

# CLARITAS

A Journal of Christian Thought

*FEATURING*  
Pocketbook Paganism  
Reduce, Reuse, Redeem?  
Prayer to the Deserted Psalm



**CLARITAS** is the Latin word for “clarity,” “vividness,” or “renown.” For us, *Claritas* represents a life-giving truth that can only be found through God.

### WHO ARE WE?

The *Cornell Claritas* is a Christian thought journal that reviews ideas and cultural commentary. Launched in the spring semester of 2015, it is written and produced by students attending Cornell University. The *Cornell Claritas* is ecumenical, drawing writers and editors from all denominations around a common creedal vision. Its vision is to articulate and connect the truth of Christ to every person and every study, and it strives to begin conversations that involve faith, reason, and vocation.

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Despite the delicious scone on our front cover, I have unfortunate news: this is not a food magazine or recipe book. But, before you put this journal down, let me make the case for your continued reading. This is the Spring 2019 issue of *Claritas*, Cornell University's journal of Christian thought. That's right, "Christian thought"—even though that phrase may seem a tad oxymoronic.

At *Claritas*, we strive to provide tangible proof that Christians are thinkers. This past semester, we did a lot of thinking, writing, and editing on one topic in particular: consumption. (Hence the scrumptious scone!) And the more we thought, the more we realized that consumption is a much bigger topic than we realized; in fact, we discovered that most everything we do is tied up in it. In this issue, you'll run into pieces providing clarity as to the Christian views of topics as diverse as the captivating (and consumptive) powers of love to 1950's German cinematic movements.

Consumption is an especially relevant topic to my personal studies at Cornell. Last year, I tacked on a second major and began studying Communication along with my existing major of Atmospheric Science. Although these two fields seem incredibly disconnected (like most STEM/humanities pairs), I found a significant overlap: they both cared deeply about consumption.

My Atmospheric Science classes discussed consumption at grand scales, focusing on the global impacts of climate change and our need for smart thinking in the face of rising sea levels and thermometers. The class I took entitled "Climate Change" spoke at length about how the future of our global climate relies on action in all disciplines, from intergovernmental policy to climate-smart technology investment. Alternatively, my Communication courses saw consumption at individual levels on shorter time frames; one class even had an assignment where we recorded every act of our own media consumption for five days. And after writing down practically our every move, most in the class became aware of real media addiction.

And yet, despite the massive differences in each field, they both came to the same conclusion: our habits of consumption need to change.

I believe that my Christian faith is essential when approaching this need. My belief in a God-created world, one that He looked at and called "good," means that I do not have to rid myself of all consumptive acts; we were created to enjoy the world in which we live and everything around us has inherent goodness. But my belief in the Fall, that impulsive act of consumption by Eve and then Adam in the Garden of Eden, allows me to see consumption as something that has the possibility for brokenness. In a world that is not free from sin, our consumption is not always helpful, necessary, or rightfully ordered.

Where do we go from here? I'm not entirely sure. Along with not being a recipe book or a food magazine, this issue of *Claritas* is not an answer key. The topics we tackle in the realm of consumption are not able to be explained fully in the space we give them, or in any space constrained by human thought. However, we hope that our thoughts and consideration of Christ's role in the realm of consumption helps provide a new perspective, a perspective that we believe is much needed.

So, what are you waiting for? Dig in.

Peace of Christ,

Carley Eschliman '20  
Editor in Chief

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# the souls' HUNGER

*Our physical appetites as more than physical*

by Zachary Lee

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There are no two words that grab a Cornell student's attention like the ones "free food." The Official Free Food GroupMe, a group where students post about free food "sightings" on campus, currently boasts over three thousand members, yet even its existence only scrapes the surface of Cornellians' obsessive fixation with complimentary cuisine. In the fall of 2018, one could hardly be a standing member of the University if one did not have "Pocket Points," an app that rewarded points based on the number of minutes of phone inactivity. Those points in turn could be reimbursed for real life rewards in the form of free coffee, pizza, omelets, and much more. One day, however, the app glitched and students could repeatedly enter the same promo code and gain ten points every time. Many experienced a "rags to riches" story, quickly accumulating an inordinate amount of points, and with their newfound abundance, cashed in their currency. On the day of the glitch, many Cornell eateries cited that they "sold out" of certain items due to students using their points to get them. The bug was rectified (to the chagrin of many) and eventually the option to get "free items" was removed entirely, replaced by "coupon option" where students could purchase discounted food items with their points. While the student body "recovered" from this seismic shift, it was clear that for many, "free food" was not something to be enjoyed in limited and random quantities, but a resource to be exploited and consumed.

If directly asked, few individuals would be willing to say that they "worship" food, though their actions are evidence otherwise. In her article "Why Stuff is Not Salvation," Anna Quindlen poignantly describes Black Friday shoppers by claiming that "the mall is our

temple."<sup>1</sup> Correspondingly, the presence of free food on campus is a true God-send for many. Just as Black Friday shoppers are willing to trample over other customers (i.e. a sacrificial and literal shedding of blood) to get that coveted item, so too are students on campus willing to go to extreme means to get free food. This is not to say that eating the badminton club's leftover pizza after grueling over an essay for the past few hours is wrong. The issue is that such desires indicate an obsessive fixation and wrongful placement of our hopes. We think that the free food will satisfy and bring ultimate comfort just like the shoppers think that buying a 75-inch TV will give them a greater amount of significance than their current 55-inch one.

Eve Turrow, author of *A Taste of Generation Yum: How the Millennial Generation's Love for Organic Fare, Celebrity Chefs, and Microbrews Will Make or Break the Future of Food*, describes in an interview how "people latch onto food as something that engages all of the senses and brings people together in physical space" and adds, "I think that a lot of people in our generation are thinking about, 'What am I going to eat next?' 'Where am I going to go dine next?' 'What's in the fridge and what can I put together tomorrow?'"<sup>2</sup> When these are the most pressing questions on a student's mind, of course a natural reaction to a large quantity of food is to hoard and eat as much as possible, if only to keep the questions at bay.



Many students I talked with cited that the presence of free food presents an “indulgence” that is both “highly rewarding” yet “prone to disappear quickly,” thus, it is best to capitalize on the opportunity. Students cited MoviePass, a movie subscription service, as an example. When MoviePass first launched, its promise

Food has become another facet of our lives affected by consumerist—culture consider unethical food preparation methods or the way many people see food simply as a utilitarian source of energy, rather than simply enjoying food in and of itself.

and goal were simple: customers who paid \$9.95 per month could view one movie per day. The service quickly garnered many subscribers, with two million active subscribers reported as of February 2018. However, the model was soon deemed unsustainable, and MoviePass slowly began to dismantle their service; currently, for \$9.95 a month, customers can see up to three movies a month. The deal is still a good one, but for those who experienced the service in its past forms, they see its current model as a devolution. Many likewise wished they had “jumped on the bandwagon” before such benefits disappeared. MoviePass and Pocket Points are both examples of services that were “too good to be true,” yet their crazed and speedy embrace by the population and equally rapid downfalls reveal an unfortunate yet difficult reality: the things we want to sustain us and enjoy are costly thanks to the systems that are in power which control and set prices, often at an unjust and high rate. Thus, when a consuming and controlling system “glitches” or “malfunctions,” the best thing to do is to take advantage of what is available before the system fixes itself. In many ways, this perpetuates the modern era of consumption culture: grab as much “good stuff” in front of you before it runs out. There is an incongruous disparity in how in developed countries, obesity and waste remain major concerns, while in other parts of the world, many die of starvation. Food has become another facet of our lives affected by consumerist culture—consider unethical food preparation methods or the way many people see food simply as a utilitarian source of energy, rather than simply enjoying food in and of itself.

It is important then to remember that food in its true form should be enjoyed with the understanding of the sacrifice that it took for you

to be eating it. Farmer Joel Salatin states how in order for anything to live and keep eating, “something has to die.” In his book *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, he gives an anecdote of a chicken and a family; in order for a family to continue to live for another day, the chicken must give up its life. He then describes how many more chickens

will die in order to keep on feeding the family, and that this is why we ought to have a gracious and thankful attitude towards the animals and plants we eat. Salatin states, “Every time we kill something whether seed embryo (wheat) vegetable

or animal in order to live, it should remind us not only of the sacrificial death of Jesus that enables us to partake of eternal life but also how precious life is. Life is so precious that it requires death.”<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Michael Pollan talks of the “impersonal nature” with which we eat food and adds that when we see the steak fillet or chicken breast on our plate, we so often forget that our food had a life before it received its current form on our plate; it was a living, breathing animal. In *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Pollan states, “If for me to eat this venture was about taking ultimate responsibility for the animals I eat, their deaths included, well, I hadn’t done that yet, had I?”<sup>4</sup>

It is evident that food is a big part of our lives, yet by viewing food through the lens of consumerism—a good at our disposal to use and discard—we ultimately lose sight of what Pollan and Salatin try to convey: the food we eat is more than just something to sustain us. Its implications run far deeper. Food is an example of how one thing’s death gives life to another.

Viewed in this light, my own 2 AM ice cream therefore indicates much more than physical hunger but is rooted in a deeper hunger for longing, meaning, and identity satisfaction.

Now knowing the sacrifice that comes with what we eat, it forces us to ask: in light of the sacrifice made, how will I live my life? Thinking in this way gives people a healthier view of creation and nature as a whole; there is a cost for me being able to wake up another day and that cost is the life of another.

The Christian Bible speaks to this larger implication of food, treating what we do at the dining table not merely as a physical act but



as a spiritual one. Daniel’s refusal to “defile himself” and eat the King’s food demonstrated his unwillingness to be assimilated to the Babylonian culture; to partake in such a meal meant he was swearing allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Jesus choosing to eat with the most-shunned in society, be they prostitutes or tax-collectors, revealed that he was invested in their narratives and was willing to draw them close even if others refused to do so.<sup>6</sup> Viewed in this light, my own 2 AM ice cream therefore indicates much more than physical hunger but is rooted in a deeper hunger for longing, meaning, and identity satisfaction.

Food likewise is a reminder of our finitude and that as human beings, we are not invincible or self-sustaining. We are weak, fleshly creatures that need sustenance to survive, and our reliance on food indicates a spiritual need to rely fully on God for strength and nourishment. Thus food, in its original design, was meant to act as a bridge between God and people; it reminds us of our dependence on our Creator, our thanksgiving over His good gifts, and our need for community with others. In quite a poetic fashion, Jesus exemplifies this by transforming the common act of breaking bread and pouring wine during the Passover meal as a symbol of

the death He would die to save the world.<sup>7</sup> The very promise of restoration lies in this meal; the taking of these elements is a reminder that Jesus shed his own blood and broke his own body so that we did not have to. Likewise, the Passover table is not meant to be some sort of exclusive club or membership, but is open to all; by inviting others to it and partaking in its elements, they learn of Jesus’ sacrifice.

As stated, food is a way to build community with a fellow human being. At the end of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, dwarf Thorin Oakenshield

mournfully states, “If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world.”<sup>8</sup> Here Thorin does not compare the physical euphoria of food, cheer, and song

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to gold nor claims that the former is superior. Instead, he juxtaposes the deeper, spiritual outcomes that lie behind both pursuits. He can attest in his own life that his quest for gold is centripetal, selfish, and ultimately destructive. Ruthless in his discovery for the dragon Smaug’s treasures, he becomes a lone ranger who pushes aside those who sacrificed themselves by joining him on his journey, thinking they might betray him to obtain the very treasures for which he lusts. Ironically, when he receives his desired

riches, he nearly loses the very things that mattered to him most: his friends and family.

In Thorin's life, the valuing of "gold" ultimately means the valuing of one's own selfish desires above others' well-being. Yet pursuing "food, cheer, and song" means something different. Valuing these means cherishing vulnerability, family, and community. At the dining table, individuals invite others into their culture by sharing meals with one another and cheer each other on through song. Eating, therefore, is more than just a physical act but a spiritual one just like one's pursuit of gold. If hoarding gold represents infatuation with oneself, then the enjoyment of food indicates a willingness to share and sacrifice. Thus, just as Ryan O'Dowd states in his article *Thought for Food*, "when we gather and eat we bring all of our beliefs and practices into an integrated whole, be they political, cultural, social, religious, or aesthetic,"<sup>9</sup> food seen in its proper light can unite people from different backgrounds together; it can be cherished rather than exploited. Jean Vanier, in her book *Community and Growth*, likewise states that "even the simple gesture of passing the potatoes is a natural moment of communication which can bring people out of their isolation. They cannot remain behind the barriers of their depression when they have to ask for the salt... Too many people come to a meal simply as consumers. They don't realize the role which meals can play in the building of community."<sup>10</sup> Thus, food is a way not only to acknowledge one's dependence on God, but a way to acknowledge dependence on others as well.

Pope Francis stated, "Fall in love with the Earth, this gift of pure abundance that God has freely given us. This disposition cannot be written off as 'naive romanticism', for it affects the choices which determine our behavior. If we lose our wonder and awe, our attitude toward the Earth will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on [our] immediate needs."<sup>11</sup> Due to the commercialization of food and the prominence of consumer culture, it is understandable why so many view food without the rightful respect with which it ought to be treated. Whether we concern ourselves solely with satisfying our own hunger and turn to food as our salvation, or if we are so removed from the processes by which we eat, it is evident that this false worship of food leads to destruction and exploitation. Food ordered rightly, however, brings life abundant: physical and spiritual strength, creation-wide

shalom, human connection, and a mysterious memory of our human insufficiencies and need for provision. Ultimately, it brings the need for a generous and imaginative God. ☩

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<sup>1</sup>Anna Quindlen, "Why Stuff Is Not Our Salvation", *Newsweek*, 27 October 2018, < <https://www.newsweek.com/anna-quindlen-why-stuff-not-salvation-82837>>.

<sup>2</sup>Joe Pinsker, "Why Are Millennials so Obsessed with food?", *The Atlantic*, 27 October 2018, < <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/08/millennial-foodies/401105/>>.

<sup>3</sup>Joel Salatin, *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs: Respecting and Caring for All God's Creation*. (New York: FaithWords, 2016), Audiobook.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. (London: Penguin Press, 2006), 349.

<sup>5</sup>Daniel 1:8 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup>Mark 2:13-17 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup>Matthew 26:26-27 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup>J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*. (Great Britain: HarperCollins, 1937), 19.

<sup>9</sup>Ryan O'Dowd, "Thought for Food", *Comment Magazine*, 27 October 2018, < <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/thought-for-food/>>.

<sup>10</sup>Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth*. (Toronto: Paulist Press, 1989), pg 303.

<sup>11</sup>Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*. (2015 Liberia Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City), 3.



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# Reduce, Reuse, Redeem?

by Abigail Bezruczyk

*Exploring the relationship between Environmentalism and Christianity*

It is typical for some Christians to give something up during the season of Lent. The forty days leading up to the death of Jesus are a time for solemn remembrance and contemplation; making a personal sacrifice, albeit small, can be a physical way to recognize Jesus' own sacrifice on the cross. Usually, the things we give up are temptations, such as indulgent foods or bad habits, like smoking. But for the Lenten season of 2018, the Church of England did something a little different: it gave up plastic.

Spurred by news that eight tons of plastic are dumped into the sea every minute, the Church

## Why should people take on such daunting challenges to change their behavior?

of England took an uncharacteristic stand for the environment.<sup>1</sup> They encouraged members of their congregation to eliminate or reduce their plastic waste and provided calendars complete with daily enviro-centric Bible verses and helpful tips like, "Bring your own reusable bags," and "Use bar soap instead of liquid hand soap."<sup>2</sup> Was this movement simply the Church of England taking a socio-political stand, or

was their encouragement hinting at something deeper?

A similar movement was seen in 2018's frenzy to ban plastic straws. In a few short months, plastic straws went from a handy tool to a scapegoat for wasteful plastic consumption. In the wake of public concern, companies like Starbucks and cities like San Francisco have taken a noticeable stand against them.<sup>3</sup>

At the heart of these efforts is a pressing issue: oceanic plastic waste. Take a look at the Pacific garbage gyre, a swirling mass of plastics in the North Pacific containing 87,000 tons of debris.<sup>4</sup> These plastics break down into microplastics which hurt aquatic life once ingested.

Recent research from Cornell even showed that plastics can damage coral reefs—pesky bacteria in plastics transmit diseases to these already-threatened ecosystems.<sup>5</sup> Single-use plastics do not simply "go away," and on our current trajectory, our plastic problem will only get worse.

The proposed solution by both the Church of England and supporters of the straw ban is a

change in our patterns of consumption and, in turn, a change in our behavior. Behavioral changes are never an easy task, especially when behaviors are widespread and culturally supported. We are always trying to make our lives easier with convenient technology and to voluntarily add a constraint to our lives goes against this. Why should people take on such daunting challenges to change their behavior?

Many environmentalists, including myself, care about the environment because they see distinct value in it. But Christians have a unique perspective on the issue, one that secular environmentalists cannot apply: Christians see the world as God's creation. The natural world is something we are called to steward. This call makes our motivations for caring for the environment (such as consuming fewer resources) reach a deeper level.

To compare these two views, let us look at two hypothetical people: Francis and Bill. Francis is Christian and Bill is not, but both are environmentalists. One reduces plastic waste for the sake of the sea turtles because he understands some value in them; the other does it for the sake of the sea turtles because he knows their value. To Francis, sea turtles are a created being. That understanding motivates his action: creation is something he is called to care for and steward.

The ascription of meaning and value are necessary for lasting behavioral change. In environmental science and conservation a specific dilemma often comes to light: How do we value nature? This question touches everything from the park down the block, to the wolf in Alaska, to the sea turtle in the Pacific—what do these things mean to us?

Ask an economist about nature's value and they will give you a few options: you value these things because of their use to you, because you like to go to the park. In the economist's eyes, you might also value them for their future use for both you and future generations—because you (or your grandchild) might someday see the wolf in Alaska, or perhaps, you are content to simply know that the wolf exists somewhere.

All of these ways to value things have one thing in common: their value has been ascribed

by humans. But imagine, for a moment, that humans never existed. Would trees, the wolf, or a clean ocean still be valuable?

Some would say no, that value is nothing more than a human construct. This is how our world mostly operates, and for the most part, it works. After all, we can only ever be inside our own heads. We are not all-knowing beings, we are humans who use our human minds to understand the world. Our societal structures like economics and law are built around human problems; they are anthropocentric. Because of this, the view that humans assign value to nature fits in nicely.

But others would say that the natural world has its own value. Instead of people valuing nature for its utility, they can take a step back and value it for itself. It is a value that comes from its existence and distinct other-ness: it was not created by man. This kind of intrinsic value comes from it being alive and created, just as we are.

What does it mean to understand the natural world as something that is created? It is first evident in its beauty: a landscape that brings the viewer to tears, the calming presence of a rolling stream, the color of birds, the diversity of flowers.

It is also evident in its mystery. You can break every natural thing in nature down to the smallest of parts, add them all up again, understand each individual piece, and yet would never understand how those pieces

To be alive is to be something greater than the sum of one's parts. And it is the act of creation that makes it greater, through the spirit that is given to it.



come together to form life. To be alive is to be something greater than the sum of one's parts. And it is the act of creation that makes it greater, through the spirit that is given to it.

As it is written in the Old Testament book of Job,

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you.

Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.”<sup>6</sup>

In the Christian tradition, God is believed to be the intentional, intelligent designer and Creator of all things. In understanding that the natural world is created, and we (also created) are part of the natural world, we can change how we value the environment.

Liberty Hyde Bailey (the namesake of Cornell's Bailey Hall and the first dean of CALS) wrote in detail about the Christian theology of creation in his book *The Holy Earth*.<sup>7</sup> In this work, he writes a new ethical framework for how humans should interact with the environment, centered on the belief of creation. He wrote, “If God created the earth, so is the earth hallowed; and if it is hallowed, so must we deal with it devotedly and with care that we do not despoil it, and mindful of our relations to all beings that live on it.”<sup>8</sup> These words promote stewardship and stewardship urges us to act with care in each interaction, in a way that gives God glory. The command was given to us from the beginning, as it is written in the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible and home of the Christian Creation narrative: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”<sup>9</sup>

This care is different than other kinds of work. We might put a lot of work into a class we hate so that we can get a good grade in the end. In the same way, we might put a lot of work into abiding environmental regulations, so that we can have a clean ocean in the end. But stewardship means that this work is infused with the motivation to honor God. The steward follows environmental regulations not simply for the result of a clean ocean, but because of the love of creation from the love of a Creator. In short, stewardship is an

act of worship.

We approach stewardship with the kind of joy and wonder that is written in the book of Psalms, “How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small.”<sup>10</sup> It is this joy that sets stewardship apart from environmentalism. When the steward knows that they care for a created world, and that they are serving the one who created it, they are filled with a joy that continues to motivate them.

What does it mean to bring stewardship into our interactions with the environment? It means we make wise use of the resources we take from the earth: our gas, wood, food. It means we make wise use of the land we live on: gardening, avoiding pollution, protecting watersheds. It means that we reduce our harmful habits of plastic use, finding other ways to carry groceries and drink iced coffee. It means using only what we need, which for most people means using less.

With stewardship in mind, we would more readily take other living things into account. We would take a step back from the notion that humans are the center of it all, and instead, understand that we are a piece of all living things. Most centrally, we would do this all with joy. This is not to say the world would be in some ideal peace and harmony, but perhaps that we could be more thoughtful in our actions, more careful of our impacts.

### It is this joy that sets stewardship apart from environmentalism.

The Christian environmentalist, being a steward, turns their reducing into worship, their study of ecology into gratitude, their conservation efforts into

love. It is more than consuming less plastic. It is deeper, and the picture is so much more complete when pairing environmentalism to God's creating hand. ☺

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<sup>1</sup>“Lent Challenge.” *Church Care*. February 13, 2018. Accessed October 10, 2018. <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/about-us/campaigns/news/1081-lent-challenge>.

<sup>2</sup>“Lent Plastic Challenge.” Accessed October 10, 2018. <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/images/>

*Plastic\_Free\_Lent.pdf.*

<sup>3</sup>Brueck, Hilary. "The Real Reason Why so Many Cities and Businesses Are Banning Plastic Straws Has Nothing to Do with Straws at All." *Business Insider*. September 21, 2018. Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://www.businessinsider.com/plastic-straw-ban-why-are-there-so-many-2018-7>.

<sup>4</sup>Albeck-ripka, Livia. "The 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch' Is Ballooning, 87,000 Tons of Plastic and Counting." *The New York Times*. March 22, 2018. Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/22/climate/great-pacific-garbage-patch.html>.

<sup>5</sup>Friedlander, Blaine. "Oceanic Plastic Puts Coral Reefs in Peril." *Oceanic Plastic Puts Coral Reefs in Peril | CALS*. January 25, 2018. Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://cals.cornell.edu/news/oceanic-plastic-puts-coral-reefs-peril-spring-2018/>.

<sup>6</sup>Job 12: 7-10 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup>"A Brief History of CALS." *Cornell CALS*. Accessed October 10, 2018. <https://cals.cornell.edu/about/history/>.

<sup>8</sup>Bailey, Liberty Hyde. *The Holy Earth*. New York, NY: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, 1916. July 15, 2010. Accessed October 10, 2018. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/33178/33178-h/33178-h.htm>.

<sup>9</sup>Genesis 2:15 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup>Psalms 104: 24-25 (NIV)



Abigail Bezruczyk is a Junior from Long Island and is studying Environmental Science. She loves being outdoors, especially when it involves writing, tea, or goldfish crackers.

# Faery Food

by John Nystrom

This is the food  
of the faery king,  
of the faery land.

It was made by  
enchantments deep and  
served by unseen hands.

And after one  
crumb comes and tumbles  
past quivering lips,

upon taking  
the smallest bite or  
tiniest of sips,

all of life is  
fuller than ever;  
something has been quenched.

Longing by a  
bite is besotted;  
by a drop it's drenched.

But something churns  
the deep-down dredges  
of the soulful lake.

A new hunger  
and thirst arises  
asking to be slaked,

and none can touch  
that empty aching  
but the faery food,

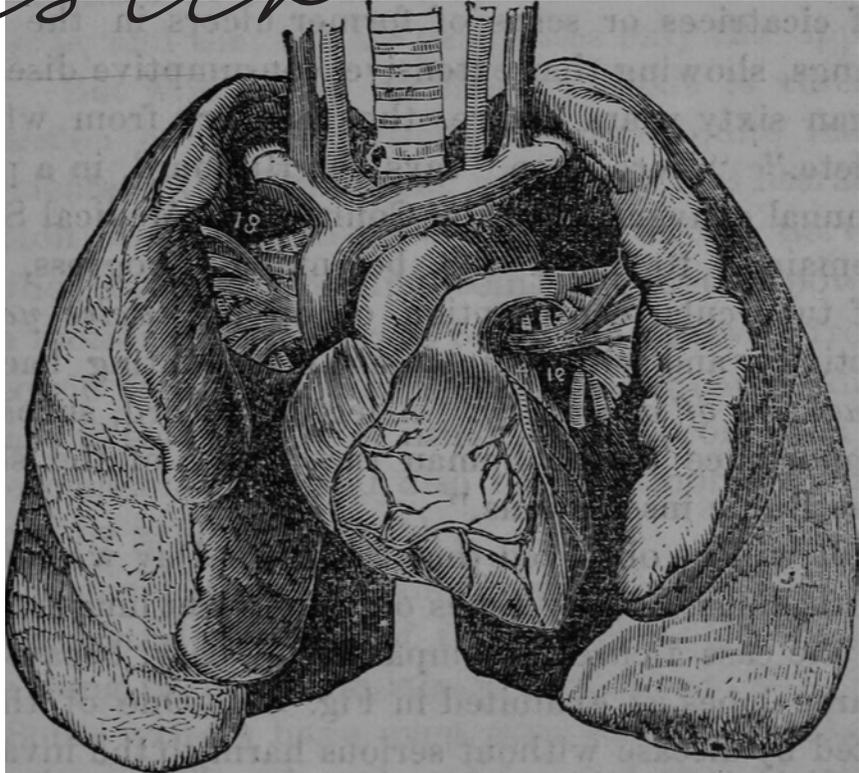
and even that  
speaks deeper things of  
unmet magnitude.



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# Lovesick

Consumption  
and the  
diseased  
conception of  
romance



by Brooke Lindsey

Benedick: Come, I will have thee, but by this light I take thee for pity.

Beatrice: I would not deny you, but by this good day I yield upon great persuasion, and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption.

-William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*<sup>1</sup>

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, if I'd been pale, skeletally slender, chronically feverish, and prone to bouts of swooning and fainting, I'd be the ideal image (for great doctors and great poets alike) of a woman hysterically in love—and I would also probably be dying of tuberculosis.

Before Robert Koch's 1882 discovery of the bacterium *M. tuberculosis*, there were many such outlandish explanations for "consumption," which we now know as pulmonary tuberculosis (TB).<sup>2</sup> The disease, which may have killed up

to one in four people in Western Europe and America in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, causes a lesion (or "tubercle") to form on the lung, deteriorating the pulmonary tissue and frequently leading to death.<sup>3</sup> Before physicians knew this, however, explanations were drawn largely from the balance of the "humors"—a tenuous and archaic explanation attributing one's health to a myriad of mental, physical, and even emotional factors.<sup>4</sup>

One such possible explanation for consumption was known as "love melancholy," which intertwined the state of one's physical anguish with one's apparent emotional anguish. This condition was more frequently attributed to women because it reinforced the idea that women suffered drastic changes in emotion as a result of "hysteria," or the movement of the female womb. Female love melancholy, like hysteria, became a patronizing mechanism by which physicians ignored the emotional needs of women by deeming them fragile and in need of rest—especially when that fragility could be



attributed to romantic upset. As scholar Clark Lawlor explains in his book *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease*, “Female love melancholy leads to consumption; in this cultural pattern, women are dependent on men, and love is the way in which they link

The notion of a powerful and debilitating love melancholy—now the myth of lovesickness—remains as pervasive in our literature and our lives as ever.

themselves to men. When love goes wrong for a woman, she has no alternative but disease and untimely death—preferably a beautiful one from consumption.”<sup>5</sup>

This romanticized view of consumption was not limited only to women, however. Just as women could suffer hysteria, men suffered “hypochondria.” This disease was just as sexist as hysteria, because it was applied to men who discarded traditional male dominance in favor of an intellectual lifestyle. As one eighteenth century scholar wrote, “Those males who become known as ‘hypochondriac’ in the eighteenth century are typically described as those who study, who write, who remove themselves from a world of trade, ambition and ‘business.’”<sup>6</sup> Consumption rendered female heroines fragile, ethereal, in need of saving; it depicted male hypochondriacs as tragic geniuses.

The love-driven disease became a favorite of many authors and poets, especially during the Romantic period of literature, when consumption became a metaphorical vehicle for the “consuming” power of love. Perhaps it was also an effort to deal with the cruel reality of such a fatal disease. Clear markers of declining health were lauded as “beautiful” and idealistic, and death by consumption could be attributed to love—something beautiful—rather than disease—something terrible.

At the same time, however, I believe that love melancholy in *particular* was readily adopted because it reinforced and reaffirmed the human tendency to exalt love, romance, and passion to a dangerous degree. As distant as the notions of hysteria and hypochondria may seem to us now, and while consumption itself has nearly been eradicated, the idea of “lovesickness” is not distant at all. Although antiquated understandings of pathogens and human biology have changed, it seems that the notion of a powerful and debilitating love melancholy—now the myth of lovesickness—remains as pervasive in our literature and our lives as ever.

It’s hardly necessary to enumerate the examples in media (from movies, to books, and to songs) that teach us to idealize unhealthy love. Love is often connected metaphorically to things which destroy us: drugs, drinking, insanity, obsession. Even in Taylor Swift’s “Don’t Blame Me,”

she sings, “Don’t blame me, love made me crazy, if it doesn’t, you ain’t doing it right. / Oh, Lord save me, my drug is my baby, I’ll be using for the rest of my life.” While the lyrics are more tongue-in-cheek than the average listener might expect, they are effective because they speak to a widely-shared sentiment: love makes you crazy, drunk, blind, or sick.

Melodrama for the sake of entertainment value is certainly one thing, but on a deeper level, we have failed to dismantle the very societal misconceptions that transformed consumption into a “romantic” disease. *Why* haven’t we abandoned our obsession with destructive love? There’s something darkly compelling about the idea of a love so strong that it must either save us or destroy us. We are enamored by tragic, star-crossed love stories where the stakes run as high as the emotions. But why are these the stories to which we find ourselves drawn?

Partially, we exist in a culture of self-gratification, in which we either instantaneously receive that which we desire or else give up the pursuit. We search for completion in food, material objects, knowledge, or sex, and the pursuit of romantic relationships, especially when seeking the euphoria that accompanies them, can be commodified just like these other desires. In other words, when relationships become another means of self-gratification, they breed a habit of romantic consumption, and we train ourselves to accept this in place of long-lasting fulfillment.

Our mythicized romances often focus more on self-gratification than growth. Often, they're tales of *instant* gratification as well: "meet cute" stories remain a frequent rom-com trope

### Too often in love, we substitute self-gratifying consumption for completion.

wherein a girl and guy destined to be together suddenly and unexpectedly meet (think two people running into each other on a crowded street, or one spilling coffee on another—chance encounters that eventually lead to something more).<sup>7</sup> These movies and novels reinforce the idea that any meaningful, interesting, soulmate kind of love is usually love at first sight—or at least, fated-to-be-so at first sight. And when

it's not about instant gratification, it's often about reward payoff: if you spend enough time waiting, or working to woo the one you love, you'll eventually earn what you want, and a life of ease will follow. It's the quintessential American Dream of romance.

Both of these views are problematic, in that they say "love simply happens," and once it has happened, happily ever after inevitably ensues. In reality, love takes work—even after a match has been made—and romance, like any other desire, is not sufficient to complete the missing part of yourself.

We already know the dangers of self-gratification, even if we do not really internalize them—that "money cannot buy happiness," and that bingeing an entire pint of Ben & Jerry's can't fix your sadness either. And despite the more contentious conversation surrounding sex, there is at least *dialogue* about the potential dangers of replacing emotional intimacy with physical intimacy. Yet in general, fairytale romances continue to be just that: people's idealized conceptions of what we think *ought* to be the case if everything in our love lives goes to plan. We are not cultivated to grow patiently together; rather, we are groomed to expect romance to happen too fast and too easily.



(you might have to pry *Pride and Prejudice* out of my cold, dead hands), but I *do* think we need to reevaluate the source of our romantic inclinations and intuitions. It is an obvious and universal truth that love is one of our most noble human endeavors. Just ask any Beatles fan, and they'll tell you that "love is all you need." And they're not exactly wrong: I think the most pressing reason for this phenomenon of lovesickness is that it is a misguided expression of our *correct* intuitive understanding that love is an essential human experience. Whether it is the love of friends, family, a significant other, or God Himself. God is the source of all love, and therefore the love we feel toward others is a reflection of that which He feels for us—after all, we are made in His image.<sup>8</sup> What we need to be careful to remember, though, is that just because love is *from* God doesn't make every act of love *Godly*.

In 1 Corinthians, a letter from the Apostle Paul in the New Testament of the Christian Bible, we are given a very specific guideline of what Godly love should look like:

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."<sup>9</sup>

And there are plenty of examples, from history to our day-to-day lives, of love done *right*. Think of the love between a parent and a child—the kind of love where someone is willing to give everything, even their own life, just to see the one they love safe and happy. Or, on a less extreme scale, we hear of friendships that transcend all sorts of barriers and adversities to cultivate understanding and empathy between two otherwise-divided people. These examples share something crucial in common: the kind of love they represent is *self-giving* love, not *selfish* love.

So how do all these people—parents, friends, and, yes, even some lovers—get love *right* when so many people get it wrong? It can certainly be helpful to point out images of healthy, fulfilling love where we see them, as the book of Hebrews (another letter in the New Testament) encourages us to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."<sup>10</sup> But the most

powerful example of love is, of course, the source of love Himself. As the Scripture says, "God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, just as living a life of love entails living a Godly life, the greatest means of showing our own love is *through* God.

Jesus offers a clear model that Godly love is self-sacrificing. He, the ultimate and perfect image of selfless love, died on a cross to save us from our sins. While consumptive love is self-serving, we should strive to cultivate love that is self-sacrificing, that is focused on serving one another rather than on gratifying ourselves. The Bible makes direct

reference to the loving relationship between Jesus and the church in its commands about marriage: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."<sup>12</sup>

We distort the gift of *real love* which God has both given and encouraged us to give when we mistake lovesickness for true, Godly love. It is true that love is incredibly powerful: The Song of Solomon, a powerful love story in the Old Testament often read metaphorically as depicting the love between Christ and the Church, says that "love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it."<sup>13</sup> However, powerful love does not equal debilitating love. It takes patience and effort to deny one's own selfish desires and choose instead to walk in the way of Jesus, but the result is that "you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."<sup>14</sup>

In the opening passage from Shakespeare's romantic comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*, the two enemies-to-lovers, Beatrice and Benedick, joke that they accept each other against their own wills, and one even teases the other that she accepts him only because she thought he was dying of a consumption. It seems the two of them have inevitably succumbed to the euphoric rush their cat-and-mouse romance gives them—in fact, they act as though they have indeed resigned themselves to a fatal disease. Later, however, in Shakespeare's famous Sonnet 116, he writes,

The most powerful example of love is, of course, the source of love Himself.

“Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken...  
Love alters not with his brief hours and  
weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.”<sup>15</sup>

This kind of love, which is unaltered, unflinching, and “ever-fixed,” much more closely resembles the eternal love of God than the humorous “consumption” of Beatrice and Benedick.

I don’t doubt that lovesickness is a valid feeling or phenomenon, but it is a diseased one. Healthy love—*real* love, the kind modeled by the Biblical love between Christ and The Church, Creator and creation—is not the kind that makes you sick. It is the kind that “alters not” but “bears it out;” it is the kind that sustains you, nourishes you, and carries you through every season. That is what makes it last. And that’s the kind of love we ought to be seeking. ☺

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<sup>1</sup>Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare, ed. A. R. Humphreys (London: Methuen, 1981), V.4.96, 216.

<sup>2</sup>John Frith, “History of Tuberculosis. Part 1 – Phthisis, consumption and the White Plague,” *Journal of Military and Veterans Health* 22, no. 2 (June 2014): <<https://jmvh.org/article/history-of-tuberculosis-part-1-phthisis-consumption-and-the-white-plague>>.

<sup>3</sup>Clark Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 5.

<sup>4</sup>Lawlor, 17-21.

<sup>5</sup>Lawlor, 154.

<sup>6</sup>John Mullan, “Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians,” *The Eighteenth Century* 25, no. 2 (Spring 1984): <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41467321>>.

<sup>7</sup>“Meet Cute,” *tvtropes.org*, 30 October 2018, <<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/MeetCute>>.

<sup>8</sup>Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup>1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup>Hebrews 10:24 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup>1 John 4:16 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup>Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup>Song of Solomon 8:6-7 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup>Ephesians 3:17-19 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup>William Shakespeare, “Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds (Sonnet 116),” *Poetry Foundation*, 30 October 2018, <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45106/sonnet-116-let-me-not-to-the-marriage-of-true-minds>>.<sup>9</sup>1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup>Hebrews 10:24 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup>1 John 4:16 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup>Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup>Song of Solomon 8:6-7 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup>Ephesians 3:17-19 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup>William Shakespeare, “Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds (Sonnet 116),” *Poetry Foundation*, 30 October 2018, <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45106/sonnet-116-let-me-not-to-the-marriage-of-true-minds>>.



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# BINGEING ON BEAUTY

*Society's mantras and their detrimental effects*

By Grace Choi

Most of us have heard the phrase “don’t judge a book by its cover.” Yet, we do so anyway.

Lydia Ramsey, professional speaker and author of *Manners That Sell: Adding the Polish that Builds Profits*, states that when you meet someone, “93% of how you are judged is based on non-verbal data—your appearance and body language.”<sup>1</sup> The remaining 7%, she explains, is influenced by the words that we speak. Given that so much of how others perceive us hinges on our outward appearance, it makes sense that entire industries are dedicated to helping people look better.

In today’s culture, we must endure the ever-present weight of others’ opinions—especially opinions centered around how we should look and feel. These opinions, in turn, foster unhealthy feelings and themes of discontentment. A study by The Park Nicollet Melrose Center, a leading eating disorder and body dysphoria treatment center, reported that over 80 percent of women and 34 percent of men are dissatisfied with the way they look.<sup>2</sup> In addition, this study reported that around 30 to 40 percent of ten to fourteen-year-olds are actively dieting in an effort to achieve what they consider to be the “perfect” body. These startling statistics force us to consider what may be the cause behind the immense cultural presence of

body dysphoria—the obsessive idea that one’s body is seriously flawed in one or more ways—and what truths, if any, we can decipher from these messages. Are we aware of how much we let these industries dictate our opinions about appearance? Additionally, what messages are being conveyed, and what do they imply about our identity and worth?

Ultimately, there seem to be three overarching messages related to body image present in our society: the “You’re-not-good-enough,” the “Focus-on-the-soul,” and the “YOLO.”

A product of our culture’s airbrushed magazines and photoshopped models setting unrealistic expectations of beauty, the “You’re-not-good-enough” message says that your body is not, and never will be, good enough. And it is not a gender-specific issue; as the phrase goes, “it’s just as hard to be Ken as it is to be Barbie.” This constant pressure by mainstream society to achieve a certain look is leading to an increasing number of the population who struggle with an eating disorder. For example, a 2011 study conducted in the United Kingdom reported that the “thinness and fitness themes” that are prevalent on various platforms of social media have led to larger percentages of the population being dissatisfied with their appearance.<sup>3</sup> With the constant influx of these sorts of messages,

there is no end to the struggle to find peace with the reflection you see in the mirror. It is an endless cycle, that carries a harmful mantra which equates outward appearance with self-worth.

Conversely, we also find the opposite of the “You’re-Not-Good-Enough” message heavily conveyed within our society. While the former focuses solely on the physical body, the latter “Focus-on-the-soul” mantra claims that our bodies are already perfect. As a result, our focus must solely be upon our inner self. The

### If none of these mantras can be followed wholeheartedly, can we strike an appropriate balance between the three?

onset of campaigns such as the Dove “Real Beauty” Campaign encourages women across the country to be confident in their own body and direct their focus on being a better person or friend.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, while many social media influencers may tell us that our physical bodies need improvement, countless others convey the message that our spiritual beings are the only ones that matter. This leads to a full indulgence in satisfying the spiritual being but neglecting the physical body entirely. This leads one to see her inner self as synonymous to her entire worth.

However, an equally damaging message is the “YOLO” message. Originating from Drake’s 2011 hit “The Motto,” the phrase “YOLO,”—an abbreviation of “You Only Live Once,”—is now a widely adopted mantra. In essence, “YOLO” encourages the pursuit of a life lived to its absolute fullest, a life truly lived without regrets. As wonderful as it may sound, the use of this phrase has also transitioned into an excuse for making careless, even impulsive, errors. This sort of mindset advocated by several prominent celebrities promotes a culture of self-indulgence without recognition of personal and important needs, like taking care of mental and physical health. And while eating all the comfort food in the world with absolutely no guilt or consequence sounds great in theory, the idea of “treat yourself because it’s all going to be okay” creates yet another set of negative consequences including guilt and eating disorders. Ironically,

even though the “YOLO” mindset rejects the concentrated concerns of the “You’re-not-good-enough” and “Focus-on-the-soul” mindsets, the consequences of all three often end up the same.

Although approaching the same topic from different perspectives, all three messages that seem to be large voices on social media and society at large lead to bad endings. If none of these mantras can be followed wholeheartedly, can we strike an appropriate balance between the three?

Interestingly enough, the Bible confirms the human desire to highly value appearance. In the book of 1 Samuel in the Old Testament, the prophet Samuel arrives at a house on God’s orders to find a new king for the people of Israel. Samuel, upon arriving, sees Eliab, the oldest brother. His

younger brother, a humble shepherd, would soon become King David. Samuel finds Eliab to have the appearance of a King and remarks, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.”<sup>5</sup> To this, God responds, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”<sup>6</sup>

The “heart” of a person is often synonymous in the Bible to one’s spiritual condition, and we are told to guard it.<sup>7</sup> The term is mentioned in the King James Version of the Bible 380 times.<sup>8</sup> That is significant, given that in comparison, the word “love” is mentioned 310 times. Our hearts describe our innermost being, and in the realm of body image, it stresses the importance of the focus on both our physical and spiritual bodies.

In regards to the spiritual aspect, this emphasis on the heart reveals an intrinsic identity that each of us holds of incredible worth and value.

Humankind is described as being God’s masterpiece, and having been made fearfully and wonderfully.<sup>9</sup> Societal standards often lead us to think we will never amount to being enough. However, the identity we hold as a creation of God and as a child forgiven by God through Jesus says otherwise. In God, we are called precious, valued, and redeemed. Rooting from this, we find the motivation to value our spiritual bodies because this identity has been given by God.

In God,  
we are called  
precious,  
valued,  
and  
redeemed.



Given our incredible worth, we are to prioritize the care of our physical bodies as well. We need not obsess about fitting the mold of physical perfection that society sets out for us. In the same light, it is unfair to hold others to the same unachievable standards of beauty set out in popular culture and judge when they do not achieve these impossible standards. However, our bodies are “temples of God” and thus we need to strive to treat it as such and prioritize our physical health accordingly.<sup>10</sup>

In a world of a plethora of opinions on an abundance of different subject matter, standards of beauty are not an exception. The “You’re-not-good-enough,” the “Focus-on-the-soul”, and the “YOLO” messages all have certain elements of truth that we can find value in. They all reiterate the physical or spiritual body that needs to be prioritized. The culmination of all of these is found through a perspective found in the Bible, which highlights the importance for both physical and spiritual care, while also emphasizing the unchangeable identity each person holds as a creation of God. ☺

*Body Image,” Park Nicollet Melrose Center, 17 October 2018, <[http://www.macmh.org/up-content/uploads/2014/05/18\\_Gallivan\\_Teens-social-media-body-image-presentation-H-Gallivan-Spring-2014.pdf](http://www.macmh.org/up-content/uploads/2014/05/18_Gallivan_Teens-social-media-body-image-presentation-H-Gallivan-Spring-2014.pdf)>*

<sup>3</sup>*Dittmar, H. “How do ‘body perfect’ ideals in the media have a negative impact on body image and behaviors? Factors and processes related to self and identity.” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 28, 1–8. (2009) <[doi:10.1521/jscp.2009.28.1.1](https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2009.28.1.1)>*

<sup>4</sup>*Dove. The ‘Dove Real Beauty Pledge’, 17 October, 2018, <<https://www.dove.com/us/en/stories/about-dove/dove-real-beauty-pledge.html>>*

<sup>5</sup>*1 Samuel 16:6 (NIV)*

<sup>6</sup>*1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)*

<sup>7</sup>*Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)*

<sup>8</sup>*C. “Word Counts: How Many Times Does a Word Appear in the Bible?” 17 October, 2018 <[https://www.christianbiblereference.org/faq\\_WordCount.htm](https://www.christianbiblereference.org/faq_WordCount.htm)>*

<sup>9</sup>*Ephesians 2:10 (NIV); Psalm 139:14 (NIV)*

<sup>10</sup>*Psalm 139:14 (NIV)*

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<sup>1</sup>*Ramsey, L. *Manners that sell: Adding the polish that builds profits.* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Pub. 2008)*

<sup>2</sup>*Gallivan, H. R. “Teens, Social Media And*



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# Dialogue

by Matthew J. Hall

Let's sit, sweet sister, and think of things we share;  
sit with me but talk instead of lives  
which from here on will probably diverge.  
And as we do may sympathy unveil  
what dumb decorum coldly would conceal:  
that holy music—which, though I may hear,  
I often wonder if it's really there—  
is heard at least by you, and so must be  
a music real enough, and holy too.

# Vision

by Matthew J. Hall

# (Diptych)

## I.

There's the veil; no one seems to know.

I see it, but of course can't enter in.

Worthy or unworthy, I would die.

Instead I loiter nearby—

sense the heat from behind,

accidentally rustle it.

Light streams out from below:

thunderous, fulsome light,

though only a few scraps and shards.

Everyone looks up sleepily

from their feed-troughs or their rocks and hammers.

“Who rustled the curtain?”

“That window had been painted shut, we thought.”

“Bricked over,” another says.

But feel instead the lovely heat of light:

and know by it the portal's there.

## II.

Hagios Hagios Hagios

they scream a branding knife

their wings and copes

gale-whipped tearing strain

white hot and icy sharp

ever inward to the blinding

Nexus whose fixity

blast-blows fixedly

amidst the whirl-sea—

still ever inward

hotter and pure.



### *Poet's Note:*

*These lines are excerpted from a collection entitled Dialogues, Visions, Thoughts, Seasons, written between 2013 and 2018 during my PhD studies in music at Cornell. They are expressions of my fight against being consumed by my dissertation; equally, they are an expression of my desire to be consumed by a purpose greater than one of my own design.*

*Matthew J. Hall is a PhD candidate in musicology.*



# POCKETBOOK PAGANISM

by Amy Crouch

*How do we worship with our wallets?*

Sacrifice, as an idea, seems abstract. The word sounds grand and serious, something you do for big things like your country, your family, or your beliefs. The dictionary agrees:

“Sacrifice,” says the Oxford English Dictionary, is “the destruction or surrender of something valued or desired for the sake of something having, or regarded as having, a higher or a more pressing claim.”<sup>1</sup>

According to this definition, sacrifice has little to

do with ordinary life.

But, at its core, sacrifice is the simple—and *daily*—act of priority-setting. We decide what we value and, in turn, how much we are willing to give up. This means that sacrifice is woven into our everyday lives. Sacrifice presents itself whenever we choose how to spend our time or who to spend our time with—and it is present every time we consume.

Some elements of consumption are visibly

money we have earned at work, for instance, because we believe that some other physical product will give us something better than money in the bank.

But our consumption is also rife with hidden sacrifices. Buying a shirt from the mall may seem like a simple exchange of money for a garment. But, in fact, when we make this kind of purchase, we are creating a priority list with clothing at the top and much more added lower on the list. Our consumption of physical products leads to sacrifices of natural resources, worker time, and even human lives. This is not an exaggeration: the world's biggest industries routinely sacrifice life.

The modern fashion industry, for example, "is one of the biggest supporters of modern slavery across the globe."<sup>2</sup>

According to the 2018 Global Slavery Index report, "\$127.7 billion worth of garments at risk of including modern slavery in their supply chain are imported annually by G20 countries," contributing to "a global economy that trapped 40.3 million people in modern slavery in 2016."<sup>3</sup>

A similarly horrific system of abuses supports the tech industry. In 2010, investigations revealed that Apple factories subject their workers to dehumanizing conditions; stress and overwork pushed 18 employees to suicide in one year, with 20 more employees being talked down from the roofs of their factory by supervisors.<sup>4</sup> In 2012, 150 Apple workers threatened mass suicide to protest "immense stress, long workdays and

harsh managers who were prone to humiliate workers for mistakes, of unfair fines and unkept promises of benefits."<sup>5</sup> To create consumer goods cheaply and quickly, companies globally turn a blind eye to blatant human rights abuses. It is a diabolically disordered sacrifice. Rather than giving up something good for the sake of something better, this kind of sacrifice trades human flourishing for cash. Most would consider this an upside-down priority list.

**Just like ancient gods, these gods want us to sacrifice to them – and they're succeeding. Our modern gods are winning; we're buying technology, clothing, food, and accessories ceaselessly, giving up our own wealth and the lives of others in the hopes that the ads speak the truth.**

Sacrifice for consumption is no modern invention—people have been sacrificing for as long as there have been people. Certainly, these sacrifices have worn different faces throughout history. But they've shared the same essence. As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* points out, "what is always offered

in sacrifice is, in one form or another, life itself."<sup>6</sup> Since the beginning of recorded history, humans have been giving up life for the pursuit of other goals. However, ancient sacrifices were somewhat more colorful. Our modern sacrifices are hushed up; public relations companies neatly sweep slavery and suicide under the rug. This hasn't always been true. At other times of history, sacrifice has been highly publicized, with grand temples and sacred spaces prepared for the rite. Altars, the ritual tables on which sacrifices were offered, were specifically reserved as a fitting place for sacrifice. What's more, sacrifice was often accepted as and demanded to be part of the fabric of daily life.<sup>7</sup> Because our modern habits of sacrifice are less visible, studying these more overt acts of sacrifice can help illuminate our hidden habits.

Sacrifices of the past, just as now, were deeply linked with consumption: sacrificing was meal-making. Rites from religions ranging from Judaism to Hinduism distributed offerings among priests or laity following their consecration. Even if the sacrifices were not eaten by people, there was still an emphasis on consuming the product by fire or burial.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, ancient sacrifices were explicitly religious; priests offered crops and cows to placate powerful gods.<sup>9</sup> Superficially, it may seem that this element of sacrifice has changed. Few people would see the objects of modern





consumption as gods, and buying a pair of sneakers seems a far cry from burning cattle on pyres.

But in reality, when we buy a pair of sneakers, a head of out-of-season cauliflower, or an iPhone, we are buying more than a physical good. We don't just buy shoes to protect our feet. A look at advertising for any product should make us realize that we are buying into a much greater and more serious set of promises. Cosmetics giant L'Oréal urges women to buy their lipsticks and shampoos "because I'm worth it," promising that purchasing from L'Oréal will literally affirm human worth. Luxury watch company

**Our God is unique among all the gods of our world in that He can redeem sacrifices; He creates more than there was before.**

Patek Philippe asserts: "You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation."<sup>10</sup> Patek Philippe's \$25,000 watches promise far more than just "this watch tells time" or "this watch looks snazzy" or even "this watch signals your status." They promise that you will leave a mark on Earth, that you will leave inheritances for your children and your children's children. These are not the promises of simple physical goods. They are the promises of gods.

Just like ancient gods, these gods want us to

sacrifice to them—and they are succeeding. L'Oréal is the leader of the booming worldwide market for cosmetics.<sup>11</sup> Patek Philippe's watches are outselling products thousands of times cheaper.<sup>12</sup> Our modern gods are winning; we are buying technology, clothing, food, and accessories ceaselessly, giving up our own wealth and the lives of others in the hopes that the ads speak the truth.

The problem is, the gods of L'Oréal and Patek Philippe do not have our best interests at heart. They prize our consumption, not our happiness—it is debatable how much L'Oréal actually wants to affirm every woman's self-worth. We give

our all to these gods, but they will never deliver on the promises from their ads and product copy.

But what if there were gods—or *a* god—who did have the flourishing of humans at heart? What would

sacrifice look like with such a god?

In fact, the Christian faith tells a story anchored in the work of this kind of god, one who took on human skin and bones in the person of Jesus. The accounts of his ministry depicted in the Bible weave sacrifice and consumption together and redeem them. Jesus' gospel turns consumption into an act of production, not destruction. The gospel writer Mark illustrates this with a striking juxtaposition. In chapter six of the book of Mark, the local king Herod throws a banquet for his court, inviting leading men and military

commanders to feast with him. One particular dancer, Herod's niece as it happens, pleases the king so much that he promises her anything, "up to half of [his] kingdom." The young girl, influenced by her mother's grudge against the contemporary prophet John the Baptist, requests John's head on a silver plate. Herod complies and has the head brought in to the feast. It's a gruesome image, to be sure; bloody heads and banquets do not seem to mix. But John's sacrifice to the festal entertainment parallels the kinds of sacrifices we still make in our desire to consume.<sup>13</sup>

Immediately after this example of broken consumption, Mark relates a contrasting event. After Jesus preaches to a crowd of five thousand, he notices their hunger and tells his disciples to find food for the crowd. Understandably, the disciples are frustrated by the request; food for five thousand generally takes more than a minute's notice. But Jesus, taking five loaves of bread and two fish, divides it among the whole crowd and they leave basketfuls of leftovers.<sup>14</sup> What does this mean? Is Jesus merely showing off? Indeed not. In the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus breaks the sinful pattern of consumption in this world. In our broken world, consuming is a sacrifice; it is always a giving up, a using up of something. But here, a crowd eats Jesus's bread and are left with more than they started with. They consume without sacrifice.

In the central miracle of the Christian faith, Jesus turns consumption and sacrifice inside out and upside down, or maybe right-side out and right-way-up. Having supper with his friends the night He was betrayed, He told His followers to consume His very body and blood so that they could have life—strange, shocking, sacrificial. What's even stranger, more shocking, more sacrificial is that following that dinner, Jesus gave himself up to be crucified, a gruesome and torturous death. He was hung from nails to suffocate.

Yet Christians believe that through these sacrifices, just like the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus ended up with more than he started with. The crucifixion did not consume Jesus; through being crucified, Jesus brought more life than there was before. His offer of

consumption does not destroy his life, rather, it brings more life to all.

This vision of sacrifice and consumption is nothing like the kinds of sacrifices encouraged by corporations who want us to consume, and Jesus himself is nothing like the kinds of gods these corporations represent. What do these differences mean for Christians? The world is still broken. We can't feed five thousand with every loaf of bread.

But we can choose where our sacrifices go. Our God is unique among all the gods of our world in that

He can redeem sacrifices. He creates more than there was before. Our acts of consumption, then, can humbly reflect this divine action. While we will not have miracles every time we have lunch, we can look carefully at where our sacrifices are going and to whom. We can sacrifice to idols, or we can sacrifice to the one true God. ☩

In the central miracle of the  
Christian faith, Jesus turns  
consumption and sacrifice  
inside out and upside down—  
or, maybe right-side out and  
right-way-up. or, maybe right-  
side out and right-way-up.

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<sup>1</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "sacrifice (n.)," 30 October 2018, <[http://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=sacrifice&\\_searchBtn=Search](http://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=sacrifice&_searchBtn=Search)>.

<sup>2</sup>Whitney Bauck, "The Fashion Industry is One of the Biggest Supporters of Modern Slavery Across the Globe," *Fashionista*, 30 October 2018, <<https://fashionista.com/2018/07/fashion-industry-modern-slavery-report-2018>>.

<sup>3</sup>Bauck, "The Fashion Industry is One of the Biggest Supporters of Modern Slavery Across the Globe."

<sup>4</sup>Brian Merchant, "Life and death in Apple's forbidden city," *The Guardian*, 30 October 2018, <<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/18/foxconn-life-death-forbidden-city-longhua-suicide-apple-iphone-brian-merchant-one-device-extract>>.

<sup>5</sup>Merchant, "Life and death in Apple's forbidden city."

<sup>6</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, Academic ed.*, s.v. "Sacrifice," 30 October 2018, <<https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/sacrifice/109492>>.

<sup>7</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, "Sacrifice."

<sup>8</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, "Sacrifice."

<sup>9</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, “Sacrifice.”*

<sup>10</sup>*Various contributors, “What Is the Best Advertising Campaign of All Time?” The Atlantic, 30 October 2018, <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/the-big-question/384984/>>.*

<sup>11</sup>*“L’Oréal in Figures,” 2017 Annual Report, L’Oréal, <<https://www.loreal-finance.com/en/annual-report-2017/key-figures>>.*

<sup>12</sup>*Rob Corder, “BREAKING NEWS: Patek Philippe increases sales by 9.1% in 2017-18 financial year,” WatchPro. 30 October 2018, <<http://www.watchpro.com/breaking-news-patek-philippe-increases-sales-9-1-2017-18-financial-year>>.*

<sup>13</sup>*Mark 6 (ESV)*

<sup>14</sup>*Mark 6 (ESV)*



*Amy Crouch is a freshman from Pennsylvania who doesn't exactly know what she wants to major in yet. She loves to contemplate music, create extravagant baked goods, and chat about words and The Word—preferably all at the same time.*

# Prayer to the Deserted Psalm

by Zachary Lee

Not the pencil case, not the apple  
slice-thin paper reams  
not the rye with sallow turkey  
and golden mustard, which peels  
like paint, not  
chewed gum mired  
to its rear, nor any  
other thing,  
but rather bless  
my father's King James...  
a gift given, hopeful  
that when observed in a year's time,  
the blackened underlines on worn, yellowed pages  
signal independent faith  
yet  
now it lies  
deserted  
in the collegiate satchel,  
a vermilion backpack with one broken strap  
it's a dog's tail, hanging limp,  
but the Word still stands  
spine erect, a slab  
of weathered pages  
bookended by cardboard,  
but buried  
by other manuscripts...too many to count  
the message, once a lamp unto my feet  
now a flicker  
"When I'm not busy I'll open it"  
But there's no space for this Scripture  
yet I'm too anchored by guilt  
to utterly abandon  
so instead indifference  
eats away at the untouched pages  
now not even a speck of dust can enter, for  
its mouth is locked in  
unnatural reticence,  
indeed, woe to him  
who doesn't break,  
his alabaster jar  
for when he comes to finally reach  
past the pencil case, the apple  
slice-thin paper reams  
the rye with sallow turkey  
and golden mustard, which peels  
like paint, the  
gnawed gum mired  
to its rear,  
he may find that the Truth looks to him  
like chaff

Poet's Note:

This piece is a response/echo to the piece "Prayer of The Backhanded" by Jericho Brown.



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# IN LOVING SILENCE

By Paola Mendez

*The importance of being still*

Noise. We are constantly submerged in it, whether sound is inflicted upon us by the world or by our own choices. Either we are surrounded by sounds of nature and the chattering voices of others or we are lost in our own world of sound—delivered by the headphones against our ears. It has become common—often frighteningly so—to see students corpse-like, blankly staring at their surroundings, as music streams into their ears mid-walk, or sitting silently, fixated upon laptop and phone screens as media streams into their unfocused eyes.

The following situation is a common reality for weighed-down Cornellians. Enter, a student, lost in thought with a brain running at a hundred miles per hour, busy processing a multitude of pressing tasks and highly anticipated goals. Suddenly, without warning, fear creeps in; their head abruptly begins to shake in panic, and they absently reach for their earbuds or phone. Why? Because, somehow, someway, stimulation has become the only way to cope with the overwhelming weight of the prospective world on their shoulders. Even when sitting contemplatively still in designated places of silence on campus, such as Sage Chapel or the ever-quiet A.D. White library, over-stimulated students find themselves without the ability to find lasting peace, comfort, or hope.

In our technology driven, fast paced, and individualistic day and age, college students tend to deal with the following issues: overstimulation, self-absorption, and despondency. Aside from their overall negative connotations, these three states are hopelessly intertwined, leading each to push and pull at the psyche of those unfortunate enough to slip into them. People attempt to rectify this entrapment through various methods of what we refer to as “self-help.” These practices attempt to soothe the body and mind through activities such as exercise, healthy eating, solitude, and meditation. Focusing specifically on the exercises of the mind, the results of solitude and meditation depend highly on the means and focus of the exercise itself. If one is absent-minded and focuses solely on the self, silence and meditation will not be fruitful.

Most people at Cornell—and in society at large—live their lives attempting to find the right combination of busyness and efficiency. But the oft-touted “work hard, play hard” mentality can result in serious trouble. Human beings are not machines; we desperately need periods of rest for both our bodies and our minds. Without proper rest, the human body suffers gravely: physically, mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually. Though sleep and relaxation are important for the human body, “rest” is much larger than the

mere physical. It encompasses the mental and emotional peace that can only be attained through the contemplation of ourselves and our surroundings in silence and meditation.

This specific form of rest cannot be achieved without complete silence. Yes, that means no headphones, no background television, nothing. If a person receives stimulation during a rest period, the mind is booted back up again—causing its “work” to continue—and cannot truly rest. So, without silence, “resting” becomes pointless; with a presence of underlying distraction, one’s mind is neither refreshed nor prepared to return to work. In addition to impeding proper rest, overstimulation of the mind leads to more dangerous behaviors; due to the intertwined nature of overstimulation, it can be a stepping stone to developing an attitude of self-absorption and feelings of despondency.

The overstimulation of media that morphs into self-absorption often takes the form of escapism, which is the tendency to escape unpleasant realities through consuming delightful fantasy and entertainment.<sup>1</sup> To be clear, enjoyment of books, music, and movies as a temporary respite from reality can sometimes provide healthy comfort and delight; the problem emerges when the tendency becomes a habit and is solely used as an escape.

Books, movies, and music can be just as addictive and dangerous as various other forms of pleasure. And like other addictive habits—such as the consumption of rich foods, sex, or alcohol—the act of consumption in of itself is not inherently bad. Abusing this consumption, however, can transform these simple forms of temporary escape into the only place in which one longs to dwell. Eventually, this abuse can violently rip us away from reality. When one returns from an escape without discovering or achieving anything ultimately useful or noteworthy, one’s elated emotions evaporate, leaving one right back at their original state of despondency. Over time, the addiction strengthens and develops—just like any other habit—as we attempt to make this temporary suspension of reality permanent. And, this permanence does not come without cost—in order to keep the fantasy alive, we must engage in perpetual stimulation. Ironically, in searching for comfort and peace in this short-

term gratification, we lose the chance to find genuine peace and comfort in reality.

This escapism is self-absorbed and results in a lessened awareness of others; it affects much more than just oneself. When we are incessantly preoccupied with the demands of our own lives and devote our slight moments of freedom to transient self-gratification (especially via media consumption), we begin to neglect the needs of those around us. Once again, there is nothing wrong with dedicating time for self-care and relaxation—such as, the watching of an occasional movie or the solitary reading of a book. The problem arises, however, when we bestow *all* of our time and energy into these self-indulgent escapes, leaving no space to regard those around us who are in desperate need of a good neighbor.

What’s more, this cycle is self-perpetuating. Self-absorption leads to despondency, which leads to even more media consumption. We rely on our fickle selves for satisfaction and comfort, all-the-while running ourselves dry. And though it is our nature to prefer ignorance over cognizance and the self over others, the only way to overcome overstimulation, self-absorption, and despondency is to look away from ourselves. We must instead look up and around.

There are many methods that attempt to help mitigate overstimulation, self-absorption, and despondency, ranging from encouragement—“Just think positively!”—to various forms of therapy. These methods are often categorized as “self-help,” implying that one must, even if professional help is involved, ultimately depend on oneself to deal with these issues.

Kyle David Bennett, a professor of philosophy at Caldwell University and the author of *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World*, addresses the issues with the methods of silence and meditation encouraged by mainstream “self-help” resources.<sup>2</sup> In his work, he claims that these methods can do more harm than good as they encourage participants to lean more heavily on the self and to empty one’s mind. Practicing mainstream methods of silence and meditation, which focus on one’s personal thoughts and happiness, can be seemingly helpful for oneself. Yet, these aims

In searching for comfort and peace in short-term gratification, we lose the chance to find genuine peace and comfort in reality.



can actually lead one to disregard others and foster an eventual sense of despondency. In his chapter entitled “Directions for Ruling the Mind: Meditation and Renewed Thinking,” Bennet reveals why Christian meditation is much more than just a personal practice. He explains how the Christian tradition uses the practice of meditation to lean on something greater than the self—namely, God—and to search for redirected wholeness.

Many forms of meditation outside of the Christian tradition, much like the “self-help” methods championed by contemporary society, depend on a sense of absent-mindedness or an inner emptiness that eventually lead to eternal peace. For example, in Buddhism, meditation is a practice to help one reach *nirvana*. In Sanskrit, *nirvana* means “becoming extinguished” or “blowing out.”<sup>3</sup> The aim, therefore, is to release all the bad of the world, such as negative thoughts and emotions, from oneself until, ultimately, the release of the negative brings about the extinction of suffering. This philosophy implies that our thoughts and emotions have no foundation for a true, separate self—making them unimportant. Thus, the Buddhist practice of meditation basically entails sitting in silence and focusing on one’s breathing, an attempt to keep thoughts and emotions, especially the negative ones, at bay.

This attempt at “blowing out” the bad does not

fully capture the actual meaning of meditation. The word “meditate” comes from the Greek word *medesthai*, meaning “to care for” and from the Latin word *meditari*, meaning to “consider,” “think over,” or “measure.”<sup>4</sup> This definition gives the concept of meditation a very different connotation. According to Bennett, meditation is separate from other forms of thinking, such as calculation, judgement, or deliberation. Meditation is a “lengthy, investigative, and focused mode of thinking,” meaning that whatever we are thinking about, we measure its “weight, depth, complexity, totality, value, and significance.”<sup>5</sup>

With this in mind, one can more easily understand what the Bible means when it references the spiritual discipline of meditation, which involves the contemplation of God’s words. As it is written in Joshua 1:8,

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”<sup>6</sup>

With this verse as a basis, we can see how meditating on Scripture goes beyond simply thinking about the written word and searching for truths (although these are still important

facets). Meditation also encompasses the *effects* of this pondering. Bennett claims that meditating on God's words not only refers to the strengthening of our relationship with Him or to the sanctification process of our spiritual walk, but also means obeying His commandments and devotedly thinking of our neighbors.<sup>7</sup>

In the Old Testament, God gave Moses, in the form of the Ten Commandments, instructions for how the children of Israel were meant to behave. While all the of these commandments are ultimately means of respecting and worshipping God, six of the Ten Commandments specifically indicate how one should act with regards to one's neighbors whereas the remaining four indicate the proper way to go about actions that are in between God and man.<sup>8</sup> This call for an others-focused lifestyle is also echoed throughout the New Testament. For example, when Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is, He not only announces that it is to love God with the whole heart, mind, and soul, He also concludes that the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves.<sup>9</sup> These two commandments—both based upon the original Ten Commandments—are intertwined. Jesus says that if we love our neighbor and uphold the law in their regard, then we are loving God and obeying His law. In the same way, if we love God and obey His law, then we must love our neighbor and uphold the law in their regard. This is part of the purpose of the law: to bring about good for our neighbor.

Jesus once again makes this clear when He, on the Mount of Olives in the Book of Matthew, tells the parable of "The King and His Kingdom." In this story, the king does not let the righteous into his kingdom. Why? Because the righteous

If we love God and uphold His law, then we must love our neighbor and uphold the law in their regard. This is part of the purpose of the law; to bring about good for our neighbor.

neglected to clothe and feed the least of the kingdom. The righteous, understandably upset, ask why they are not able to enter through the kingdom gates. In response, the king says that the righteous' lack of aid toward the least of these was equivalent to a lack of aid towards the king.<sup>10</sup> According to this scripture, the way we treat our neighbor is a symbol for the ways in which we treat God. And when our nature is

self-absorbed and indulgent, this notion becomes awfully daunting.

Providentially, Bennett's concept of Christian meditation offers a solution to the self-absorption and dissatisfaction that comes from the self-indulgent and harmful habit of unhealthy amounts of media consumption. By devoting time daily towards the practices of silence and meditation, not only do we glorify God, but we also improve ourselves and become more inclined towards our neighbor. These three ends are not offered by other forms of meditation. Though Buddhism claims that the practice of meditation and attainment of enlightenment leads to personal and interpersonal harmony, there is no tangible explanation of how this is possible; in order to reach the "goal" of Buddhist meditation, we have no thoughts or emotions at all.

Bennett's take on Christian meditation is initially void of self-focus and calls for the complete awareness of one's thoughts and emotions. By turning all noise off, at least once a day, and contemplating on our thoughts and emotions—as well as God's words with the intent to be mindful of our neighbor—we are able to reach a sense of peace and fulfilment. This peace and fulfilment is so complete that it encompasses not only our relationship with God, but our daily interpersonal interactions as well. Bennett also reminds us to be aware of the difference between thinking of our neighbor and being mindful of our neighbor. The former requires learning to love and care in thought and subsequent physical execution, while the latter refers to the simple awareness of our neighbor's presence and life.

By thinking of our neighbor while meditating on God's word, we are constantly reminded of two things: what God thinks of our neighbors (which is how we should think of them) and how God loves our neighbors (which is how we ought to love them).

As it is written in John 15: 9-17, a book of the Christian Gospel, if we desire to abide in God's love, we must keep His commandments, which call us to love one another just as He loves us.

Mindful meditation of ourselves and of our neighbor is not about us; it is about God. When we remember that our meditation, and therefore our thinking, is absent of self-absorption, we can

then be more mindful of what we do with our time; we can decide to pursue acts of selflessness instead of acts of self-indulgence. This pursuit is what brings us true peace, fulfilment, and harmony—things that are only found in God, not in ourselves. ☺

<sup>4</sup>*Bennett, Practices of Love, 67*

<sup>5</sup>*Bennett, Practices of Love, 68*

<sup>6</sup>*Joshua 1:8 (ESV)*

<sup>7</sup>*Bennett, Practices of Love, 69-74.*

<sup>8</sup>*Exodus 20:1-17 (ESV)*

<sup>9</sup>*Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)*

<sup>10</sup>*Matthew 25:36-40 (ESV)*

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<sup>1</sup>*Merriam-Webster, s.v. “escapism (n.),” accessed October 30, 2018, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/escapism>.*

<sup>2</sup>*Bennett, Kyle David, and James Smith. Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2017.*

<sup>3</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, Academic ed., s.v. “Nirvana,” accessed October 30, 2018, <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/nirvana/55914>*



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## Bennett's Simple Steps to Practicing Meditation

*Adapted by Paola Mendez*

1. Schedule a specific, regular time and place for daily meditation
2. Read and contemplate the Bible daily
3. Pray without ceasing (for ourselves, for others, in praise, in conversation)
4. Use times, such as cooking, commuting, morning and evening routines, that usually involve watching Netflix or television, listening to music or a podcast, to pray or contemplate.

# Carrying

by James Seaton

This backpack is something you can't buy at a store.  
It is not always earned. Sometimes, it is forcibly  
strapped across your torso by one who may or may not  
love you.

This weight is a burden, a heavy yoke that,  
after a while, becomes a day job. We gain consolation  
in its presence, in its mirage. Often, it is the only thing  
constant.

We depend on pain, place our heads on its bosom,  
indulging in the heart-beat song we are so accustomed  
to hearing. Even in times of joy, we thank the world for its  
pleasure.

Our eyes draw near to weariness. Tears become scores  
of ash lining the skin. Thoughts of what we have since  
lost crowd the mind until we are gone, gone though  
God would have it otherwise.

# Carried

by James Seaton

This backpack is something you can't buy at a store.  
It is never earned. Always, it is latched onto a cross,  
lodged in the bone-deep wounds of One who  
loves you.

This weight is a burden, a light yoke that,  
after a while, becomes a life of fire. We gain warmth  
in its presence, in its truth. Often, it is the only thing  
constant.

We depend on love, place our heads on its bosom,  
delighting in the heart-beat song we can never hear  
enough. Even in times of sadness, we thank God for its  
fulfillment.

Our eyes are wide with excitement. Tears, a radiant blue,  
fall between our knees. Thoughts of what we have since  
lost vanish in these profound moments, vanish though  
enemies would have it otherwise.



*James Seaton is a senior from Long Island studying Communication in CALS. If he's not studying, writing poetry, or leaping into a sand pit, he's probably terrorizing his friends with awkward facial expressions.*



# There's *no* place *like* HEIMAT

*How the culture we consume  
reflects our desires*

by Elizabeth Schmucker

What makes *The Wizard of Oz* lovable and relatable is not the fantastical travels of Dorothy and her loyal dog, Toto, but the desire to return to a familiar and trusted home—even if that home might be with an aunt and uncle in the middle of bleak Kansas. Even if we have never been to Kansas, we can understand the longing for the security that comes with home, even if our home is not a beautiful island or mountain dwelling. German culture reveres this concept of an ideal home even more; for the past seven centuries, it has produced more books, music,

poems, and movies on this concept than the English-speaking world.

The collective mind of Germany's culture is so obsessed with this topic, one could even say consumed by it, that the German language has a unique word for this concept: *Heimat*. Most regions have local *Heimat* museums, elementary school students must take a course learning about the local history and environment called *Heimatkunde*, and the German government even has a federal department for *Heimat*. The German language, infamous for its many compounds, has a couple dozen words which incorporate *Heimat*. Why do so many Germans consume so many books and movies around this concept, and why are they consumed by the concept of *Heimat*?

I propose that this building block of German culture comes from an unmet desire for both an ideal physical place as well as emotional well-being. *Heimat* is an example of the universal desire that we share when we long for an ideal home with comfort and acceptance. There have been many attempts to portray this ideal through films and books. But the problem is that the longing remains unquenched, which leads many to stifle or substitute *Heimat* for a lesser ideal. Christianity, however, affirms the goodness of the desire and holds that no stifling

is needed; our desire for an accepting home, or Heimat, will be realized in heaven.

To first understand the nature of desire, one should examine the meaning of Heimat. Even in the German language, the term Heimat is difficult to define; it captures a sense of both physical location and emotional attachment, and it also has been used with different nuances in different eras. If one had to choose a single

This building block of German culture comes from an unmet desire for both an ideal physical place as well as emotional well-being.

word, Heimat would translate as home or homeland. Since the 15th century, it has carried connections to physical concepts associated with nature, such as the Linden tree, one's place of birth, or a rural village.

Heimat carries strong emotional sentiments as well. It is partially associated with Geborgenheit (another hard to translate word, roughly the feeling of security or comfort, of feeling as if one belongs and is understood) but, simultaneously, is also associated with Sehnsucht (yet again, only a rough translation can be offered; a nostalgic yearning). Geborgenheit points to why Heimat is so loved; in my Heimat, I do not have to explain myself: the people understand and know me, I understand and know them, and we have a bond. The second emotion points to the reason Germans have been consumed by this word for so long; people think of Heimat the most when they lack it. In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy only loves Kansas when she leaves. This concept, for once, translates well into English; it is looking back at the "good ole' days" when gas was a



buck a gallon and life was simple. At the core of humanity, this desire is emotional, and not just physical.

In the 50's and 60's, a popular new film genre based on Heimat demonstrated one way in which people have attempted to fulfill this desire for physical and emotional security. Each of these 250 films had the same shallow plot involving two young lovers in some scenic natural setting.

And, despite their repetitive and flat nature, the German people readily consumed them; the highest grossing German film of all time is indeed a Heimat-film, *Der Förster vom Silberwald*, and boasts of 28 million views in theaters. The film sets up a drastic opposition between the idyllic pre-industrialization nature, traditional attire, and classical music with fast-paced modern life in the city. For example, a beautiful young woman chooses a forest ranger over a city-dwelling modern artist. Long scenes of eagles hunting and deer running through mountains are also contrasted with failed modern art in a small apartment. The film idealizes Heimat as a village mountain life, for both its beauty as well as its connection to childhood memories and familial contact.

The question remains: why did the Germans, known for engineering excellence, revere this agrarian lifestyle so much? It is absurd that this rational culture would be obsessed with this fantasy. One key element alludes to the answer. The male protagonist, when asked about his past, laments his "verlorene Heimat" (lost Heimat). This "lost home" term refers to the forced migration of 12-16 million German-speaking people and German citizens from land controlled by the Soviet Union at the end of WWII to then East and West Germany. The film industry could produce 250 films, each with the same story arc of the beautiful country couple because after having just lost their own Heimat, the audience was longing for the Heimat ideal that the films could provide. The desire for the ideal, like the desire for Heimat, is strongest, just when the ideal is most lacking.

In the 60's and 70's, many academics pushed back against this genre because it was seen as kitsch. Kitsch is another German word borrowed by the English language combining the ideas of cheesiness and sentimentality. These films could be compared to Hallmark movies; although they are cheesy and low caliber, many people still enjoy them. The academics wanted to point out



that reality is not as clean and simple as films portray it to be; the idyllic image of living and working in harmony with nature never existed. A new genre known as anti-Heimatfilms (or critical Heimat films) arose to point out the delusion of the Heimatfilms of the 50's.

For example, *Das plötzliche Reichtum der armen Leute von Kombach* (1971) tells the story of another German village which represents the idealized community of the Heimatfilms. Everything idealized, however, is not what it seems. Farming is back-breaking work that brings worries rather than wealth; consequently, the village attempts to gain wealth by raiding a wagon full of tax money. Relationships are also strained: a couple only gets married because they had a child out of wedlock and not because of romantic love. Both the connections to the land, such as farming, and the emotional connections to people, such as in marriage, fail to follow through on the promises Heimat offers. The film ends with the execution of all of the villagers involved. This disastrous ending signifies the ultimate failure of the idealized picture of Heimat.

This film was very successful with film critics but was a total bust with the popular audience. The film successfully made one think, but it did not offer anything redemptive about the situation. This is perhaps the reason for its lack of popularity; people do not just want to think, but they want to see their desires fulfilled. The

happy image of returning to a balanced farm life, even if not realistic, feels good. This feeling continues to show the universal and persistent desire for an idealized home, a desire that criticism cannot wash away.

In our globalized and industrialized world, the village ideal seems unattainable. Others have offered alternative solutions to finding one's Heimat. But in seeking alternatives, we leave behind the physical desire for Heimat for solely the emotional. Some suggest finding Heimat in the sky lounge of the airline Lufthansa if one's

job requires constant travel.<sup>1</sup> Some, such as many exiled German authors, consider a language their Heimat; perhaps they can speak, read, and write English, French, and German, but the language in which they feel at home is German. German sociologist Hartmut Rosa offers the metaphor of an anchor as Heimat, anything

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that holds one in place during the turbulence of life.<sup>2</sup> Heimat could then be family, a set of political ideals, or any other comfort defined by the individual. These suggestions make sense in that they fulfill one half of the traditional understanding of Heimat; they provide some stability during life's problems.

The problem with Rosa's definition, however, is that it tells us we need to settle for something less than we desire. It takes away the physical component of Heimat, leaving us with only the abstract, emotional feeling of home. In a sense, it claims that our desire is wrongly placed. But does one really have to settle for giving up half

of the ideal, or is there an alternative solution to fulfilling the longing for Heimat? For this answer, we can look to our final home.

One use of Heimat thus far not mentioned is found in German translations of the Bible. Martin Luther, in his 1545 translation, uses the term in Genesis 24:7 when Abraham talks about God's command to leave his home and travel to the Promised Land. "The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred [Heimat], and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land.'" <sup>3</sup> Thus, Luther affirms in this translation the motif of leaving one's Heimat.

Other German translations have also used Heimat in Philippians 3:20, "But our citizenship [Heimat] is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." <sup>4</sup> This concept of Heimat as being found in heaven has been an integral part of the Christian tradition. In the Grimm dictionary, comparable to the Oxford English Dictionary, part of the definition of Heimat includes this connection to Christianity. "For the Christian, heaven is Heimat, in contrast to the earth, on which he, as guest or foreigner, sojourns." <sup>5</sup>

Heimat fits with the Christian tradition because this tradition affirms the desire for somewhere physical and good. In the traditional view of creation, God created the world as good, and Adam and Eve lived in the perfect Garden of Eden, which was "very good." <sup>6</sup> Their desires were both spiritual—for God—but also physical—for fruit. <sup>7</sup> In this way, Christianity affirms the desire for a physical place, in contrast to Rosa's definition. It offers an explanation for why one might look into the past for the ideal Heimat.

Furthermore, the Christian tradition asserts that the world is currently fallen. Just as the abundance of suggestions of Heimat ideals points out that there is something lacking in the current state of things, Christianity also affirms that things are not all good in the world. In the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the fruit not allowed them, they damaged their perfect relationship with God and were exiled from the Garden. <sup>8</sup> Through this, they lost their perfect home.

Christianity offers additionally, however, the promise of a perfect physical reality to come. 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21, both passages from the New Testament, describe the coming "new heaven and new earth" that would arrive after Christ's return. These descriptions imply something very physical. This can also be logically deduced because of the belief that Jesus,

after His death and resurrection, has a physical body and has promised us physical bodies as well. Physical bodies require a physical place to live. In Revelation 21:4, John describes heaven as a place where "He [God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." <sup>9</sup> This physical reality carries the sought after emotional fulfillment. In this way, heaven satisfies.

Perhaps cultures are consumed by the desire for the ideal, not because it is an unrealistic goal, but because it is part of human nature. The desire for Heimat points to the possibility of the completely fulfilled desire for a physical place in which we are known and are secure. Our longing for Kansas is not irrational but, rather, is a foretaste for the feast to come. ☮

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<sup>1</sup>Harmut Rosa, "Heimat im Zeitalter der Globalisierung\*," Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 17 October 2018 (155), <[http://www.kas.de/upload/dokumente/2012/heimat/Heimat\\_rosa.pdf](http://www.kas.de/upload/dokumente/2012/heimat/Heimat_rosa.pdf)>

<sup>2</sup> Rosa, (163)

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 24:7 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup>Philippians 3:20 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup>"Heimat" Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, trans. Elizabeth Schmucker, 17 October 2018, <[http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNetz/wbgui\\_](http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNetz/wbgui_)

<sup>6</sup>Genesis 1:31 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup>Genesis 3:6 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup>Genesis 3:23 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup>Revelation 21:4 (ESV)



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