayed bottled within us, the ones we always wanted to share, the ones that shaped

who we are. For in all of our stories, there is a common thread.

In all of our stories, God was there.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27 (NIV)

Joseph Delamerced is a sophomore concentrating in Education & Health.

thaw

Naomi Kim

sap still stirs within
roots curled deep into dirt
like fingers scraping at bedrock

clinging to the thin winter-starved branches
are droplets of water
like pearls lined on a bracelet:
God's gift to this gray rainy day

awake me, O Lord

breathe Your light
upon my dormant soul, that
i may open my eyes, blinking ice
from winter-cruised lashes,

and like a bulb buried deep,
press towards the uppermost layer of soil,
which separates earth from heaven.

Naomi Kim is a junior concentrating in English.



HOPE, Ciprian Buzilla PhD '21

Daughter

Karis Ryu

Content warning: mentions of death.

“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

1 Corinthians 13:3 (ESV)

When Umma died, I didn't cry.

It was two weeks after my seventh birthday. We'd visited her in the hospital that day, Appa and me. Gathered our breaths and blown the candles out together, the three of us.

“When are you coming home?” I had asked her.

“Soon,” she'd promised.

Maybe I still thought she would follow through. As Pastor Heo delivered a solemn message, as we placed flowers down by the plaque in the churchyard. Maybe I was thinking of that story we learned in Sunday school about Lazarus and how Jesus raised him from the dead, and how, when we learned that story, I had turned to Jinsung and whispered if he thought Jesus could do that for my umma too.

“I don't know, you're the smartest one here.” He shrugged and turned back around to face Ms. Moon.

Maybe Umma was only napping. Maybe she would wake up soon.

But she didn't.

She didn't, and at the end of every day from then on are Appa

and me, trying to wake up from the dream that was our life with her.

Appa doesn't react well when I tell him that I'm not coming home for winter break.

“I'm taking a winter course,” I explain over the phone, careful to keep my voice low. The librarian is particularly sensitive about noise. “I found a way to pay for housing, so don't worry about it—”

“Why would you decide this before talking to me?” he interjects.

Silence. My brain grapples for words to string together, but no explanation arises, because there is none.

I've only called Appa once this whole semester.

“Even Jinsung has been calling his parents.”

“Mm-hmm.” I smile and nod on reflex, even though he can't see me.

“I can't tell people what my own daughter is up to.”

Smile, nod, smile, nod, always say please, always say thank you, always say yes.

That's all I've ever done.

“Ddal-ah.”

Good daughters go home.

“Bye, Appa.”

Click.

I'm not a good daughter anymore.

“Such a good daughter.”

I know that's what everyone was thinking the years after Umma died. They thought they were being respectful and quiet, but I could see it in their eyes. The way they looked at me whenever I ran down the fellowship hall with the other children. Pity, and anticipation, and approval.

I heard all of it.

“Such a nice girl.”

I don't know how it started. Maybe it was a coping mechanism I didn't realize I was using. Or maybe it really was in my heart all along.

What came first, the chicken or the egg? What came first, the good daughter or the expectation that I be one? Did I smile because I wanted to, or because I felt like I had to?

Maybe, once upon a time, I knew. But I don't know anymore.

And how could I have known that as a seven-year old, anyway?

But for a while, I liked it. Being Grace Shin, the pretty girl next door everyone liked, who was so nice and sweet despite everything that had happened.

At least I wasn't Grace Shin, the girl without a mom.

I haven't been to church in three months.

No one knows this when I come for the summer. Elder Park thinks I found a nice Korean church thirty minutes outside of campus with long sermons and potluck lunches.

Because Grace Shin would never tell lies.

The pew is cold and hard under my hands. I used to win all of the Sunday school memory verse contests. I played piano on that stage for four years.

If only they knew, hisses a voice, airy, barely audible.

Pastor Heo preaches, standing at the pulpit as though he hasn't aged a day. Appa is next to me, stoic, stiff, his stare straight ahead.

I want to pay attention, I really do. Everyone else thinks I do. But my mind is pulled in a hundred different directions, and none of them are towards the pulpit.

It's been a while since I've thought about God.

God used to be ritual, like everything else in my life. Like homework. Like putting away the dishes after lunch. Like saying *Gwenchanayo*, of course, no problem, and smiling that same smile until my mouth hurt.

I wonder, more and more, if there ever was any substance to me at all. If there is any now to salvage.

I used to think that I knew why I went to church. I used to clasp my hands and pray earnestly to a God I thought was listening. John 3:16, God is good all the time, all the time God is good, He is risen He is risen indeed, Hallelujah Amen, be lifted high. *I believe in God, the Father almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary—*

The congregation recites the Apostle's Creed, and my mouth stays shut.

I am a nineteen-year-old pressure cooker, so it's no surprise that I explode.

Dinner is silent except for the clinking of chopsticks against plates. I use them to shred the jaeyuk on my dish, slowly, watching tears grow and stretch in the pork.

Appa sets his cup down in a sudden, sharp motion. "I don't understand you anymore."

There's a picture of Umma on the counter, just her and me, because Appa took it ten months after I was born. She is eternally young, and I am unrecognizable.

I don't understand myself either, Appa. But what I do know is that once upon a time, I used to. I used to know, before people got in the way. Before Appa got in the way, before Elder Park got in the way, before this whole neighborhood turned to me and saw the girl that they needed.

And I had become that girl. But at the cost of myself.

"You never did," I say. Then again, louder. And louder. And louder.

It's been nineteen years. So when I explode, it's messy and there's noise and pain and heartbreak everywhere.

Home is a small two-room apartment tiptoeing the border between Maryland and Virginia. Not quite one thing or another.

I used to think
that I knew why
I went to church.

Home is beige carpet, mottled from years of stains not quite cleaned up.

Home is Appa crying with the door closed when he thought I was asleep.

Home is me, eight years old, standing silent and still in the hallway, hearing every noise.

We used to fight. He had yelled at me that day. I hadn't eaten dinner. I wasn't doing my homework. Because Umma wasn't coming home.

I heard him crying that day. He hadn't meant for me to hear it. But I had heard it anyway.

He still doesn't know that I heard him. That I had been standing there in the hallway, pressed against the wall, and that I had bowed my head and clasped my hands and made a promise to God, to Umma.

I'm sorry. I'll never make Appa cry again.

When Umma died, I didn't cry. Because when the world shakes like that, someone has to keep it together.

I tried, Umma. I tried to be good.

I smiled every day. I washed every dish. I did every sheet of homework. I took care of Appa, I said thank you to everyone at church, I tried so hard to be so good—

But I'm not good. I'm sorry.

I failed.

There's anger festering inside of me. Anger and exhaustion.

I'm so tired, Umma.

I tried to be good. I tried to make everyone happy. But I can't do it.

Is this what prayer is?

When you're on your knees in utter desolation, when all you can do is cry out without knowing who is out there to hear you.

I've never really prayed my own prayers before.

I've never let myself admit my own thoughts before.

All my time was spent trying to live for other people. People who wouldn't understand. People who also fall short.

There has to be more to life than smiling and nodding forever.

Bow your head, clasp your hands.
It's ritual. But what else can I do?
Isn't this how rituals begin?

Dear God,

*Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
Psalm 73:25-26 (ESV)*

Karis Ryu is a junior concentrating in History and East Asian Studies.

16 Spring 2020





Through The Wilderness

Mikaela Carrillo

*But I cry to you for help, Lord;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.*

*Why, Lord, do you reject me
and hide your face from me?*

Psalm 88:13-14 (NIV)

Where the land is not sown
And the wind blows not,
The ground is rough-going
And the air is too hot,
Where the land cries out
And the enemy mocks,
I weep and call out,
“Where is my rock?”

Mikaela Carrillo is a junior concentrating in Public Health



*THE GATE,
Ciprian Buzilla PhD '21*

To Walk Through A Doorway

Hope McGovern

It is never an innocuous thing to walk through a doorway. There must have been a choice, a decision to leave behind one backdrop in favor of another. You must go this way or that, fall on only one side of the threshold. To enter through a doorway means to leave the place you were before. The Ancient Romans personified this notion with Janus—the two-faced god of transitions, the keeper of doorways. In him was both life and death, war and peace, past and future. He was the door.

But there is never just one door. Each junction begets another, and so the journey begins. As if in a labyrinth, we know not whether a single choice will bring us to our end or reveal us again to the expectant sunlight. Where do we end up? Many go down to Egypt, searching for milk and honey, but find only chains. Some make their way step-by-step to Babylon, steeped in riches bought by the exploitation of the weak. Most, though, just sit and wait for Godot beside the same broken wells. But none find their way back to the high places of the Garden.

Maybe paradise will not be ignorant of pain, but replete with agony that has been felt to the full and then mended at its source.

Has the path to paradise been lost? We have stumbled in the dark long enough—if only we could find the right door, we might return to a former state of innocence. We step with tired feet into traditions of shame, hoping moral austerity will guide us back to paradise. We linger at each mirage, desperate to spy the shape of a fruit tree. Or, stubbornly, we declare paradise has always been all around us, never mind the dark and cold. At each threshold we ready ourselves, sure that this path will lead to the light. But the object of our reaching eludes our grasping hands, and we never grow less weary. Shall we walk backwards, retrace our steps through each doorway until

chaos recedes and we walk in the Garden without shame once again?

Or perhaps we have only thought we knew what paradise would look like. Perhaps paradise will not look like tears that have never been cried, but tears that have been wiped away by loving hands. Maybe paradise will not be ignorant of pain, but replete with agony that has been felt to the full and then mended at its source. Perhaps it is not a garden at all to which we go, but a gleaming city on a hill. Our paradise lies ahead, not behind.

Another says, “I am the Door” (John 10:9, ESV), though He does not wear two faces. Through His door is only life, only peace, only a future awash with light. Leaving behind the labyrinth of Sheol, we Passover from death to life and set out on a path for the Celestial City. The way is narrow, but if we will only pass through the Bloodied doorway, we will reach it. All that remains, then, is to cross the final threshold. Therefore, seeker, enter in.

“What are we born for?”

‘For infinite happiness,’ said the Spirit. ‘You can step out into it at any moment...’

-C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

Hope McGovern '19 graduated with a degree in Engineering Physics.

John Chau's Body

Kion You

My name is John. I love you, and Jesus loves you. Jesus Christ gave me authority to come to you. On November 16th, 2018, John Chau, a 26-year old missionary, shouted these words from his kayak towards the men standing on the shore of North Sentinel Island. As Chau got off his kayak and waded closer to the island, the men shot at him with bows and arrows, one of which pierced through his waterproof Bible. Chau then rushed back into his boat and paddled back towards his local fixers, Christians from neighboring islands.

I love you, and Jesus loves you. It is illegal to visit North Sentinel Island, due to the Sentinelese's historic hostility towards outside encroachment. Yet Chau tried again the next day, knowing full well that the island's inhabitants would not warm up to him: he wrote these words to his friend Alex the previous night: "I think I might die. I'll see you again, bro—and remember, the first one to heaven wins." The next morning, fishermen dropped Chau off at the island.

On the following day, the fishermen drew back to the island only to see a body, presumably Chau's, being dragged around the beach with a rope tied around the neck. Chau's death then caused international controversy and ridicule, within both Christian and non-Christian spheres, and he became a man known only in the way that he died. Think pieces, investigative reports, and blog posts flooded the internet that month, and the tenor of all rang similar: descriptors like *naïve*, *brainwashed*, and *foolish* became ubiquitous in describing Chau.

I became flustered and uncomfortable at this coverage, because, first of all, it is an utter rarity to see an Asian American male face plastered all over the news. If anything, I was taken back to 2012's "Linsanity," a two week period in

which the Harvard educated, devoutly Christian Jeremy Lin came out of nowhere and took the New York Knicks to a blazing seven game win streak. Yet unlike Linsanity, a unified "win" amongst Asian Americans, the death of Chau was the complete opposite.

+++

Chau was born on December 18th, 1991, as the third child of a Chinese psychiatrist father and a white lawyer mother, and grew up in Vancouver, Washington, surrounded by lush wooded forests. Chau then attended Oral Roberts University, an Evangelical university in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which sends a seventh of its student body abroad on missions. After his

John Chau exemplifies the conditions of what it so often feels like to be Asian American, to belong to nowhere and to be beholden to nothing.

freshman year, Chau felt his calling from God, commenting on a missionary blog, "Hi! I genuinely believe that God has called me to go to the Sentinelese." He then began working earnestly for this goal.

There is no doubt that John Chau believed in the absolute truth of Jesus's "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:19, that he had to "go and make disciples of all nations." He subsequently joined a community of people who do extreme, often undercover missionary work in the "10/40 Window," a region between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator that holds most of the world's Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. Between 2015 and 2016, Chau made four trips to the surrounding Andaman Islands, making contacts in the local Christian community. In 2017, Chau attended a missionary training course with the All Nations program. The finale of this program consisted of Chau taking hours to hike in an area south of Kansas City, and then facing a mock-up tribal village in which "locals" threatened to kill him in an unintelligible language. The international executive

director of All Nations told the *New York Times* that Chau was "one of the best participants in this experience that we have ever had."

John Chau is someone who I, a Korean American, Christian, college-aged male, could've seen myself become. John Chau exemplifies the conditions of what it so often feels like to be Asian American, to belong to nowhere and to be beholden to nothing. Yet this is not just about his race but also his masculinity, shown through his idealism, and his religion, as Chau embodied a sense of exploration and travel that he only thought could last within a Christian paradigm, that evangelical mission was the only way to live fruitfully in foreignness.

+++

Like John Chau, I, too, went on an overseas mission trip after my freshman year of high school. But unlike Chau, I had no such conviction of a "calling," nor did I have faith that my presence overseas could change anybody other than myself. It was the fall of 2012, and my dad had told me to come with him to Thailand the next summer. It would be for two weeks, right in the middle of our two month family exodus to South Korea. I had no say in the decision.

The mission team from San Diego Korean Presbyterian Church to Thailand started off with five: the senior pastor of our church, my dad, myself, an older woman, and a middle aged man. We would be spreading God's light in a country where approximately one percent of the population is Christian, compared to the eighty or so percent of Korean Americans who identify as Christian. Historically, evangelism efforts in Thailand had been going on for over half a millennium, ever since Jesuit priests tagged along with Portuguese colonizers in the 1550s. American Protestant efforts began in earnest in 1828, as Congregationalists were followed by Baptists who were followed by Presbyterians. From the

1970s onward, Korean missionaries began flocking in, and now Korean Americans would be coming too.

+++

Chau's heart had been set for years on the North Sentinel Island, which the neighboring Onge people, part of the overarching Andamanese people group, call *Chia daaKiwokweyeh*. Like in so many other parts of the Global South, new diseases introduced by British expeditions in the late 18th century, such as measles, pneumonia, and influenza, wiped out the vast majority of the population. The number of Sentinelese today is approximated to be around 100-150 people.

After showing much resistance to more British settler colonialism, the British responded by creating penal colonies on Andaman lands, encroaching even further on indigenous lands. In the 1940s, even the Japanese bombed the islands. However, in 1991, a team of Indian anthropologists led by Madhumala Chattopadhyay successfully met the Sentinelese, passing along gifts like coconuts. As a whole, virtually nothing is known about the Sentinelese people outside of this sparse contact with outsiders. Perhaps this impossibility is what drew Chau in, this idea that he could join a history that no one had ever been successful in doing.

It is easy to label John Chau as assimilating into what Teju Cole calls a "White-Savior Industrial Complex," one in which well-intentioned westerners blithely go on humanitarian missions to have "a big emotional experience that validates privilege." However, the contemporary world of Christian evangelism, although retaining strong doses of neocolonialism, has become complicated by the mess of globalization. It was only a few decades ago when Pyongyang was called "The Second Jerusalem," and today, South Korea officially commissions around 30,000 missionaries annually, falling second in numbers only to the United States. Now, the global

mission field is much more complicated than a simple binary of West to East, from white to non-white. Nearly half of the top 10 countries that send out missionaries are outside of the Western World: neighboring India, Brazil, the Philippines, Mexico. Korean missionaries now go to places like UCLA, the Rust Belt, and New York City alongside China and the Dominican Republic.

Thus, John Chau can be seen as the paragon of a globalization teeming with the internationalism of religion: Christianized Chinese immigrant father meets white mother, child grows up in the Pacific Northwest, attends college in the South, and then decides to go to an island group off the coast of India. "I'm in awe of how GREAT our God is," Chau wrote in his journal a few days before his death. "Even my heritage points to you—me, an American citizen, part Irish, part Native American (Choctaw), part African, and part Chinese and Southeast Asian—thank you Father for using me, for shaping me and molding me to be your ambassador."

In his journal, Chau expressed that he hoped to live with the Sentinelese for decades, learning their language and teaching them about the ways of Christ. Moreover, in Chau's view, if he died, he went to heaven. If he lived, he had a greater chance to bring the Sentinelese into heaven with him. Thus, Chau, in his own belief, was by no means "irrational" or "delusional" for dying as the media portrayed him to be. The only irrational and delusional parts of his thinking were that he could quarantine himself for a few weeks, come into contact with the Sentinelese, and somehow not spread virulent diseases to the uncontacted tribe.

+++

In our first night in Bangkok, a sweaty, jetlagged July night, we stayed in what was described to me as a "four star hotel," which surprised me—I had expected to suffer. During the next day or so, I played with Thai schoolchildren in the church and

22 Spring 2020

gawked at how cheap the food was. The next day, we drove a minivan north into the countryside, through fields and fields of staring strangers. We spent most of our time driving across the country.

I found little purpose for me, and even for my father, to be in Thailand, other than to serve as spectators who were part of the evangelical travel industry. Because our team was so small and had an actual pastor, our roles were clearly defined: the Korean missionary shuttled us around the country and organized all the logistics, while the pastor gave the sermons during the night, usually in small homes that doubled as churches. Generally, from Korean people I know who have been on overseas mission trips—which is to say the majority of them—the church teams usually split up into different groups and visit different villages, often performing skits and running a VBS (Vacation Bible School) for the children. In my case, I had no stake in any of it. I did, however, contribute some prayers into the ether.

My one "role," however, was photographing the events of the mission trip. My camera was a shining eight megapixel camera on my new pebble blue Galaxy S3, and I took as many pictures as I could: the wet markets, the children, the chickens, the night gatherings. People praying, people crying, people praising.

My friends, who had done mission trips in countries like India and Mexico, always came back to church tanned and weathered, giving exuberant testimonies of how they saw miracles that summer: people getting healed on the spot, dead arms becoming functional again, cataracts disappearing, demons being driven out of bodies. I saw nothing that summer.

I remember trying incredibly hard one night after the sermon, putting my hands on the body of a frail, old man in the hopes that his paralyzed legs would work again. We were all praying together, the pastor, the missionary, my father, and I. *Dear God,*

please heal this man's legs. Dear God, please heal this man's legs. Dear God, please heal this man's legs. Dear God, please let me believe this is working. There were no miracles in any village. I wondered if I was the one stopping God from making miracles happen, if my sins were letting the devil have the upper hand.

In one village, our team ran into a local Peace Corps volunteer, a young white woman who attended the Thai church, but could not understand Thai. I was told to translate for her, perhaps out of pity, as she had never been able to understand a sermon despite dutifully coming by every Sunday. So during the service, our Korean preacher spoke in Korean, the Korean missionary translated into Thai, and I, in the back, whispered English translations into her ear. She nodded eagerly, and expressed much gratitude that she could finally understand a sermon. I, for once, was happy that I had actually done something.

+++

After Chau's death, his father wrote to Doug Bock Clark, who reported extensively on Chau's life in *GQ*, saying, "the theology of the Great Commission is the byproduct of Western colonization and imperialization, and not Biblical teaching at all." He stated that people groups who did not follow Western religious terms could still be following the teachings of the Bible. His son certainly did not think this way. Chau believed firmly that people who had not heard the gospel would go to a punitive hell, and acted on this conviction. Clark concluded, "In all my months of reporting, I never found any evidence that Chau even once questioned his calling. His certainty was so absolute that he was willing to bet not only his life on it but the lives of the Sentinelese."

For me, Thailand was my first and last overseas mission trip, and unlike Chau, I did not decide to head back and try my hand again. Yet as an Asian American Christian, and one who will work abroad after graduating college, how could I

help but respect the depth of Chau's conviction, despite how problematic it may be? How could I help but project my own racial and religious insecurities onto Chau, and impose the fear of subpar assimilation into white, Evangelical America, of not being "Christian" and "Asian" enough, as an impetus that drove his convictions even further? And how could I have any answers of what the "right" media coverage for Chau should be, other than simply saying that the way newspapers portrayed him as a symbol, rather than a human, like they so often do?

I can't help but sense a feeling of estrangement when thinking of Chau's life: "He seemed sort of lonely, despite everything," Kaleb Graves, a friend of Chau's, told Clark, referring to the fact that Chau had to hide his singular, illegal dream from the vast majority of people in his life. This loneliness is why seeing John Chau's face all over newspaper headlines struck me so much. For me, it was less a sympathy towards his plight: I believe in heaven, and believe that Chau will go to heaven. Nor was I shocked by the attacks on naive Christian missionaries as part of a colonialist enterprise, which I had heard many times prior. What really struck me, and what I still think about today, is the fact that Chau, a tiny young man who grew up as a minority in America, acted on his belief that he could go absolutely anywhere, settle down, and begin to preach. *Conviction*, whether constructive or debilitating, was something Chau undeniably could not let go of.

Kion You is a senior concentrating in English.

Waiting for Home

Claire Lin

“At that time I will gather you; at that time, I will bring you home.”

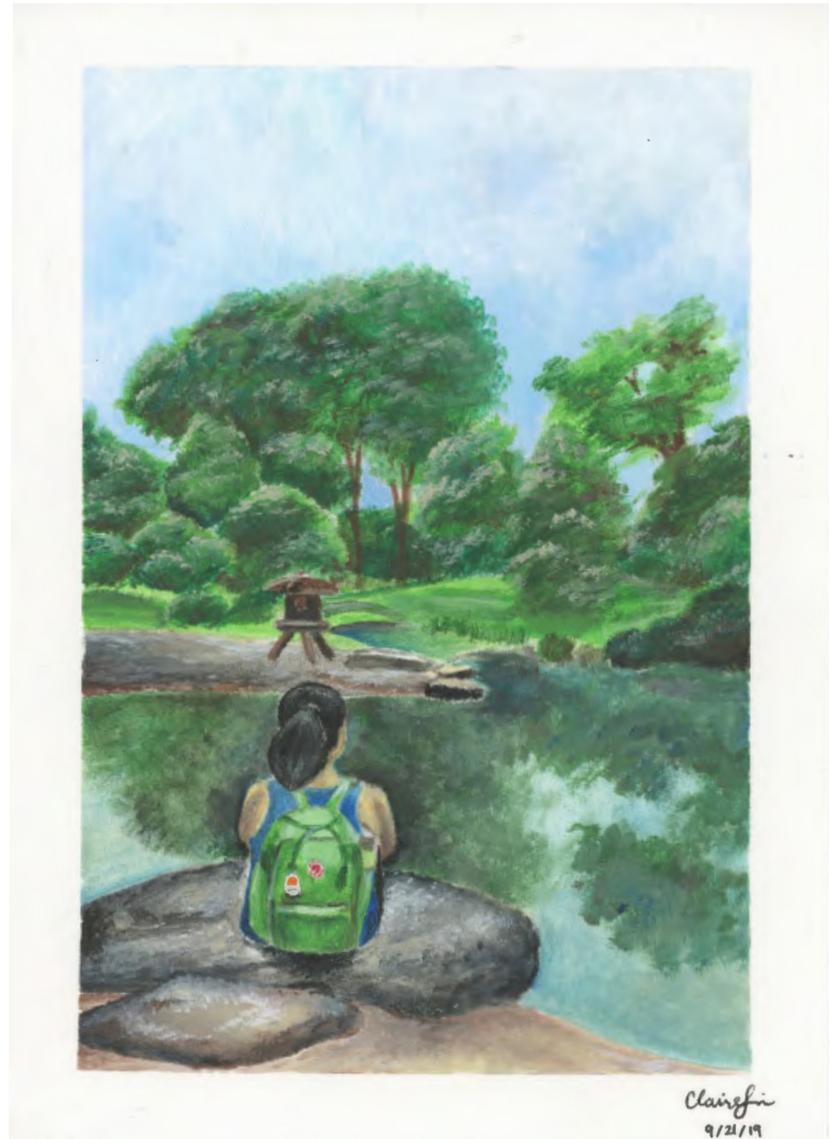
Zephaniah 3:20 (NIV)

Whenever my father stayed late at the office, he would have to walk alone through a city filled with gang violence, street theft, and shootings. On those nights, my mom, my sister, and I ate together in anxious silence, worrying about all that my father would encounter on his return. As we waited by the door for his appearance, there was no peace—instead, our living room lingered with fear and unrest, because we didn’t know if he would make it back.

Today we are waiting for Jesus to come back. Even though we don’t know exactly when it will be or how it will be like, we rest in the Faithful One who “[does] not change” (Malachi 3:6), trusting that He will hold fast to His promise to return for us. This world—and all its uncertainty, challenges, failures, and defeat—may seem terrifying, but we have peace because in Christ, “perfect love expels all fear” (1 John 4:18, NLT). And as I learned during one particularly hectic summer in high school when my parents dragged me away from SAT prep and into a garden overflowing with the splendid work of God, there is incomparable comfort knowing that our lives are safely kept in the hands of the great Creator of the universe.

So we live, reassured that while the things of this world are temporary, we have a glorious and eternal place in heaven prepared for us. And we hope, our feet tired but our souls resting and waiting for the King to bring us home.

Claire Lin is a freshman intending to concentrate in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.



Claire Lin
9/21/19

Two Letters

Chaelin Jung

To those who have been hurt by the Church,

I'm sorry. I'm sorry for the pain this institution may have caused you, the ways it has been complicit in atrocities throughout history, and, above all, the fact that it hasn't always been the reflection of Christ that it is called to be.

From the institution of slavery to the legacy of colonialism in the Global South to the white-savior complex, it's easy to see the historical evil that has been done in the purported name of Christianity. And I would be lying if I claimed to not be guilty myself. I've had friends belonging to the LGBTQ+ community who told me of experiences like public shaming by church members and condemnation of Christian family members. I can't even imagine how hurt they must have been when I tried to gloss over their pain with empty platitudes about the love and goodness found in Christianity. To those friends, I'm sorry. I should have been a better listener and a better friend. I should have sought to understand your experiences instead of simply seeing it as another opportunity to proclaim my faith.

I think this hypocrisy I am guilty of is similarly apparent in many other Christians, especially those whose actions matter on a national and international level. Perhaps you've wondered: how can politicians claim to be Christian, yet promote policies that strip humans—made in God's image—of their dignity? Why does a God we proclaim to be all-loving and good allow suffering in the world? Every time I hear of the latest shooting or asylum-seeking children put in cages or incident of police brutality, I too find myself angry at God for permitting such things and frustrated at the Church for its inaction. These big questions of suffering and evil are ones humanity has been wrestling with for centuries, and I would be grossly oversimplifying if I tried to explain my understanding of these topics within the confines of this apology. But I always go back to the things I do know: God is sovereign (Colossians

1:17), He sees our pain (Psalm 34:18), and He is making all things new (Revelation 21:5).

You probably have many more questions, and I probably won't have the answers. But I hope that doesn't discourage you from seeking out faith yourself. In fact, I would encourage you to continue asking challenging and messy questions, especially as they relate to your own experiences and identity. Because despite the ugly divisiveness of our time and the categories of *us vs. them* that constantly pit people against one another in everything from politics to ethnicity to religion, I still believe that individual conversations built on respect and trust are the most effective tool for mutual understanding. In the Bible, James similarly urges us to be “quick to listen and slow to speak” (James 1:19, NIV). For example, when I was working with refugee populations during a summer internship, I met countless volunteers, many who came with church groups. They arrived with fears and doubts about what would it mean to openly welcome refugees into the community: “How can we know they're *good people*?” even “Why can't they just go back to their home countries?” But when they met the refugee families and heard their stories of hardship and resilience, their hearts softened. Critics became champions, the fearful now the fiercest of advocates.

I illustrate this example because I believe that everyone needs these encounters and personal experiences to look beyond what we may have been inculcated with by media, popular opinion, and even our own ignorance. The Church needs these experiences, and we need you to help us better understand you as an individual. So I urge you to seek out conversations with those who belong in the Church, and call us out when you see ignorance.

While the outlook may seem gloomy, we can find hope in the redemptive work God is doing in and through His people. From prison reform to treating AIDS to addressing human

trafficking and modern-day slavery, Christians have been major participants in global efforts for justice. When the Church seems irredeemable, we can look towards Christ's ministry on earth to see what it should be. Our servant-king Jesus ate meals with outcasts (Mark 2:15-17), healed the sick (Matthew 9:20-22), and mingled with the poor (Mark 12:41-44). He surrounded himself with the people the world rejected and taught lessons of neighborly love and justice. He was—and is—our Prince of Peace, in whom we find rest and solace.

This is just the beginning of what could be a lifetime of apology. And I realize none of this means anything if nothing changes on the Church's end. We Christians, are not perfect—far from it, actually. We're a group of broken and sinful people who are wholly dependent on God's grace for salvation. To be completely honest, I'm not exactly sure how we can achieve the change needed for the Church to be what it's intended to be: a picture of Christ.

But this I know to be true: we were fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image (Psalm 119:34), and His love extends to all of us. Most importantly, I hope you know that you are heard and seen—maybe not *always* by the Church or its members—but always by the Creator of the universe. His love for you goes far beyond any label or identity, and He longs to heal both your wounds and the brokenness of this world.

To the Church,

During one of my first lectures in college, the professor started class with an exercise: “Raise your hand if you think the world is messed up.” Nearly everyone in the 300-person lecture shot their hands up. From global refugee crises to perpetual gun violence to deep racial division, the world is broken with seemingly irreparable wounds.

And in this brokenness and this chaos, we mourn. We mourn the sin that causes evil and hate to corrupt God's beautiful creation, and we grieve over the pain and sorrow that permeates every corner of our existence. We long for the
26 Spring 2020

wholeness and the perfection of heaven, where tears will be no longer, sorrow a memory of the past, and joy everlasting.

But while we're here in this life, our mourning cannot fizzle into passivity or jadedness. Because God makes it clear that He wants to use His people for His redemptive work—and that includes social justice:

Do justice, love mercy. Micah 6:8 (ESV)

As you did it to one of the least of these brothers, you did it to me.
Matthew 25:40 (ESV)

Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless. Isaiah 1:17 (ESV)

We often avoid conversations about the dark history of the Church's association with racism, bigotry, and sexism. We often stay silent regarding affliction around the world. So with the aim of cultivating a culture in the Church of service, reconciliation, and sacrificial love reflective of Christ's, let's talk about these things and create spaces and opportunities to discuss social justice with discernment and love.

I was reading through Galatians recently, and I saw this verse and couldn't stop rereading it:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

In one verse, the Apostle Paul completely deconstructs any possible argument we could have for not treating everyone with dignity and respect. Yet, somehow these tropes of Christians promoting racism, discrimination, and bigotry have become normalized. Perhaps even worse, Christians, especially in the western world, can be so easily apathetic to human suffering around the world.

If we truly believe that God is sovereign, we should dream big dreams and pray big prayers. One practical thing I've

**But our involvement
in social justice as
Christians cannot
stop with thoughts
and prayers.**

been doing is lifting up specific countries or social issues in my prayers, praying for spiritual and physical provision, for God to raise up and send out laborers to the harvest, and for love to overcome evil.

But our involvement in social justice as Christians cannot stop with thoughts and prayers. Because prayers to a sovereign and faithful God move mountains when paired with acts of active obedience.

In typical college-student fashion, I've been thinking a lot about my future calling. And God, in His grace, has been opening my eyes to see entire fields and opportunities—from development economics to human rights law—through which I can be a part of work that advances His kingdom here on earth. In the process, I've been challenged to pursue a professional career that's glorifying not in the eyes of man but in the eyes of God.

We can also give: our energy, our time, our finances, returning a portion of what has been given to us by God. Each of us has a heart for different issues, and discovering that is a blessing in itself. Here is a very short list of organizations that recognize faith as the motivation for their work:

- HOPE International: utilizes microloans and collective saving models to address poverty globally
- World Vision: focuses on community development and individualized child sponsorship
- Love146: works to end child trafficking and exploitation; founding of organization was deeply inspired by Christian faith
- Bread for the World: advocates for policy changes to address malnutrition

But honestly, you don't need to work with Christian philanthropic organizations—or even established organizations—at all, although those can be good places to start. Jesus's ministry was built on relationships, on evidenced love and generosity. Our command to love our neighbors, second in importance only to loving God, is one we shouldn't

take lightly (Galatians 5:14). As a global Church, let's be people who listen, who seek to understand hurt, who seek reconciliation, and who are known for our radical love. Some practical ways to do that as students here on College Hill:

- See what your local church is doing in the city. If no program or campaign exists yet, reach out to church leadership about the logistics of starting one.
- Join a student organization that uses a mentorship model for underprivileged individuals in the community, like BRYTE (Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring and Enrichment) or BEAM (Brown Elementary After-School Mentoring).
- Be involved in policy advocacy and activism regarding issues of social justice. *Vote* - prayerfully and educatedly.

People are suffering, living in abject poverty, and starving. Girls are still being sold as child brides, and the human trafficking market is ever-active. The world has never seen a higher number of forcibly displaced persons, and we're facing an existential climate crisis.

But we have this hope—this steadfast assurance—that God sees the pain and despair. His heart breaks for the oppressed, the poor, the hungry, the afflicted. So we cry out: *God, move our hearts so that we would move our hands and feet. God, use us to love people, to reflect Christ, to be part of Your great story of redemption on this earth.*

And if we know anything about God, it's that He is a faithful God who loves His people. Let us offer ourselves, our careers, our relationships, and our lives as means for His restoration and glory.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:3-5 (ESV)

Chaelin Jung is a freshman intending to concentrate in International and Public Affairs and Economics.

After the Apple Comes the Fall

Spring Path, Kathy Luo '19

Kaitlan Bui

After the apple comes the fall;
After a spark, things burn.
It seems whatever humans touch
Will back to dust be turned.
We try to trim a young tree:
We cut, and feed, and tend.
But winter comes, and flowers fall,
And black leaves, heavy, bend.

After the apple comes the fall;
After a life, there's death.
In this dark life, where is the light?
I hear one labored breath.
When we wear too-big shoes
(Even just one size big),
We trip, and fall, and bruise, and bawl;
Our grimy graves we dig.

After the apple comes the fall,
But we know this by now.
And still, we tiptoe, strain our arms;
It looks so sweet and round.
We wear our too-big shoes
And put on a too-big suit.
Although we are not tall enough,
We reach to grab the fruit.

After a stretch, we break a sweat,
Make contact with the red.
We pull it down— forbidden fruit—
But now, we're filled with dread.

After the apple comes the fall;
All humans know this rhyme.
But still, we greed to grab, to reach—
Though we fall every time.
We think we know more than we do.

We want to be acclaimed.
We want the things we shouldn't have,
But find we suffer shame.

After the apple comes the fall;
This fact's not newly found.
The question is: how do we fall?
Where do we fall? The ground?
Does there a hole await us,
A deep, dark, endless pit?
Or is the ground covered with grass
And moss and little sticks?
Is there a cushion for our fall,
And if so, who's it for?
After the fall, is there just ground?
Or wait— is there still more?

After the apple comes the fall:
A broken record played.
But when we fall, God picks us up.
Slowly, He makes us great.

He tends our wounds
And gives us food,
And looks us in the eye.
“There are things greater than this fruit.
I'm *God*. I'll make you fly.”
He tells us, “My dear children,
Why for this fruit do you so care?
I've laid for you treasures in heav'n—
They wait for you all there.”

After the apple comes the fall:
It's ugly truth, not lie.
But if we cling to God's big hands,
After the fall, we'll fly.

Kaitlan Bui is a sophomore concentrating in English Literature.

Dreams of Skies

Jeremy Wang

*My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline
or be weary of His reproof,
for the LORD reproves him who He loves
as a father the son in whom he delights*
Proverbs 3:11-12 (ESV)

My beloved son Mark,

Since before you were born, I have watched over and walked beside you. Twenty years ago, when you stepped into that tub of water with a white robe on, when the pastor spoke those well-worn words, I looked on.

I watched as you strayed, as the memories of that special day faded, slowly but surely, into the dark. I watched as you grew up, floating through the years of high school and college, meeting and learning more and more about people, forgetting and losing more and more about your Father. Yet through it all, I directed your path back towards mine.

I watched as my work gradually came to fruition, as you once again came to know me in all my glory and love. You devoted more and more of your time to the pursuit of Me, and your joy grew as you better understood my character and my love for you. To watch as my Son's sacrifice transformed you was a truly beautiful experience.

Of late, however, your doubt has begun to grow. I have always told you that the world is not a perfect place (not your home), with sin and cruelty living beside love and kindness, and I have always desired for you to believe this wholeheartedly. But as you have settled into your new family, warm with love, the world has taken on a rosier shade, and I know that your newfound comfort and contentedness with this world have not led to gratitude but have instead fostered an impossible

hope (ambition) that you might build a pocket of perfection by yourself and for yourself.

Earlier today, you took your daughter and your wife deep into Chinatown, exploring the cramped bakeries and grimy restaurants. Between stops, though, you had to walk through streets filled with the product of this world's deep-seated brokenness, with people struggling in every way imaginable. As so many would, you hustled your family past them as quickly as possible, but young Lucy inevitably stopped and stared, curious about these people so different from anyone she has ever known.

I saw you grow exasperated, and I watched, disappointed, as the corners of your mouth tightened in disapproval. Your wife was more patient, but soon she too decided that she had seen enough.

“Let's go, Lucy! We don't have all day. Daddy wants to take us to one last place, a very special one.”

Taking your daughter by the hand, she walked with you down the street. But when Lucy saw a skinny old man, clothes and face and hope worn down by years of hard living, sobbing on the street, both of you stopped, astonished. Lucy, grabbing a tissue from your wife's purse, had rushed out from under your watchful eyes and offered it to the man.

The man looked up in amazement before fleeing down a side alley. The moment passed, but I knew that it would influence your thoughts, lead you further down your troublesome path.

Your family returned home late at night, and you immediately tucked Lucy into bed. I watched as you sat down at the oaken table by the fire and composed a note:

Goodnight, my xiaobao. I'm so proud of you. It amazes me that even such a small child as my daughter has the loving heart within her to reach out and comfort a complete stranger crying on the street. Moments like these make the difficulties, the inconveniences of raising you when you were younger entirely worth it. In moments like these, I see your mother's radiance in you, your grandmother's kindness.

Perhaps we Christians are wrong to say that humanity is born fundamentally sinful. Your mother and I have discussed this dozens of times, and each time my doubt in human weakness grows. I know that sin and love are not mutually exclusive and that they battle within us each day, but in the face of such wonderful and surprising and beautiful love such as yours, I can only wonder if perhaps broken humanity might really be capable of bootstrapping itself to pre-Fall perfection. I'm really not sure. Either way, you'll see these scribbles when you grow up, and you might laugh at them, cry over them, tear them to bits and pieces, who am I to say?

It's getting late, and I should probably sleep. Need to wake up for church tomorrow.

In response to your questions and doubts, I decided to remind you of the world's fallen nature, the imperfections that still exist and will continue to exist until my return. And so, my son, as you drifted off into sleep, I gave you a taste of my perspective.

In your dream, your feet carried you quietly through a forest ringing with birdsong. There was a sense of that unique peace which comes when your thoughts alone are accompanying you.

Then I took control, directing your eyes to rest upon the violet sky which capped it all.

My son, how can you understand what happened next?

You saw, my son, the briefest glimpse of what I see every second of every day, and you felt for just a moment the weight of sadness that I have felt since the Fall.

If I tell you that the sky changed, that would be true, but not enough.

If I tell you that the sky bunched up, folded in on itself, and unfurled outward once again with a thunderous crack, that too would be truth, incomplete though it might be.

If I tell you that I picked you up and laid you down in my world, you would come close to understanding, but still it would be insufficient.

No matter what exactly happened, the truth is that the sky you gazed upon was suddenly very different. That glimpse of striking violet was replaced with an endless canvas of gray, a gray full of depth yet flat as a tabletop.

As you stared into this grayness, it must have frustrated you immensely. What kind of person would make skies so boring? Weren't they meant to be fascinating, ever-changing paintings of hope? Nevertheless, there it was, leering down at you. But before you could ponder the meaning of it all for long, the sky changed again.

And then it was nothing but a summer thunderhead, foreboding darkness pierced by shards of lightning. Its weight loomed over you, threatening to crush you back into the dust where you were suddenly so sure you belonged. When the sky itself seems determined to leave you empty and meaningless, there's nothing left to do but cower. So cower you did, pressing knees and body into the earth, though your eyes never left the sky.

The next sky was peaceful. A warm sheet of ochre and cocoa and russet floated serenely overhead, and your racing heart began to slow. Until the next sky arrived, of course. Sky after sky flashed by, leaving you breathless.

Soon, it stirred you to panic. How could it not, when a thousand skies streaked by, burning layers of afterimages into your eyes? All at once you saw sickly green swirls, scarlet chaos, and eerily still blues. And where before you had time to feel something unique in response to each new sky, there was suddenly nothing but a heart-pounding, bladder-emptying, muscle-freezing panic as the endless barrage of skies slammed into you one after another, leaving you reeling. Who wouldn't be, confronted by the incomprehensible?

In fear and confusion you stood and you ran as the skies above flickered and the ground below trembled. Past villages and cities, meadows and forests, deserts and oceans you ran, fleeing what cannot be evaded until

you stopped.

After all, you knew deep down that what you were doing was hopeless. Even a child knows it is pointless to run from the sky. While you stood there stupefied, wondering if you could just be given peace, I placed my hand under your chin and

pulled.

Pulled until you had to look up again, into that maelstrom. And once your gaze was fixed upon the skies, *you saw.*

In the endless skyscape, you saw reflections of others' lives. You saw a belt flash, a child scream. You saw gaunt men and women trading the last of their savings for a moment of chemical solace. You saw a crushing press of flesh, a tide of wretched humanity suffocating the poor and oppressed. Then the storm turned inward, and you saw yourself in a shouting match with your wife, yourself turning a cold shoulder to the homeless man on the street corner, yourself silently and unconsciously judging Lucy's dark-skinned schoolteacher. Most painfully of all, you saw how this anguish has persevered in spite of all humanity's attempts to eradicate it. You saw, my

son, the briefest glimpse of what I see every second of every day, and you felt for just a moment the weight of sadness that I have felt since the Fall. It broke you, more deeply than you can understand, but in the end, it will be what saves you, because you will understand that humanity was made for something more.

Then I brought you home, gave you rest. I woke you up, set you down among a circle of people, in a cozy little house. The rafters overhead were wooden, stained by age. A model train set was half-assembled and scattered across the smoothly finished oaken table. A ball of yarn laid, partially unraveled, by the crackling hearthfire. Cushioned armchairs were arranged around a faded woolen rug.

Finally, you dragged your gaze away from the high and the low and to the people. There was an aging woman with a smile that spoke of love deeper than the skies. A small girl who kindly brushed the tears from your face. And a speaker, someone whose flowing voice and tender eyes welcomed you...home? For a moment, you were uncertain of who they were, where you were, before you recognized your mother, daughter, and wife.

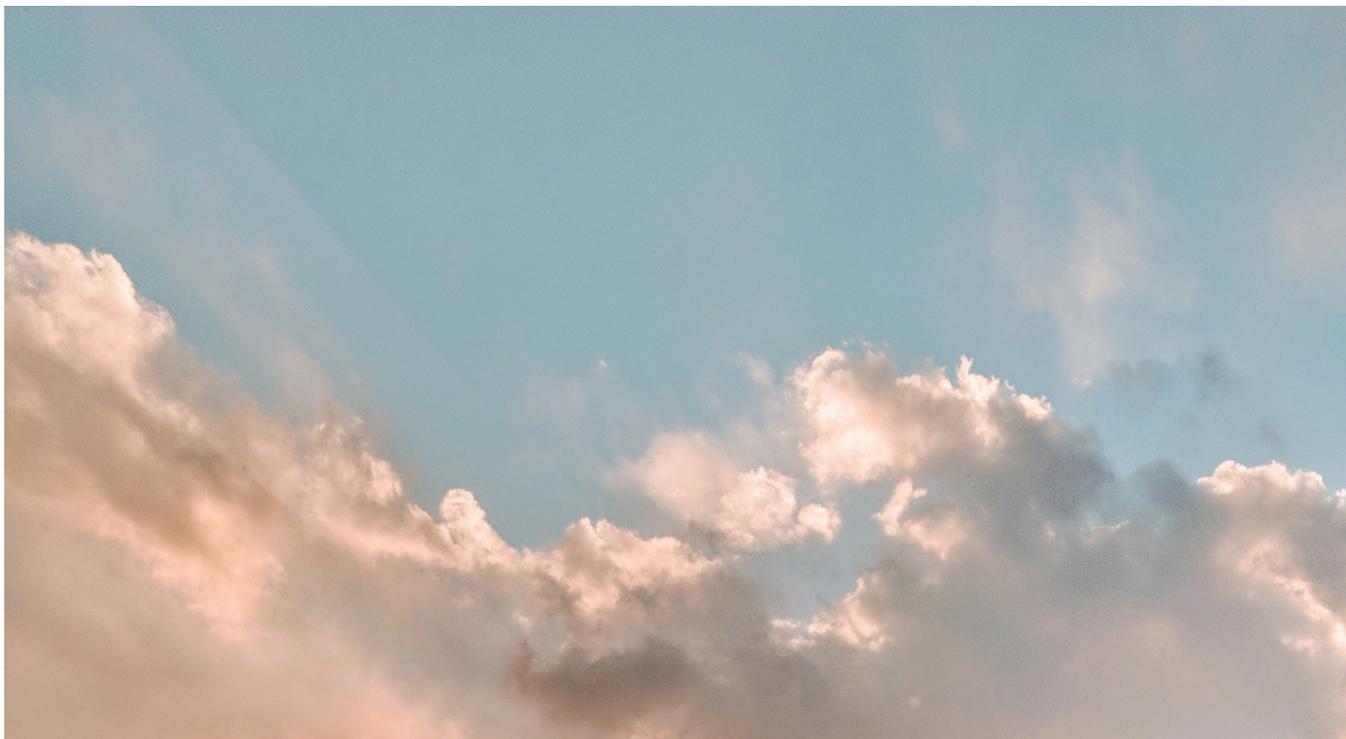
Now I watch as the experience you just endured clashes with this intimate familial love that is my gift to you. The two will tug at you, stirring up questions that will challenge and confuse and even disturb you over the coming years, forcing you to confront the reality of sin still extant in this world and the miracle of redemptive love persevering alongside it. Though you will still have the blessing of your church, family, and friends, no longer will you be able to veil your eyes with illusions of perfection attainable in this world.

I am sorry that you have to go through this. But understand: I am the LORD your God. You cannot believe in me without needing me. And you cannot need me while seeing only the

good of my creation, though it certainly exists. I have already won the victory, redeeming all by my Son's sacrifice, but you must remember that creation is still fractured at its heart, awaiting the final return of Christ, who will erase the evil with which you are now uncomfortably familiar. Only He can do this impossible thing. This knowledge will stand you in good stead, strengthening your faith and desire for me until that Day, when I at last turn this world to face my pure goodness, remove the need for this pain and suffering, bring humanity to its promised city. Memories of the journey you took tonight will fade until you will once again be the man you were, but if you can hold on to the reason that I did this for you, no matter where time takes you, you will come to see that what I did for you, I did out of love, though it was but a dream.

This piece is not meant to be a perfect representation of God. I wrote it in response to a friendly rebuke during a time when I was feeling overly content about my life. He saw that I was taking various blessings for granted and beginning to adopt beliefs that were replacing Christianity in my life. I wrote this piece, then, to poke and prod at myself, imagining what God would say to me so that I might return to Him. As such, God speaks as I imagine Him. I know that people will disagree with my depiction of the LORD, and I welcome such differences of perspective. In fact, this piece exists in public expressly to provoke such thoughts in other believers and to depict an underrepresented side of our faith to those who aren't Christians. So, reader, take this piece as you will, and decide for yourself whether this message resonates with you.

Jeremy Wang is a sophomore concentrating in Math-CS.



Reverie, Kathy Luo '19

Porcelain Butterfly

Anna Delamerced

the other day, at 9:45 in the evening
I found out she passed away;
her neighbor told me in a brief email.

they had lived down the hall from one another
in this one-story home for the elderly
surrounded by tall pine trees that never fade in the summer

we shared the same birthday
separated by seven decades of life
of which I only caught a glimpse

her name, the name of a flower
her glasses, the way they frame her brown eyes
pieces of her sit on my windowsill

a book. a snow globe. a card, signed
with her scraggly signature.
I never throw those things away

I can still picture how she lounged
in her wheelchair, watching TV,
the oxygen tank right next to her

the first time we met, she narrated
tales of growing up in a country
on the other side of the Atlantic

I was assigned to be her doctoring student
check her vitals once a month, my stethoscope
to her heart, sit and listen
to her worries, her childhood stories

I'd knock and hear "come in, my dear"
come in, there's so much room, come in.
I can still see the porcelain butterfly hanging on her door

how I wish I told her so many things
the things unseen
how there's more to life
than the one we experience right now
a new home that pales in comparison
to the other side of the Atlantic
how I wish I told her so many things...

this morning I am coming to visit
her neighbor, the one who emailed me.
I park the car and take a deep breath.

there is good news I can't help but share,
can't help but tell someone else
I have learned through tears and apologies—
I don't want to live in fear
of what someone else may think of me
if I tell them about You

I long for the day
when the grave clothes fall from me
and I hear Your voice, saying come.

I passed by her old room today.
room #20. new faces fill the place.
the porcelain butterfly still hangs on her door.

Anna Delamerced is a medical student at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.

Prayer

Reverend Janet M. Cooper Nelson

Source of our soul;
Blessing beyond measure;
Foundation for every sacred vision
We offer in these bright days of Spring,
The labors, nearly complete, of this academic year

Hope of every heart;
Metric of worthy endeavor;
May our offerings bring
Authentic faith and compassion,
Humility and gratitude,
Accomplishment that hungers still for understanding.

You are at the depths of all that we seek to understand:
Sustain our vision and discipline to learn fully.
Cathedrals burn; leaders fail.
Abide with us.
Animate our paralysis.
Illumine our sorrow's shadows
Walk the road from fear and death with us.

Break the bread anew.
So startled by hope,
May we see you,
Know you,
Ourselves, anew
“We beg you,
Make us truly alive”¹
Always,
Amen.

The Reverend Janet M. Cooper Nelson
Chaplain of the University, April 2019

1 Communion prayer of Serapion of Themius

Ministry Profile: Black Christian Ministries

Julius Gingles

Black Christian Ministries (BCM) is a group of students seeking fellowship and community in a space valuing both the Christian faith and the people and cultures of African descent. Our mission is to deepen our relationship with God while sharing His love and His message with Brown's campus. Though BCM is open to all, we center our discussions particularly on the ways in which faith intersects with our identity as people from the African diaspora.

Every Monday, BCM members gather in Harambee Lounge at 9pm for Bible study. Our Bible study is largely student-led; the questions, experiences, and thoughts of BCM members often influence the topic chosen each week. We encourage every voice to be heard, often discussing the Word in depth in small groups and sharing our praise reports and prayer requests with one another. In addition, many BCM members engage in a weekly fast from Thursday at 8pm to Friday at 8pm.

The topics of our fasts vary widely, but often center around issues affecting the Black community or students at Brown. The fast culminates in our weekly Kickback, which is hosted Fridays at 8pm in Page-Robinson Hall 411. Our kickbacks are a time for further fellowship and discussion in a casual setting. We often discuss the issues we have been fasting over, as well as how to view events in pop culture and the media through

a Christian lens. We also just “kickback” and share stories, make jokes, play games, and entertain one another in various ways all while being sensitive to each other's spiritual identities and needs. The ability for BCM members to fast and pray together strengthens our community and commitment to God, which is the goal of the kickbacks and our organization as a whole.

No matter what the spiritual level, this is a space simply created for the fostering and development of the community. It is also a space where everyone is welcomed to join and relax, especially after a week here at Brown University. On Sundays, many BCM members attend Church services at two historically Black churches in Providence (Congdon Street Baptist Church and The King's Cathedral). However, there are many other churches in the Providence area that BCM members attend regularly. Aside from these weekly events, BCM also hosts worship nights throughout the semester and travels to the annual BCM conference in Massachusetts in the Spring.



A photograph of a rooftop garden. In the foreground, there are several large, rounded clusters of flowers. One cluster is a vibrant pink, and another to its left is a pale pink or white. The flowers have many small, star-shaped blossoms. The leaves are thick and green, some with water droplets. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a hazy, overcast sky. A prominent skyscraper with a grid-like facade is in the center. Other buildings are visible to the left and right, all slightly out of focus.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:24 (ESV)