

# COLLOQUY

A CONVERSATION WITH GUTENBERG COLLEGE



Fall 2018

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# From the Editor

Robby Julian

Welcome to Gutenberg College's newest publication, *Colloquy*. With the publication of *Colloquy*, we say goodbye to *News & Views*, the newsletter of McKenzie Study Center and then Gutenberg College for thirty-seven years. We hope the information it conveyed and the articles it provided served you well. You can still find most of the articles on Gutenberg's website, [www.gutenberg.edu](http://www.gutenberg.edu).

We also hope *Colloquy* will serve you well as it reflects Gutenberg's moving forward in the twenty-first century while remaining firmly grounded on its foundational values, values like those Ron Julian writes about in "A Meaningful Life."

"Colloquy" [kol-uh-kwee] means a "conversation," and that's what we hope this new publication will be—a conversation between you and Gutenberg College that keeps you involved in the Gutenberg Community, a haven in our culture's wilderness.

We want to tell you when Gutenberg ventures in new directions (see "New Opportunities at Gutenberg"), welcomes new faces (see "New Full-Time Faculty" and "A Few Words from Gutenberg's New House Managers"), or undertakes a new goal (see "A Guide for Good"). And we still want to share teaching from our tutors (see "How to Read a Book (of the Bible)").

But we also want to hear from you. We welcome your responses to articles, your questions, and your topic suggestions. Please send them to [office@gutenberg.edu](mailto:office@gutenberg.edu) and put "Colloquy" in the subject box.

As Gutenberg grows, we want *Colloquy* to grow as well—in content and pages. We hope to include articles and creative work from our alumni, insights into Gutenberg's curriculum, book reviews, and more. This issue is our first step. Thank you for taking it with us.

Robby



# A Meaningful Life

Ron Julian

I want to live a meaningful life, and I think you do as well. And (no surprise!) I think that the truly meaningful life is found in the life of the Christian believer. The best life is the meaningful life, and the most abundantly meaningful life is the life of faith. But why is that true? What is it about the Christian faith that makes a meaningful life possible?

## Aspects of a Meaningful Life

The meaningful life is one that is significant, that matters, that contributes to a larger purpose. One thing that makes life significant is how our actions relate to our sense of right and wrong. We would like to believe that there is an "oughtness" to things. There is right, and there is wrong. And we can find meaning in doing the right thing. To treat people well is satisfying. To pursue goals that are not corrupt and evil is satisfying. Without a sense of right and wrong, our actions seem arbitrary and insignificant. And if we violate our sense of right and wrong, then we are ashamed of ourselves. Actions that are arbitrary or shameful feel meaningless. Actions that are upright feel meaningful.

Similarly, we also see our actions as significant if we are increasing the number of beneficial things in the world. We find it meaningful to promote health, contentment, learning, peace of mind, and so on. Meaning and flourishing are related to each other. We would like to believe that it is possible to flourish and that our actions can contribute to that flourishing for ourselves and for others. If we feel that nothing beneficial can be found, and that nothing we do can benefit ourselves or others, life feels meaningless. Actions that are futile or harmful feel meaningless. Actions that are beneficial feel meaningful.

We also find meaning from relationship. We want to think that we matter to others and that others matter to us. If we were gone, we would be missed. And ideally, on the biggest scale, we would like to think that the universe is not impersonal and indifferent to us. It is very hard to find meaning if we feel completely alone. To be alone and uncared for feels meaningless. To be loved and loving feels meaningful.

We also judge how meaningful a situation is by its outcome. Ultimately, meaning comes not just from what we are doing at the moment but from what we are pursuing, the goal that drives us. Hope is a hugely important contributor to meaning, even in the midst of suffering. Think, for example, of someone working for Habitat for Humanity. A group of people come together to build a house for someone who has no home. The people are working hard. They are hot. They are tired. They are sore. But they are working toward a goal that they believe in. The thought of that goal gives meaning to every aching muscle. We can live with a great deal of suffering if we believe that it is purposeful, if we believe that the suffering is taking us somewhere worthwhile. Actions that are purposeless and pointless seem meaningless. Actions that are purposeful and hopeful feel meaningful.

We also find it meaningful to think that we ourselves have capacities and qualities that are worthwhile, that make us significant. We can think, we can create, we can understand, we can solve problems, we can be funny. Each individual has a unique set of qualities that makes that person interesting. We rightly see our individual characteristics as a gift. To have a role to play enriches our lives. We find meaning in believing that we can make a unique contribution to the world. To be inconsequential and dispensable feels meaningless. To make a unique contribution feels meaningful.

I am sure much more could be said, but let me stop here. We will feel that we have truly meaningful lives if we are upright and without shame, if we benefit ourselves and others, if we give and receive love, if we can work hopefully toward a desirable outcome, and if we can make a unique personal contribution to the world.

## The Bible on the Human Situation

The Bible has much to say about the human situation and how that relates to the possibility of a meaningful life. Genesis tells us that God created human beings to be stewards over the rest of creation. And it is in that context that we are told God made men and women in His image. God made us like Himself so that He could delegate responsibility over creation to us. Lots of animals are bigger and more powerful than we are. But God did not give dominion over creation to the grizzly bear or the tiger. He gave it to human beings made in His image. Many things contribute to our being in God's image, but the most fundamentally important is that we can understand right and wrong and then make decisions based on that understanding. God has qualities like goodness, generosity, justice, and we have the capacity to have such qualities as well. And we can bring those qualities to bear as we exercise our stewardship over creation.

So, before we even get out of the first two chapters of Genesis, we have a lot to think about when it comes to a meaningful life. Human beings have a relationship with their creator and with other human beings also made in God's image. We have qualities that make us truly significant. That is, we have the qualities of God Himself. It is so significant that we are made in God's image that one of the first commandments given is that we must not murder each other. We can kill and eat a lamb, but we cannot kill another human being. And what is the reason given? The other person is in the image of God. We also have meaningful work as stewards over creation. We can work toward a meaningful goal. We can judge our actions by God's standards of right and wrong and do what is right. We can choose to do those things that bring goodness and health and flourishing to the world. We can make things better. All of this brings great meaning to human life.

But, of course, we have to turn the page from Genesis chapter two to Genesis chapter three. There we read of the rebellion of humanity and the reality of sin and death, the two great tragedies of humanity. First of all, we are morally corrupt. We ought to love our creator with all our being, but instead we turn away from Him. We ought to love our neighbors with the same care that we show for ourselves, but we are selfish instead. And that moral corruption has led God to condemn us. Our end is death and rejection by God. And so, in a very real sense, we have lost the ability to find true, lasting meaning in life. We cannot find meaning by expressing through our actions the image of God in ourselves because that image is stained and degraded. And we cannot find meaning by working hopefully for a desirable goal because the greatest goal is to sustain and improve life, and instead we die.

Now we come to one of the great themes of the Bible: God is our rescuer. We need rescuing from the two tragedies of human life: sin and death. And essentially, that is the story that the rest of the Bible goes on to tell. We need God's mercy, so we can escape the judgment that we so richly deserve. And that mercy, in turn, will lead to restoration, rescue from the death and moral corruption that robs life of meaning. Ultimately, the biblical story of God's mercy and redemption culminates in the promise of the Messiah. The Messiah will give His life as an offering for our sins. The Messiah will conquer sin and death, ruling in righteousness forever. And so we see that the supreme goal of each person must be to receive God's mercy and find life and restoration under the promised Messiah.

## Life in This Age

Clearly then, life in the age to come, life in the Kingdom of God, will be a life filled with meaning. With death gone and the image of God fully manifested in us, we will live without shame, we will benefit everyone, we will give and receive love, we will have truly desirable goals, and we will express our God-given individuality perfectly. The question we are left with, however, is what about now? Does the life of faith contribute to a meaningful life now, in this age?

*(Continued on page 4)*



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# New Opportunities at Gutenberg

Gutenberg College exists to cultivate wisdom and perspective in students—perspective on the condition of their souls, perspective on their culture and how it has developed, and perspective about how to discern truth and live well in a world that presents conflicting voices about truth and goodness. To help students in this process, Gutenberg is providing two new opportunities.

## Study-Abroad Program

To help students gain perspective through travel, Gutenberg has instituted its first comprehensive international study-abroad program through Global Education Oregon. For the first time, Gutenberg students now have access to more than 250 academically rigorous and thematically diverse study-abroad programs in 90 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. To ensure maximum benefit from Gutenberg's curriculum, students are encouraged to engage in this wide array of new classes during the summer.

## Applied Liberal Arts

Gutenberg does more than help prepare students for the job market. It prepares them for life. To ask and address existential questions gives students a level of self-awareness, understanding, and wisdom that sets them up to deal with the challenges of their vocations, relationships, and beliefs. Part of learning how to deal with challenges is through practice. To give students the opportunity to practice outside the classroom, Gutenberg has created a new optional course: Applied Liberal Arts. This new course is an internship program in which students locate vocations of interest, work outside Gutenberg at those institutions, and proceed under the mentorship of Gutenberg's faculty. This course will give students opportunities for extra-academic application of the principles and ideas they learn from the curriculum so that they can be prepared to live well after graduation.

## A Meaningful Life

Continued from page 3.

The answer is yes, absolutely. Remember, the key to the ultimately meaningful life is finding mercy and restoration from God. But who is it that receives this mercy and restoration? I would describe the Bible's answer in this way: Mercy and restoration come to the one who says from the heart, "God, tell me the truth, and I will strive to believe You and to live in the light of that belief. God, tell me the truth about my sin, Your mercy, Your promises, what is right and wrong, and anything else You want to tell me. Tell me, and I will seek to believe You and live as if it were true." And so it is in pursuit of this kind of life, the life of faith, that today, in this age, the opportunities for a meaningful life are found.


Today, sin makes it impossible for us to escape a sense of shame. But believers can pursue one supremely right thing: we can believe God and seek to live in the light of that belief. We can believe the gospel. We can confess our sins. We can repent. We can live our lives in the light of God's promises. Even though we are sinners, we can have the great satisfaction that comes from doing what God says is right: to humbly believe Him.

Today, sin and death degrade all the possible benefits we might bring to the world. But believers can pursue one supremely beneficial thing: We can proclaim the truths of God and encourage each other to believe them and find life. The greatest gift we can give each other is to clarify what is true and important and urge each other to pursue that truth.

Today, all our relationships are corroded with sin. But God has given believers eternally unbreakable relationships. We have relationship now with the God who works all things for our good and opens the door when we knock. And we have eternally significant relationship with our fellow believers, those who share our faith and our hope and our destiny.

Today, all our hopes are ultimately nullified by death. But believers have a hope and a goal that will not disappoint. We can seek, through the life of faith, to find our citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

Today, our individuality is stained with our own evil. But each believer has the opportunity to contribute to the everlasting work of God. We can comfort others, we can teach, we can tell the meaningful story about our own struggle to believe. In the eyes of the world, we may seem unimportant, but in the drama of faith, we each have a crucial role to play.

The life of faith is the only truly meaningful life because it alone partakes of the eternal. Believers will enter into eternal life in the age to come, and there they will have a completely meaningful existence throughout eternity. But now, today, is the time when we make the choices about whether we will submit to the truth and pursue it in our lives. To believe God is profoundly right; to encourage faith in ourselves and others is profoundly beneficial; to know God and our fellow believers is a profoundly meaningful relationship; to strive in hope to enter the kingdom of God is profoundly desirable; to express our individual lives of faith in the world is a profoundly important contribution. So where is the meaningful life to be found? In this age and the next, the truly meaningful life is found in the promises of God. 

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**Ron Julian** is a tutor at Gutenberg College, the author of *Righteous Sinners*, and a co-author of *The Language of God: A Commonsense Approach to Understanding and Applying the Bible*.



# The Wind Without

Chris Alderman

*The following is an ode in the style of the English poet Coventry Patmore's "Faint Yet Pursuing" (1877). Such a style may strike the modern reader as a little unnatural, but it was never the writer's intention to put himself "freely, fully, and truly on record" as Patmore's contemporary Walt Whitman taught us to do. Rather, the poem was my attempt to follow a procession of thoughts and images that originated ultimately "without," and it seemed natural to give it the form of a poem that had succeeded in doing just that.*

## New Full-Time Faculty

**Gutenberg has been blessed with gifted and caring teachers from its founding. This fall, Gutenberg welcomed Chris Alderman to its full-time faculty.**

Although Chris is now a full-time faculty member, he is not new to Gutenberg. Last year, he served as an adjunct tutor, teaching writing and German. This year, he will add classical Greek to his teaching duties and also assist Provost Eliot Grasso with outreach to high schools and homeschool communities in the region.

Chris earned his B.A. in English from Washington and Lee University in Virginia, taught English conversation in Japan (he speaks Japanese), returned to the States to earn an M.A. in Language and Literature from the University of Chicago, and pursued a Ph.D. in comparative literature for two years at the University of Michigan, where he taught English composition to freshmen and did graduate coursework in German literature and classical studies. Dissatisfied with the intellectual constraints of a secular institution, Chris left the doctoral program and returned to his hometown of Eugene, where he was part of the Gutenberg College Residence Program and where he met and married his wife, Abby. The couple are expecting their first child, a daughter, in February.

Chris has this to say about his new role at Gutenberg: "As I see it, there are far worse things one could be pegged as than a 'language guy', not only because language is the stuff great books are made of but also because an understanding of it is crucial to understanding the Bible. Simply put, we at Gutenberg believe that the Scriptures communicate in the same way that ordinary human language does. This is where things get interesting, of course, because the way that ordinary human language communicates is anything but simple. Consider the notion of genre or something like irony, hyperbole, or paronomasia and how it affects the way we understand the literal meaning of a passage. Some of these may be obscured or lost in translation; others may require the illumination of historical or cultural knowledge; all may be taken for granted until we study a foreign language or really study our own. Estranged in such a way from how we ordinarily communicate, we come to see what an extraordinary achievement that communication really is. German, Greek, the English of academia—these are important languages, to be sure, but of even more importance than Gutenberg students' proficiency in these particular languages is their understanding of language itself. It is an honor to be able to accompany them on this leg of their journey thither."

Chris is not only a skilled linguist but also a writer, having self-published two collections of poetry, *Poems in Verse* and *Ephemerides*. He brings depth, personality, and energy to our efforts at Gutenberg College, and both students and faculty are glad to have him here.



As late as yester—slow to learn—  
A sending did I spurn  
Whose value mocked my scanty means  
And price my skill to earn,  
For cost it naught;  
And I,  
A body of differentiated spleens,  
Would rather a goat's self-pleasure  
at great expense have bought.  
Gross flattery,  
When once a silver note escapes the tin  
Flute that is Man-ikin  
(Lodged in the flowing sand,  
half-stopped thereby),  
To hear it and to doubt  
Not that it started from some space  
within,  
Some cavern sacred to the I,  
But from the wind without!

Of other islands pickled in Atlantic seas  
These rooms a view afford;  
On ours, a female deer with fawn in tow  
(The sending, Lord)  
Out of the sad, dismantled trees  
November has settled on the Hesperides  
Pranced to the shore below  
Nor paused, but treaded water,  
and out to sea did gybe.  
A doe  
With fawn aboard.  
I will be your scribe.



## A Few Words from Gutenberg's New House Managers

### Gil and Erin Greco

This year, we have had the pleasure and privilege of beginning to care for this magnificent house and the souls who choose to live here.

It was a significant move for our family, from the place we had come to call home (Kansas City, Missouri) to Eugene—but it was also a beautiful return voyage.

We're back—back to where Erin grew up, back to where we met, back to serve the alma mater that has given us both so much.

As we walk these halls and meet these new residents and do our best to arrange space and time in a way that supports their vibrant living, we are ever conscious of those who have come before us.

Every day, we live in this tension—existing as a bridge between the manifold gifts of past leaders, students, and residents and the visions we're helping to cast into Gutenberg's future—and honestly, we wouldn't have it any other way.

God has blessed us greatly by calling us to this work in this season, and it is our prayer that He will also bless this house and all who reside in it.



## A Guide for Good

### Eliot Grasso

Gutenberg College grew out of McKenzie Study Center (MSC), a biblical outreach ministry to the University of Oregon and the broader Eugene area.

The mission of MSC was to bring the truth of the gospel to those who were searching and to give clarity of understanding to those who believe. The Gutenberg Project grows out of a deeply ingrained desire to see human beings changed by God and become Christlike, for that is the ultimate purpose and end of man.

When Gutenberg opened its doors in 1994, no one had any idea of the kind of impact this small school would have on the humanity of those who crossed its threshold. Yet, over twenty years later, more than eighty human beings have graduated, their lives changed forever by what they received at Gutenberg.

What exactly do the students receive at Gutenberg College? They receive respect, love, and dignity from their teachers and their peers. They receive a framework for their faith that offers and justifies a firm foundation in the unseen person of God while also giving them permission to wrestle with what living in accordance with that belief looks like. And they receive a deep, nuanced picture of the human condition. From this picture flows love, empathy, and respect for others. The deep questions of the curriculum—investigated by the ingenious authors of the Great Books—undercut pride and cultivate humility. Gutenberg addresses the human soul and the qualitative change required to live well before God.

As the stewards of this valuable project, we believe it of the utmost importance to do all we can to share its riches with the world and to build a financial basis so that more generations of students can benefit. Gutenberg is not just a project for today. It is a timeless project designed to address the temporal and eternal issues of reality. We invite all who find value in such a pursuit to join with us in supporting our current and future students as they meditate and act on this question: What does it mean to be human? Please visit [www.campaign.gutenberg.edu](http://www.campaign.gutenberg.edu).



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**Eliot Grasso** is the provost and a tutor at Gutenberg College, where he teaches seminars on art and music and leads discussions on the Great Books. He holds a M.A. in ethnomusicology from the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance and a Ph.D. in musicology from the University of Oregon.



# How to Read a Book (of the Bible)

Chris Swanson



In *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer Adler, one of the founders of the Great Books tradition, divides reading into two different skills. The first he calls “structural,” and the second he calls “interpretive.”

Structural reading looks to understand the structure of the entire work: What are the main themes? What is the primary goal or thesis of the book? What is the book trying to communicate in broad terms? Understanding the whole gives the reader insight into reading specific sentences or paragraphs.


Interpretive reading begins with the sentences and paragraphs. This approach carefully examines the specific parts of the work, using a knowledge of grammar and a sensitivity to the flexibility of words. From the specific sentences and paragraphs, one builds a picture of the book as a whole. A skilled reader uses both approaches, often simultaneously, looking at both the whole book and its parts to try to build a coherent understanding.

The most important of all the Great Books is the Bible. At Gutenberg, we approach the Bible both structurally and interpretively. During this fall quarter, students at Gutenberg are reading a number of books of the Bible as part of the Western Civilization and Great Conversation courses. Some are reading large sections of Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy. Others are reading II Samuel, Job, and Ecclesiastes. After each book or section, students come together to discuss the assigned selection and practice the skill of structural reading of the Bible.

Students also have an opportunity to practice interpretive reading of the Bible. In a course we call Microexegesis, sophomores spend most of a year reading through the Gospel of John sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph. Later as seniors, they explore theories of Bible-reading in Biblical Hermeneutics, a class that delves deeply into specific passages.

Because the Bible is so important and complex, one might ask if structural reading makes any sense. After all, some scholars and pastors have written tomes about a single verse, and so reading the entire book of Deuteronomy, for instance, will miss too many details. After a short amount of reflection, however, it becomes clear that all those exhaustive researches depend on the reader’s perspective on the whole of the book or the whole of the Bible. In simpler terms, one’s theology affects one’s reading of the text.

On the other hand, one might ask if interpretive reading makes any sense. After all, in many cases the apparent reading of a sentence may be misleading without the whole context to make sense of it. Again, though, after a short amount of reflection it becomes clear that the whole context must be constructed from the meanings of the parts.

Thus, reading the Bible requires both skills. For a grand symphony made up of individual notes, both conductor and musicians must perform their parts well to create beautiful music. So it is with reading the Bible. The reader needs to have skill with both the whole and the parts and gain an awareness of how each part influences the other. We at Gutenberg are thankful to be part of a college whose curriculum helps students continue to develop their skills of reading the greatest of all the Great Books. 

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**Chris Swanson** is the president and a tutor at Gutenberg College, where he teaches science and leads discussions in Microexegesis, Western Civilization, and the Great Conversation. He holds a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Oregon.



## Volunteer Spotlight: Beth Sheehan

Gutenberg College is blessed by the efforts of countless volunteers who give sacrificially of their time and talents. Beth Sheehan is just such a volunteer.

Over the last few years, Beth has been instrumental in organizing, preparing, and donating an amazing spread of delicious food for a wide variety of events for Gutenberg College. These events include Summer Institutes, Friends Night, and the alumni reunion. Beth is pictured above with her Summer Institute helper and another great Gutenberg volunteer, sister Gretchen Odegaard.

This summer, Beth arranged for the donation of a baby grand piano, which now resides in the Gutenberg living room. She has also spearheaded the donation of dressers and daybed frames for most of the resident rooms. And she obtained an invitation from one of the Eugene Rotary Clubs for our provost, Eliot Grasso, to make a presentation on education. These opportunities are so helpful in spreading the word about Gutenberg College.

We owe a huge thank you to Beth Sheehan for her generosity and talent!

COLLOQUY FALL 2018



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## Community Classes

These free classes meet at Gutenberg on Wednesdays, 7:00 to 8:30 PM. Fall quarter's topic is "Christianity and Psychology: Faith and the Mind." Winter quarter classes begin January 9. Visit [www.gutenberg.edu/home](http://www.gutenberg.edu/home).



## Great Books. Great Conversation.



### Residence Program

Applications for Gutenberg's Residence Program are now being accepted for this and next school year. Please contact the office to learn more.



### Apply Now for Fall 2019!

Gutenberg College offers an outstanding four-year liberal arts education in the Great Books tradition. We all learn best through conversation, where we can ask questions

and discover answers that fuel our desire to learn more. At Gutenberg, you won't find lots of lectures. Instead, you will meet authors who influenced Western civilization and find a community that discusses the big questions of life.

A one-year, \$1,000 grant is available for first-time college freshmen who complete their application for admission to Gutenberg College by December 1, 2018, and finalize plans to attend by January 1, 2019.

Applications for admission, financial aid, and the Residence Program are available online.

**Join the Conversation!**  
[www.gutenberg.edu/admissions](http://www.gutenberg.edu/admissions)



In July, Gutenberg College launched a \$1,000,000 capital campaign, A Guide for Good.

The campaign is driven by our deep conviction that Gutenberg College provides an educational environment desperately needed in America: an environment grounded by a biblical worldview and a careful examination of one's self and one's culture.

We successfully completed Phase 1 of our campaign at the end of August, raising over \$26,000 in just one month. We are now in Phase 2 of our campaign: to raise \$250,000 by December 31, 2018.

For more information or to support A Guide for Good, please visit [www.campaign.gutenberg.edu](http://www.campaign.gutenberg.edu).