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One would think that the recent natural gas shortage would make industry more responsible about the use of natural resources—particularly petroleum resources. Though no one should have been surprised by the shortage—there were similar, though less severe, shortages each winter for the past several years—the severity of this winter caught many people off guard. Hundreds of thousands of workers in Pennsylvania were out of work because their plants were closed. The entire state of Indiana was without enough fuel. And in Ohio, the shortage was so severe that the entire public school system was shut down—including Ohio State University.

These conditions all exist because of a wanton misuse of natural resources. Americans have developed a lifestyle which is selfish, inefficient and unjustifiable. They are concerned only with being comfortable at a particular moment and have no vision for the future. It is this lack of vision which caused the recent crisis, and one hopes that it may cause a change in attitude.

Yet all indications are that there will be no such change. American industry seems set on seeing to what lengths of irresponsibility it can bring itself. At the time when the recent shortage was most severe—when Indiana was closed down, and people were freezing to death in Ohio—the Coca-Cola Company was advertising Coke's new, all-plastic, wide-mouth bottles. These bottles are said to make everyone's life more convenient (and no doubt immeasurably happier), for the bottles are easier to carry home from the grocery store (much lighter, you know), they keep Coke tasting like Coke (an unexpected bonus), and they are easier to pour from (so that one can drink the Coke that now tastes like Coke).

Such advertising and such products pander to the selfish, inefficient and unjustifiable American lifestyle. Rather than being helpful, the bottles are incredibly inefficient. Since plastic is a petroleum derivative, the manufacture of these bottles constitutes an unnecessary use of petroleum resources. Once manufactured, these bottles are still inefficient, for they are non-returnable, they are difficult to recycle, and they are not bio-degradable. So, in the face of the results of America's wanton misuse of its resources, Coca-Cola has wantonl misused some resources and created a product which is totally unnecessary and for which they are now trying to create a need.

Not to be outdone, however, Ford Motor Company came up with a fine entry of its own for the irresponsibility sweepstakes. While Coke was advertising its bawdy new bottles, Ford was proclaiming that it had not reduced the size of its big cars as the other major automobile manufacturers had—though even these reduced size cars are indecently large. Thus one can still ride in big-car comfort and inefficiency at Ford. Again, industry takes no notice of the results of such inefficiency.

Now, these two companies have been flagrantly irresponsible, and it is simple enough to deal with these two cases; one can easily not buy Coke in plastic bottles, or not buy big Ford automobiles. But these are not the only cases of irresponsibility on the part of American industry; they are only the flagrant ones.

Industry's exploitation of resources is, however extremely common, and much of it is easy to overlook. McDonald's and Saga do not need to package their hamburgers in styrofoam; milk does not need to be bottled in plastic containers. Returnable glass containers were common as recently as ten years ago. Such everyday irresponsibility is harder to spot and is more difficult to deal with, yet it is necessary to oppose such actions. The community—and particularly one which claims one of its goals as reforming culture—must be alert to the irresponsible use of resources, and when such irresponsibility is spotted, an organized, visible response to it must be made, whether it be in the form of a boycott, letter writing campaigns, or the like.

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Suffering... is the true badge of discipleship. The disciple is not above his master. Following Christ means passio passiva, suffering because we have to suffer.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Call to Sacrifice: Life Within the Bounds of Grace

The modern age has gone far to acquaint us with the bearing of mental anguish. T.V. inundates us with shows based on various kinds of human suffering. We are shown everything from the fictional traumas of violent detective series to the factual misery that the networks deem newsworthy. The soap operas attempt, not very successfully, to portray the strains of everyday living. One need only look at the current movie and best seller titles to realize how suffering has caught the modern fancy even in the entertainment field.

As Christians we are all exposed, at least intellectually, to another sort of agony. We are led to expect to share in the suffering of Christ, to endure the mental anguish of being ostracized from the world, and to endure the torments of the struggle with the devil. The road to heaven is not easy, but we are well aware of the existence of, and the need for, these difficulties.

But the Christian church has for too long ignored the physical suffering which must be borne if we are to be true disciples. I’m not referring to physical suffering imposed on us by others, but to suffering and deprivation which we impose on ourselves out of a love for others and a consciousness of Christ’s presence. This is not to advocate a return to hair shirts or other forms of self-chastisement—although they do have a value. What is asked of us is that we once more acquire a sense of sacrifice that requires us to deprive ourselves of things which our society may consider to be altogether acceptable.

The past few years have seen a proliferation of conferences discussing the issue of the Christian’s responsibility in the area of social justice. The output of these conferences has been excellent, resulting in statements of Christian objectives in dealing with social ills. The urgency of meeting these problems head-on is felt by anyone reading the journals put out by these conferences; but a sense of frustration also attends this urgency. For all our apparent concern in this area, no discernable change in life-style has occurred within the Calvin community as should happen if we were to seriously act on our findings. This change in life-style has occurred within the Calvin community as should happen if we were to seriously act on our findings. This change in life-style would, I am afraid, be quite drastic, subjecting us to deprivation of a kind unexperienced by us before. This change in life-style cannot merely consist of a benevolent feeling that we are going to forego some of our wants so that someone else can have a square meal for once. We must go so far as to take a vow of poverty. We still have a responsibility to live a full Christian life, but we cannot give in to society’s notion that we live to indulge our desires.

We live in a society that is, by all standards, extremely affluent. The Calvin community is on the whole above the average level of affluence found in this society. One need only notice the Buicks, Cadillacs, and Oldsmobiles rolling in here on registration day in the fall to realize this. We wield this overabundance of wealth in a way that satisfies our every physical need in many cases. Even some of our most ridiculous desires are satisfied simply because we have been put, through no action of our own, in a society that can afford these things. We have gone so far as to consider some of these luxuries to be necessities. For instance, a stereo, a snowmobile, a ten-speed bike, and a different change of clothes for at least each day of the week are not thought to be particularly extravagant possessions. At Calvin we have encouraged the development of a mentality which is concerned with our own wants to such an extent that they obscure the needs which exist outside our community.

There is a certain resistance within us to this idea of deprivation. Most of us at Calvin do feel a sense of it, for many of us have given up something to attend this school. There are many
ings which we forego simply because we have insufficient funds to finance both college and the things we want or need we need. The financial demands of college involve almost a total commitment of our funds, leaving precious little with which to socialize and gain a respite from the rigors of study. We do deprive ourselves so that we can gain a Christian higher education.

This sense of sacrifice which we feel is not to be downplayed; it is one of the most commendable aspects of our reformed background. Most of our parents gave up much to send us to Christian institutions, feeling rightly that a Christian upbringing in education is indispensable to developing a concept of living which will last through our chosen careers.

But there remain two areas in which this view of deprivation needs expanding. First of all, we have often given up our present desire for luxuries in hopes of future fulfillment of these wants. We often hear the phrase "When I get established, then I'll be able to..." But the vow of poverty which we take is a lifelong vow. When our commitment of funds to Christian education is completed there will be new commitments in the world of Christian service which must take precedence. There is always a market for what we have in excess of our urgent needs.

The second area in which we need to improve is the way in which we handle our excess funds in college—those which we use for social activities. This is not to advocate a constricted social life, but a redirection of our social conduct that makes a more economical use of our funds.

So far this discussion seems to have painted a rather bleak picture for those who feel obligated to take up the Christian responsibility. Does it entail resigning ourselves to no more than the barest necessities? What chance of leading a full life do we have if we have no time or resources to devote to our interests?

Christ demands that we develop to the utmost those talents which we have. He also realizes that we have a need to escape at times from the strain of our work. Our interests are as much a part of our Christian life as our vocation. Our job must be to restrict our interests, examine them for their value, and redirect the way in which we approach them, always keeping in the back of our minds that the ability to pursue these goals comes through grace.

First of all we must restrict our desires. A tendency of college students is to spread themselves too thin. It is an easy thing to fall into, for in college we are faced with many new and interesting activities. It seems like one week it's one thing and the next week it's another. Becoming jacks-of-all-trades but masters of none, we develop none of our talents or interests to the point that we can make a real contribution in any of them. Concentration on a limited scope of activities is the only way in which we can make best use of the materials we do have.

In the second place, we must examine our outside interests to see what value they have and whether the investment involved is commensurate with the substance we and others derive from them. So many activities are just not worth the cost involved. A person who, for example, buys complete ski equipment for a class when he realizes that skiing will never be more than an infrequent form of relaxation is not making a responsible use of his funds.

Finally, we must take a new approach to the way in which we use our spare time. One of the greatest injuries to Christian service occurs when our idea of work begins to exclude the notion of socializing and relaxation.

We then plan our time off in a way which precludes the possibility of serving our fellowman. If we are to have fun it seems we must have a party, or go canoeing, or engage in some other activity which is self-serving. It becomes hard for us to grasp the notion that many of the things we cherish most in our social life—good friends, catching up on gossip, having a fun time—can all occur while we are active in projects which benefit more than just ourselves.

An example of this proper use of spare time is the KIDS program. The program is happy to report that a new record of over four-hundred students are involved this year—one of every ten Calvin students. But unfortunately they need many more. What of the 3600 Calvin students who are not currently involved with the program and who have not been willing to fill these vacancies? We must change our preconceptions about spare time and our notion that work must preclude enjoyment.

Calvin is supposed to be the leader in the Christian community, a place where new ideas are not only discovered (or old ones revived), but also a place where these ideas are put into action. We have a responsibility; since we cannot avoid it, we must accept it and act upon it. As Bonhoeffer says,
The following are selections from position papers presented as part of a discussion among students in last semester modern drama course at Calvin. They are partial and admitted inconclusive responses to a variety of questions dealing with the relationship between Christianity and dramatic arts.

Symposium:

Christianity and the Dramatic Arts

What should be the Christian's appropriate response to twentieth-century drama?

According to the guidelines in Christian Liberal Arts Education which underlie the curriculum at Calvin, it is the attempt of the education we receive here to avoid something that our church is so often guilty of with respect to society: withdrawal. At the same time, we should not go to the other extreme and become guilty of accommodation. Instead, it is the goal of Christian education at Calvin to learn to live a faithful life in the world today:

“This means that [we] must understand this society: its sources and roots, its values, its aims and ideals, its allegiances. [We] must both learn from this society and become a discerning critic of it.” p. 32

With particular regard to twentieth-century drama, I think that an additional comment from the guidelines for CLAE is appropriate:

[Be aware that] not every response to what God was doing in Christ constitutes a Christian life. A man may respond to God positively or negatively, properly or improperly . . . [but] all men respond to God and His revelation.”

As Christians and as individuals, all of us respond to God's revelation. So also do we respond to twentieth-century drama. I am not trying to be simplistic, but I believe that the origins of our responses make them appropriate (i.e., Christianity and individuality). We observe, evaluate, agree, disagree, adopt, reject, combine, isolate, integrate, and vindicate the themes and styles of twentieth-century drama according to our perspectives as Christians and individuals. As Ervina Boeve said in the November 12 issue of Chimes, “Drama is not a tool of redemption, but rather a tool of enlightenment.” We can learn from drama and add to the enrichment of our perspectives. And learning is truly an enriching and appropriate response for Christians and for individuals.

Janice VanLenten

What should be the concerns of Christian playwriting?

All Christians have a three-fold responsibility: to be guardians of the creation, to love others, and to praise and trust God. The playwright, with his fellow artists, is called to assist us in carrying out our responsibilities in each of these dimensions.

Christians, in whatever their calling, must work with a number of basic truths. It is these truths which a Christi playwright must constantly be aware of in the writing of plays. Specifically, the truths are these:

1. Creation is an integrated whole, every part of which is touched by faith.
2. All relationships are either whole or broken, as seen in the light of a God-directed lifestyle.
3. Brokenness in life is not the result of external mistakes, but is rooted in man's misconception of himself.
4. All of mankind shares in the guilt of sin and on through Christ can this guilt be removed.

Current notions which have come to be accepted truths, and which must be defied by Christians, are these:

1. There is no possible way of distinguishing between illusion and reality.
2. Communication between individuals is impossible.
3. Man has no responsibilities outside of himself.

These truths must not necessarily be overtly or even covertly incorporated into the play. If the intent of the playwright is to make the audience aware of these specific truths, he may do so. However, if his intent is something other than this, for example, entertainment, social comment, or evocation to change, these truths must serve as the framework for the play.

As previously stated, the task of the Christian playwright is to assist his fellows in their responsibility to be guardians of creation, to show love to their fellow man, and to praise and trust God. As works of art, the playwright's contributions must not be evangelistic or moralistic. Should he choose to entertain, the result must be a refreshing experience for the audience. The social comments made must be a reflectio
society is malfunctioning, for example, injustice, a disordering of resources, the idolization of technology. If playwright wishes to motivate the audience to change he must do so out of a genuine love, which redirects toward the shaping of a unified, philanthropic, God-centered lifestyle.

Marian Groot

are there so few Christian plays?

Explicit Christian messages often fail in the theatre because they do in fact appear glib, and the stereo-typed idea Christian with an answer turns sympathies away from plays. Christian playwrights might then expose the plight of man and very subtly suggest the Christian alternative that it is possible for art to carry a message, can message then not be "Christian?" Yes, it can; however, one looks at a cross-section of drama, he finds that few playwrights offer answers to life's questions of fate meaning. Instead, they present problems, confusions, injustices, and dilemmas in life. Plays are usually "problem-oriented" as opposed to "solution-oriented." Christians, by definition, claim to have a "solution" or a principle for life which, in the midst of all misery adversity, does not fail. A play which offers a solution be considered didactic and snobbish as well as unilate. It will take a playwright of great ingenuity and ability to create a valid work of art and still escape these limitations.

But this is not to say that a Christian play has to hold a Christian solution. The real world is full of failure, tragedy, cow, and misery as well as love, joy, and happiness. A Christian play can present any of these aspects of life, since sin and its effects are real. Defeated characters in plays are fair game for a Christian playwright. Plays which show the struggle and problems of man are valid, because they illuminate some aspect of human nature and of life itself. We might not call them Christian plays, but they still are in their content. Surely we would not call Albee's American Dream a Christian play, but would not a Christian playwright whole-heartedly agree with its rejection of the American Dream?

Why are there so few Christian plays? This depends on one means by "Christian." Any play which exposes injustice, illusion, and misconceptions in man's belief systems, in a sense, Christian. Plays that challenge man to look at himself and evaluate his life are also in this sense Christian. More strictly defined, a Christian play must proceed from Christian assumptions. But even though playwrights do not accept the Christian assumptions when they expose incongruities in life, their ideas are often compatible with them, and are therefore not to be dismissed on the is of being "unChristian."

Frank DeVries

Is a Christian tragedy possible?

In asking if a "Christian tragedy" is possible, one automatically raises other questions such as "What, specifically, makes a tragedy Christian?" and "Are there dramatic forms or techniques that contradict Christian thought at the outset, and thus cannot be used in the writing of a Christian play?" Without attempting to answer these questions as such, I will assume in dealing with the initial question that asking whether a tragedy can be Christian is in effect asking whether the tragic form and vision are in conflict with Christian ideas or whether the two may be in agreement.

An examination of tragic plays and the motifs that have characterized classical, Shakespearean, and, to an extent, modern tragedy shows that several elements are common to the tragic vision and Christian philosophy. Tragedy operates, first of all, with a belief in the basic dignity of man, whether he is a noble or aristocratic character, as in classical and Shakespearean dramas, or an ordinary person such as Willy Loman, whose wife says of him: "He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being.... So attention must be paid." Tragedy focuses on human endeavors and failures and growth, suggesting that these things are meaningful and significant, and thereby affirming the Christian's belief in man's worth, and his pre-eminence in God's created order.

Related to this is the concept of human responsibility, which is also essential to tragedy. The tragic hero is propelled by his own errors or excesses to his necessary fate. Although in twentieth-century literature the influence of naturalism has led to a questioning of the extent of man's
ability to make choices and control the circumstances in his life, the traditional tragic character always acknowledges, is the end, his own responsibility for his actions and their consequences. As Claudius admits, in *Hamlet*,

There is no shuffling; there the action lies in his true nature, and we ourselves compelled, even to the teeth and forehead of our faults, to give in evidence.

III.i.61-64

This too is in accord with the Biblical concept of man, an undeniable part of the Christian dramatist's attitude regardless of how he may express this view of man in his work.

A third element of tragedy that parallels Christian philosophy is the hero's self-realization, through acceptance of his responsibility for error, and his subsequent regeneration through suffering and/or death. The concept of necessary atonement for sin through sacrifice and suffering lies at the very heart of Christian doctrine and life. Tragedy in its formulation of the so-called tragic experience, captures something of that impulse or need for atonement which is universal in man, and which finds its complete resolution only in Christ. While the tragic hero typically saves himself, so to speak, the Christian believes that man is not capable of paying for his own wrongs through his own suffering. Yet tragedy very directly approaches the truth of man's yearning for justification and renewal.

The level of the gods in tragic drama indicates another aspect of tragedy which is compatible with the Christian view. A negation of this dimension of existence in contemporary life and drama has rendered modern definitions of tragedy somewhat ambiguous. In classical and Shakespearean tragedies, however, the characters move within an essentially orderly universe governed by supernatural powers or principles. The supernatural dimension establishes a framework within which the rightness or wrongness of characters' actions are judged and consequated. Edgar in *King Lear* professes, "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices/make instruments to plague us" (V.ii.172, 173). In the tragic world this just, supernatural power controlling the universe occupies a place similar to that of the personal, omniscient God in the Christian conception of reality.

Tragedy's ultimate perspective, finally, coincides accurately with that of the Christian than most modern thinking propounded by modern dramatists. In its emphasis on the hero's ability to recognize his own imperfection experience regeneration in abandoning all of his earthly comforts and concerns, it is, after all, a hopeful vision confirming the possibility of freely-willed growth and rectification in man. Arthur Miller concludes tragedy it "implies more optimism in its author than does common sense" and that its final result ought to be the reinforcement the onlooker's brightest opinions of the human spirit. The Christian, as well, believes in man's ability to avert guilt and be renewed, to become, in Christ, "a new creation" (II Cor. 5:17). He is aware of life's darker aspects, his fundamental attitude is one of perpetual hope.

This much said, the question of whether any tragedy be a "Christian tragedy" is still an open one. If making good Christian drama requires any more explicit statement Christian truths than can be unobtrusively expressed through the proper elements of the tragic medium, the result is impossible, for the dramatic effect is then destroyed. The dramatic purpose remains unfulfilled. It seems to however, that although every tragedy is not likely to be a "Christian" one, the tragic vision is not in conflict with Christian ideology, and its concept of man is, in many respects, identical. That a Christian dramatist could utilize or transform the tragic form in an artistic expression distinctly Christian ideas is, I think, not at all beyond the realm of possibility.

J. Schrei
Are any subjects taboo for the Christian artist?

God demands that everything we do be to his glory, including works of art. This places certain obligations upon the Christian artist, but among these is not a restriction of subject matter. He is restricted, however, in his methods and his intentions.

The first obligation of the Christian artist is to be good at what he does. A work cannot glorify God if it is second-rate. The Christian must do the best that he can, and the fact that a mediocre work is filled with pious Christian doctrine is no excuse. An example of such well-intentioned mediocrity is most of Christian rock music, which seems intent to set weak lyrics to out-of-date music.

The Christian artist is also forbidden to work solely for commercial success. His obligation is to please God, not the masses. If he can create solid work and still be popular, there is nothing wrong with success, but if he sacrifices his vocation to make money, he has failed both as a Christian and as an artist. Television is the prime example of this sort of artistic prostitution, since the audience has become the only authority on what will be shown.

The Christian artist, finally, has the obligation to uphold Christian values in his art. This perhaps goes without saying, since an artist would be unlikely to create works that are in conflict with his own beliefs unless he is doing so to make money, which is covered under the artist’s second obligation.

What does it mean to call a work of art “Christian”? In order for the term to have any meaning we shall have to define a work of Christian art as one which deals with explicitly Christian subjects. This immediately makes non-presentationa forms, such as music, non-Christian. Are we then going to restrict Christian artists to the representational forms, or shall we admit that the Christian artist is free to pick his subjects or to have none at all? The latter is the only tenable position.

The artist, like all men, gets his calling from God’s commandment to Adam to subdue the earth. This means that it is man’s obligation to seek out the potentialities of his world and for the laws that make it possible for man to work for God’s glory. The Christian artist must actively seek the norms for his medium and learn how to realize these norms in his work.

The artist’s calling is to the aesthetic sphere of life, not to the evangelical. He may choose, if he likes, to dedicate some of his works to an expression of his faith. He may even create works specifically for the worship service, but he is under no obligation to do so. The artist’s primary obligation is to make the best aesthetic use he can of his medium.

God placed man on earth and it is his proper element, no matter how corrupt it has become. All things are given for man’s use so long as he will use them properly—which is to say, to God’s glory. The Christian artist is free to use whatever means necessary to develop whatever subject he wishes, providing he lives up to his obligations to God and his medium.

Stanley Kubrick’s A Clockwork Orange is a fine example of exploiting immorality to make a moral point. He uses sex and violence, which have been so abused in modern films for commercial purposes, to make a point about human freedom. The sex and violence in A Clockwork Orange are not ends in themselves, they are means by which a significant point is made. Similarly, if a Christian needs to use what would normally be immoral elements, he may do so, provided the final product glorifies God.

Jack D. Hickman
Twenty Years of Films at Calvin
A Critical Memoir
by Bernard Pekelder

The Christian Reformed Church has always lived fitfully with films. From 1928, when the Synod listed movies as one of the three prohibited worldly amusements, through its hotly contested acceptance in 1966 of the film arts as a legitimate cultural medium, to the present, the denomination has enjoyed little unity of thought and judgment.

The differences within the church have often surfaced at Calvin—the college of the church. Films have not only created tensions between the constituency and the college community; no less often have differences surfaced among us on campus. Subsequent problems and crises have sometimes demanded an inordinate amount of our time.

After 20 years of films at Calvin, it seems appropriate to me to review the past and appraise the present. This is an account of how I have seen it. It is based on official documents, memos and notes in my file, and on my recollection of some of the early history and my involvement in it.

In 1955 the Student Council formed a Film Committee to sponsor “commercially produced films” on campus. They were shown “to provide entertainment and education,” and shown “on Friday night to coincide with the ‘night out’ dating pattern of the majority of the student body.” Proceeds were used to augment the Student Council’s Contingency Fund.

The Student Religious and Social Activities (SRSA) Committee, composed of faculty and students, was responsible for all social activities, including those promoted by the Film Committee. When I was appointed to the staff in 1962, the SRSA Committee, of which I became a member, was joined in a running battle with the student Film Committee about the latter’s selection of films. The SRSA Committee expressed disapproval of some of the choices made and decided to study the entire area of films on campus.

In November, 1963, the SRSA Committee adopted some “Operating Procedures for Selection of Friday Night Films.” It required that one or more members of the SRSA Committee serve with the Council’s Film Committee to “select and preview all films.” The criteria for film acceptability were:

1. If the film is to be shown for entertainment only, it must be completely inoffensive, e.g., no drinking scenes, etc. [The word “completely” was deleted in March, 1965. b.p.]

2. If the content . . . is relevant in an educational setting, it may be shown if the realism in it (e.g., abusive language) is essential to the matter portrayed. (SRSA Committee Minutes, Nov. 7, 1963)

That semester three films were shown: Diary of Anne Frank, Cry the Beloved Country, and Compulsion.

The next two years were marked by hassles and disagreements between the student Film Committee and SRSA members. What criteria should be employed in the selection of a film? What constitutes an “educational experience?” How much profanity and how many bedroom scenes were integral to a plot or made a film unacceptable?

And in a little dark room on the old campus, a few of us sat hours on end, drinking coffee and previewing films. Committee members chafed under the demands on their time. “I’ve got better things to do than waste three hours looking at movies I don’t care to see” was a growing complaint. When the SRSA Committee asked other faculty members to assist them, they received scant cooperation and strong objections from them. The Committee plaintively noted that “a basic problem is the acquisition of a minimum number of faculty and student members for proper previewing.” Nor did the student chairman of the Film Committee improve the situation when he sometimes gave SRSA Committee members less than twenty-four hour notice that they had to spend an afternoon previewing films.

A crisis occurred in May, 1966, when the Student Council Film Committee proposed to the SRSA Committee that a series of thirty films be shown the following year on Saturday nights. Weary committee members rejected the proposal with alacrity, observing that “it would be quite out of keeping with the total educational and cultural program of the college to preempt twenty or thirty dates at this early time” for films. It also decided that “a series of five educational-discussion films during the school year” would be adequate to meet the educational responsibilities of the college.

These films were to be “intended solely for the college community, publicity to be confined to the college community, and ID cards used for admission” (SRSA Minutes, May 12, 1966).

But the decision to limit the number of films was born not only out of weariness. It was also born out of a growing frustration in the Committee at our failure to achieve our educational goals.

The SRSA Committee’s decision to “prescribe the appropriate written or verbal commentary necessary to ac-
ompany the showing of each film” was not window dressing. It took that responsibility seriously. Members worked long and hard. I remember, not only previewing films, but reading reviews and discussing films with each other so that we might be well prepared for the “commentaries” which were given in some form at each showing.

But seldom were more than a handful of students interested in the “educational experiences” we prepared for them. I, like other committee members, often stood on the FAC stage to introduce a film. I tell you it’s a lonely feeling-facing hundreds of bored and restless students who have little patience and less time and are only waiting for you to shut up. We heard it sometimes, in the noisy undercurrent: “Douse the lights; cut the crap; get the show on the road.” And post-film panel discussions? We were lucky if ten people remained after the film.

Then Synod met, in June, 1966.

After vigorous and lengthy debate, it declared that “Synod, having re-evaluated the principles which determine the Christian’s relationship to the world in general and to the film arts in particular... accepts the film arts as a legitimate cultural medium to be used by the Christian in the same ways that every cultural medium is used.” But it said more. It said “there is a large educational task which must be initiated by responsible agencies at various levels of life in the Church” (Acts of Synod, 1966, pp. 33, 339). This spoke to us, at Calvin College.

Most of us welcomed the mandate, if for no other reason than that it seemed to clear the air. No one had sounded this note in the movie “prohibition days” when some of us had been on campus. Our attendance at movies required an advance spy (preferably a guy from Jersey who had no G.R. acquaintances) to see if the coast were clear, then a furtive dash with upturned collar through the bright lights of the marquee into the welcome darkness of the interior. We slid “into the world,” sometimes remembering with fear the question posed by the minister back home: “How would you feel if the Lord returned while you were sitting in a movie?”

But now, we felt, new winds were blowing. The College had been seeking to a limited degree to educate in films. Now we had a specific mandate from the Church. We, with other denominational ministries and agencies, were called to develop the tools of discernment and judgment requisite to a Christian approach to films.

President William Spoelhof responded immediately to the Synodical mandate. In September he formed a Film Arts Committee of twenty-five faculty members to discuss the implications of the Synodical decisions for the college community. After preliminary discussions, each member was requested to write down some of his reactions and suggestions. Among them were the following:

“I would favor a stronger faculty role in the selection of movies... and more faculty leadership in discussing the films from a Christian perspective.” (John Primus)

“If the college is unwilling to give some leadership, then I think we are shirking our duty.” (Carl Sinke)

“Our focus must be on the cultural and educational role of the film arts. If this is to occur, the initiative cannot remain solely in the hands of students. Planning must be done by the faculty as well.” (David Holwerda)

“About Chimes advertising: Why should its pages be defaced with industry-made movie mats—when everyone knows that these mats are invariably sensationalizing distortions.” (Bernard Van’t Hul)

“We should create a balanced film program aimed selectively at our various student audiences... those interested in entertainment, those with a spectator’s interest in the film as art, and those aesthetically or professionally interested in the film. Our greatest danger from our critics... comes from showing films which have aesthetic qualities we approve but which reflect a moral life we con-

demn.” (Charles Miller)

From this large committee a task force of eight was appointed to review the comments and suggestions, and to outline a course of action.

Since the Synod had not only given a mandate to the college, but had also declared that “it is the pastoral task of the Church in preaching, catechetical instruction, family visitation, counseling... to give specific guidance and instruction to its members in this complex and difficult situation,” the committee judged that a meeting with church leaders was crucial. We had to learn what they intended to do, and what they expected of us.

Subsequently we held a series of three meetings, involving faculty members and forty-five ministers from nine neighboring classes. My scribbled notes of ministers’ remarks made at those meetings summarizes fairly well what took place:

“My consistory would never let me talk about a movie from the pulpit.”

“I don’t agree with Synod’s decision. It’s a step in the wrong direction.”

“Let the Banner provide leadership; it can start a movie review column.”

“Don’t look to parish preachers for leadership; we’d be crucified.”

“It’s the task of the college to do this.”

“Don’t do it; you’ll get hurt.”

“You must do it.”

“Be careful.”

I remember well my feelings of apprehension and concern upon the completion of these meetings. The Synodical action had brought no greater consensus and agreement among ministers and in the constituency, and the college was receiving neither great support nor clear direction. Some felt the college had no business “moving in” so swiftly. Even those who encouraged us to give leadership warned us we might get burned. It was a lonely course on which we were embarking. Few wanted to get on board, and not everyone remaining on shore was a well-wisher!

But while the President’s Film Arts Committee was holding its hearings
...after five years of working with students and staff more distant point, I have come with difficulty

and engaging in a rather careful deliberation of courses which were open, the beleaguered and embattled SRSA Committee continued to struggle with immediate problems. Tensions between the Committee and the student leadership led to repeated confrontations.

Just about this time an SRSA subcommittee submitted a preliminary draft of a Constitution. When the SRSA Committee observed that the President's special committee had the matter under study, it decided to turn its study and the proposed constitution over to the Film Arts Committee. And in a gesture of unbounded selflessness, it also offered to this committee the privilege of previewing and approving all the student Film Committee films!

Events moved swiftly then. By February, 1967 the special Film Arts Committee proposed the formation of a Calvin Film Council, composed of four students and three faculty members. Among its purposes it was "to select a yearly program of outstanding films which are not readily available to the student body . . . . to determine a program format (which may include such things as program notes, lectures, and panel discussion groups) for each film . . . [and] to seek to educate the Calvin student body concerning the cinema arts in a Christian perspective." This was approved by the faculty.

Thus the Film Council, as we know it today, was born ten years ago. A weary and frustrated SRSA Committee drank coffee to its success, set its mind to other tasks, and with the exception of annually approving (or disapproving) nominations for the Film Council chairman it left the "film scene." As a member of both the SRSA Committee and the President's Film Arts Committee I also left the active scene on that date. For the last decade my role has been that of spectator rather than player, but a sympathetic spectator who has been on the floor and knows how tough it can get down there.

Now, after five years of working with students and staff on film arts, and after ten years of watching from a more distant point, I have come with difficulty to an unpleasant conclusion: we have failed.

We have failed at the most crucial point, viz., "to educate the Calvin student body concerning the cinema arts in a Christian perspective." And thus we have also failed to offer important leadership to the denomination through our Film Arts program.

I have never heard anyone suggest that the Film Arts program was a smashing educational success. In fact, I have rarely heard anyone claim that we enjoy even a modicum of success with a substantial number of our students, though a small number with special interests has been well served. But I am now prepared to put it more boldly. I think that to talk about "educating the student body in a Christian perspective" assumes a grandeur of mission that pooped out long ago. We have promised; we have not produced!

I score myself first of all in this indictment. I, with others of you, was in the business for five years. Before Synod ever spoke we sought to give leadership in providing Christian perspectives on films. We gave our introductions, our program notes, our post-film panels. We tried, very hard. And we failed. And we knew it.

That is why, after Synod spoke in 1966, the SRSA Committee gladly relinquished its film responsibilities to the newly formed Film Council. Few of us would so readily and graciously have surrendered a Christian educational work of such promise, even though it demanded much of our time, if it had been only moderately successful. But it was not difficult to surrender a program we judged unsuccessful, hoping someone else could succeed where we had failed.

Now for ten years the Film Council has worked under its mandate of providing film "education in a Christian perspective." In spite of criticism

from on campus and off campus, I think it has done its work with good intentions and dedication. Yet I suggest that the student body remains quite unchanged; little learning has taken place. We are not much farther ahead than twelve or fifteen years ago.

Given, then, the good intentions of students and staff members who have been responsible for the film program for the past fifteen to twenty years, what is the reason for our failure? I believe the main reason for continued ineffectiveness is very simple: an almost complete lack of student interest in Friday night films as an educational experience. Most students do not attend weekend films for this purpose. They attend because classroom pressure has ended for the week; the laudably realistic language of the 1955 Student Senate appropriately spoke of the "night out."

Now, one may lament or decry the fact that most students are not looking for an education in films on weekends, but one cannot deny it! The proof is everywhere. Count the number that remained for "post-film discussions" last semester. Observe the level of attention given the chairman who introduces the next film. Or take a poll during the next three movies in the FAC and ask students why they came. Show the next film on Tuesday, at 3:00 p.m., and see how many desire the "educational opportunity."

I do not seek to be snide. It was the same story twelve years ago. I only plead for some realism on this score. Yet, though lack of student interest in film education has been the unchanging "given" for over ten years, we keep acting as though we need not face the fact. We're going to educate students on weekends, whether they like it or not!

I had a dream. Hope versus Calvin. Fieldhouse packed. Fifteen minutes till game time. Honderd, Tuuk, and Zuidema walked to mid-court. They spoke.

"It is time for your education in basketball... note the
choreography of the jump shot...a few points on the history of basketball in the Ivy League...observe, now, the use of the butt in blocking out for rebounds...and here are a few results of recent tests on ankle stress with low-cut shoes..."

And the crowd groaned, and cried, "On with the game." And the three men slunk to the sidelines, timidly announcing there would be a post-game panel. And they had it, around the scorer's table, with five P.E. majors present. And the rest of the crowd went home...and they did the same thing when we played Olivet...and Alma...and Wheaton...and at every game...FOR TEN YEARS! And I woke up screaming...

Who's kidding whom? How long shall we continue with the unchallenged assumption that we are going to be successful in educating people, whether they want it or not? How long will the Film Council carry on its program according to its mandate, but rarely meet the expectations and desires of the majority of students who come to see its films?

During the past ten years the Film Council has not always kept the educational focus in mind. I know it's not much fun preparing educational programs for people who are taking the night off. But I do not believe it is an excuse for neglecting to emphasize this integral part of the film program. Yet my experiences in attending films have rarely had any educational significance. I have heard chairmen introduce films cleverly, and apologetically, and hastily, and dully—but rarely did any suggest that a serious Christian perspective should or could be brought to the viewing of the evening's film.

The Film Council has promoted a program that in recent years was overly ambitious, particularly if we take the educational mandate seriously. A top-notch job requires time and effort. Consider the expenditure of both in the Kubrick Festival. Should the college commit the resources and time necessary to promote such an extensive program on a weekly basis? This still leaves unanswered the question if such an emphasis on the film arts would be congruent with our total educational and cultural endeavor.

I think the Film Council, while historically affirming that its purpose was educational rather than entertainment, has taken advantage of the students' "night out" to promote its program. Why? Because it needs the income; it usually ends up in the red. But it always made me uncomfortable to hear the Council justify its film selection on educational grounds while appealing for student support on the night they are getting away from educational pursuits. (And I've been puzzled for years at the apparent inability of the Film Council to see to it that the Grand Rapids Press removes our films from its weekly review on the Entertainment [1] page.)

Were not the failures of the past conceded by the Film Council last year, when it informed the Faculty that its original mandate "to educate the Calvin student body...concerning the cinema arts in a Christian perspective" was more than it could handle? At that time it informed the Faculty it had changed its mandate to read that its purpose now was "to promote the students' ability, particularly as Christians, to understand, appreciate, and critically evaluate the film arts."

But we are at the point when new language, born out of a sense of failure, offers little solid ground to hope for substantial improvement in the film program. It takes more than textual revisions. It requires a look at basic assumptions, at immediate and long range goals, at procedures and programs to achieve our ends. And it requires some solid evaluation of just what we have accomplished.

The main thesis of this article is that an admission of failure would be salutary for us. Implicit in this admission are not charges against persons or Councils. It is not a question of moral culpability or professional deficiencies, but of the convergence of many factors which have hindered an effective program.

It is my conviction, based on a review of twenty years, that two main factors can be easily and consistently isolated. One is the Film Council, composed of people highly competent and sophisticated in the film arts, working hard, seeking to do a good job. These people, working with a Faculty-approved educational mandate, select films they judge will contribute to achieving that educational goal. The other factor is the majority of students; these students have little interest in gaining an education in the film arts on Friday and Saturday night. They attend the films because they want something to do, but for reasons completely different than the Council plans for the program.

Very simply, that is the problem. It makes creditable and effective education impossible. It guarantees failure. I ask that we look at it seriously, and then establish a program that takes account of the realities of the situation.

For fifteen years I have defended our film program by reminding critics that we were responsive to a Synodical mandate, and that we were offering leadership in cultivating Christian discernment and judgment in the use of films. That defense was always attended by the hope things would get better, that we would achieve some breakthrough so that we could begin to do more effectively what we were doing rather poorly. But given our present structure and program, and our persistent refusal to face up to some unpleasant but unchanging "givens," I have lost that hope. And until some changes come, I have raised my last apologia for the film program at Calvin.
re-take

"I can't understand why a Christian would want to see that film. I myself didn't want to. . . ."

The observation above is that of James DeBoer, as quoted in the January 21 issue of Chimes. The film to which he is referring is Stanley Kubrick's A Clockwork Orange. Although his is only one voice in the controversy surrounding the proposed (and subsequently cancelled) showing of the film at Calvin, Mr. DeBoer's attitude is apparently representative of many who objected to it. These people would seem to believe that they have a special calling to warn our community about corruption. Such a belief, in our opinion, smacks of more than a little pretension; if they had received some special insight they would do well to communicate it more responsibly. The Dialogue editors regret that Mr. DeBoer rejected their invitation to explain his reasoning, preferring to state only that President Diekema and the deans know his position and that that is sufficient.

Mr. DeBoer and those who share his opinion agree that no Christian should create, or himself be, a stumbling block for his weaker brother; A Clockwork Orange, they maintain, is necessarily a stumbling block for the whole Calvin community. The Film Arts Committee was not unaware that the film was controversial and possibly unfit for universal consumption: it was preparing a flyer for distribution which said just that.

We would liken this controversy to that recorded in 1 Corinthians 8—the problem of meat offered to idols. The Christian community in Corinth was divided on the question of whether it was right to eat the meat. St. Paul sided with neither the group that said it was right to eat the meat nor with the group that said it was wrong. It was not a question of a universal yes or no; it was a matter of individual conscience. Paul's injunction was that the strong not despise the weak and that the weak not despise the strong. We applaud Mr. DeBoer's decision to avoid the film if his conscience dictates that he should not, but we feel that he clearly oversteps his bounds in suggesting that no Christian should want to see it.

Another disturbing aspect to this controversy is the apparently prevalent, and in our opinion, wrongheaded conception of the relationship between Christianity and the arts. Many people seem to think of Christianity as a purely restrictive religion; they think that there are things they may not think about or see because they are Christians. With regard to the arts these people have tunnel vision: they want to view only art which is either innocuous or explicit Christian; they do not want to be reminded that there is corruption in the world.

This Pollyanna attitude is dangerously naive and illusory, and it stands in conflict with the Calvinistic conception of man's duty with respect to society. Christianity does not limit what Christians may respond to rather, it broadens the spectrum of things they can and must respond to. Christianity demands panoramic vision, not tunnel vision. Christ is the light by which the Christian must learn to see everything in his world—the bad as well as the good.

Beyond the responsibility to inspect our world, it is also our responsibility to respond to it. It is our authority in Christ which enables us to do that. We as Christians can see immorality and know it for what it is, whereas non-Christians might only see it as an alternative morality. Christians can see the dangers of selfishness and greed; non-Christians may accept them in the name of self-interest. Quite simply, Christians know the difference between right and wrong, and it is their responsibility to say no to wrong rather than to piously ignore it. Christianity enables us to see the world from a distinctive perspective, and we are commanded to use the capability responsibly.

Many people will agree with this thesis, but say that Christians are called to respond to reality, and say that much art, including A Clockwork Orange, is just not realistic. They miss the point that distortion of reality is an effective way to comment on it. We concur with Flannery O'Connor's remark in Mystery and Manners: "To the blind you draw large, startling figures, and to the deaf you shout."

The final aspect of the controversy we have found disturbing is the attack on the Film Arts Committee (FAC) for not fulfilling its educational responsibility. The FAC's detractors argue that in the past the FAC has virtually ignored its educational mandate and that this year's committee is taking it no more seriously than its predecessors did. This is unfair. Firstly, this year's committee cannot be blamed for the mistakes made in other years. Secondly, this year's committee has taken the mandate seriously: discussions have been held after a number of the films, and the Kubrick weekend was to have been set in an extensive educational framework.

We would suggest that the problem lies not with the FAC, but with the people who do not want to take the trouble to watch movies seriously and responsibly. Those who do not responsibly enter into evaluation and discussion of the films do not earn the right to object to them. We conclude, with Flannery O'Connor, that "Ignorance when borne like a cross is one thing, but when it is wielded like an axe, and with moral indignation, it is another thing indeed."

David Faber is chairman of the Film Arts Committee. He replaced Carl Byker, who resigned in January of this year.
"Unmasking Our Sorrow" may seem like a somewhat unlikely poem for me to choose to print. There are a number of reasons why I selected it, not the least of which is that it contains several flashes of very fine poetry. It also allows me to return to the question of action and non-action, because this is an angry, demanding poem. There is nothing elusive about the point it makes, so I won't belabor the issue. But something can be said about the three poems it stands in juxtaposition to.

The contemplative's discipline ("a mystic mind") is shattered by anger, even the relatively selfless anger of "Unmasking Our Sorrow." But what is false must be stripped away and annihilated, and not even Mr. Dylan can do that for anyone except himself. The recovery of identity demands moving beyond anger, beyond the poetry of T.S. Eliot ("We are the hollow men"), beyond even drugs ("mescaline heightened understanding"), into the silence and non-action of the desert. Those who achieve this point of view are the very foundation of what little reality we are capable of perceiving. They pray without words. They pray without ceasing. They are bodhisattvas. They are holy.

Is God transcendent or is He immanent? What does the ocean answer? These are silly questions. Just listen . . .

David Westendorp

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Unmasking Our Sorrow

"Nobody feels any pain."

Bob Dylan

The Black boy
Screams for a break
All, day, long.
Mistah principle gently
Slaps him on the back
And tells him
"Take your chance"
And rolls away
Into the white sunset.

The doctor tells
My youngest brother
To eat these pills
And swallow this diet,
To relax and enjoy
His meal time
My mother reminds him
To pray once before and once after
Each meal.
Mother, father
Can't you see—
His wrists are slit,
His hand fistened shut.

I sit in the classroom
While the teachers tell tales
Of their Sunday Afternoons
And bells ring
And he reminds me I'm no good
As he administers his tests
And fools stare
Right through me
To black board;
I ask a question
About Monday in the city
But he cancels class.
The Woodstock nation
Assembles to not be afraid
But it lasted only five days.

Would somebody please shake their fist
And undo the crosses
That are branded on
Too many false foreheads
And put the conquered tomb
Of the risen Jesus
On a banner
So we might get started.

John Russiak
Devil's Ash

Archangels descend
seething, suffering fires
of gentle honesty
and elementary patterns of flight.
Imprisoned and groaning cold
a mystic mind
no longer focused
but slowly growing old.

Immaculate of wings blown free
of love and quotes
in duration combined
do not hesitate your objective trait
but trample the feet
of every element in rhyme.

Hymnly visits
create the death of every son
first born and weeping bold.
Imagine the chaos of hell
when the race is run
and the apple bowed.

Seven Years to Understand

1
bleary eyed,
red and wet in late evening
stacks of books piled haphazardly around the room
histories, anthologies, mythologies,
and notes to himself strewn about the floor
Jesse falls asleep at his desk
as cigarette ashes fall to the floor.

2
"We are the hollow men,
we are the stuffed men"
he sits
at a round table
stained with coffee juice and cigarette burns.
Tiresias dives for pearls
in a drowned sailor's eyes.
Tarot cards are turned face up on the table
"Ah, the High Priestess, then the Hermit" she muttered,
peering at him through dim light.
Jesus flows
cracking dream's ceiling:
Holy Mother turns
the wheel, the center of stillness.

Beth Style
left
d coffee on the table
d a tear in the freezer, with a note:
I suppose she thought it appropriate.
a moment
she saw her hair
wing past shoulders
und unresponsive breasts
aching cold, exposed thighs.

in a row,
ien rows
regimented catalog
acing the same direction
anticipating the same revelation.
here are explicit sexual images here . . .”
uline heightened understanding
. . . wonderful phallic symbols.”
e water
irling in and out of desk legs
nd smelly feet.
hat did he say?”
on’t know
ly watched his lips
wing, flowing around air
ontorted peyote phrases.
se leans over and whispers,
here are some really nice things in here, you know.”
is key finds my mind in a dog’s mouth
ightened only by a simple image.

Portrait
Wm. David Sheldon

I painted all afternoon
while you played Mozart
again and again
in my head.

Nude blonde
on the shore—
round,
like a child.
Arms flailing,
she screams at the sea.
From the shell
of something long dead,
the ocean answers
the ocean answers
whisper sweet breathing
the ocean answers
the ocean answers
the ocean answers
the ocean answers

Eric Paulson
Larry and Susie are husband and wife. Larry was in an accident when he was sixteen. He was in a coma for several months. In the past few years he has relearned his motor control. He still talks thickly and slowly. People think he's stupid. It is true he never says anything profound or witty, only nice, and dumb.

Larry married Susie when she was divorced and pregnant. (She had been married two months.) Susie had a bad mother who beat her and belittled her. She is very overweight and very childish. She cuts down Larry in front of my Mom and Dad. She hits her boy Billy when she's angry. She tells my Mom he's a little brat. Billy listens as he pushes my old truck underneath the chair.

Larry and Susie have trouble “making ends meet.” Larry is a janitor at Swagman’s Cafeteria. He is proud of his clean floors. Susie thinks he should become something and make money for her. She sits at home with the TV on, talking to her friends on the phone. They get “Aid to Dependent Children” and any other handouts Susie can find.

Larry and Susie took out a loan to buy a new car, a yellow Duster like mine. Larry and Susie and Billy were riding on the freeway. Billy was naughty. Larry turned to hit Billy. The car hit the guardrail. It was totalled. They owe $700 on a car that doesn’t exist. Now Larry has a swollen face. Billy walks like a crippled lizard with his bandaged leg. Susie was in the hospital for two weeks with cracked ribs and a broken wrist and several deep cuts. She got out of the hospital. She went home and took a bath. Susie is very overweight. She ripped her stitches loose.

Mom and Dad took Larry and Billy to see Susie tonight. They came home and ate cake and drank orange soda.

Larry said sort of slow, “Gee, Susie doesn’t look so good as she did this afternoon.” Billy is taking all the frosting off his cake. He says he doesn’t like the frosting. My Mom smiles at Billy. My Dad stirs his coffee. Larry frowns slightly as he thinks of something to keep the conversation going.

I lean against the refrigerator.

Grandma had an open house tonight, celebrating her eighty-fifth birthday. She had a good time, I think. A lot of people stopped in to say hello. Even I dropped in and waded through the well-wishers to give her a peck on the cheek.

Eighty-five years old. All her friends are dead or too feeble to come. So she enjoys her children, some of whom are planning retirement, and her great grandchildren, most of whom are still wet behind the ears.

Which reminds me, all my cousins are popping out kids like gumball machines, and here I am with everything but marriage on my mind (for the most part).

Well, I met Aunt Leona and cousin Tom is still on the job and it’s not what he wants and he doesn’t know what he wants to do and she wishes he’d hurry up and find himself and aren’t kids today just like that, unmotivated and apathetic, and boy, her prayer list is getting longer and longer.

The big man across the table from me was Uncle Bud’s friend. So I’m Steve’s son, huh? Oh, the one who was in the ministry this summer. Yessir. So, am I going into seminary? I should talk to his son Jim. He’s in the seminary, just loves it, really on fire for the Lord. He’ll inspire me to make the commitment. Four years—that’s nothing. It goes fast. Yessir. I should go talk to Jim at the seminary. Great bunch of preachers there these days. And I have to know that all those guys are on fire for the Lord. I’ll only have to check out it, I’ll find they’re all associated with Campus Crusade or

Steve Vryhof is a senior English major from Grand Rapids. This semester he is student teaching at Unity Christian High School.
Navigators or Inter-Varsity or some such group that’s really doing what needs to be done.

And Aunt Jo wishes their church would get going on the evangelism program. They keep stalling and discussing the “Philosophy of Evangelism” and they don’t move, and the church is uptight and split over it and isn’t it a shame that the Church hinders the Gospel. And she wishes her son knew where he was going and she can’t seem to talk to him and wonders if he’s right spiritually and now he’s almost thirty and is back in business college and he really isn’t sure what kind of job he wants and she wishes he’d find his place and then he wouldn’t have to put up the front that everything’s OK when it’s not OK.

Someone is talking about seminary again and I should go and become a minister and I say there’s a lot of questions to be answered first and it’s not that simple and then I don’t say anything for awhile.

“But isn’t it a matter of faith?”

I think of DeVries: “He resented such questions as people do who have thought a great deal about them. The superficial and the slipshod have ready answers, but those looking this complex life straight in the eye acquire a wealth of perception so composed of delicately balanced contradictions that they dread, or resent, the call to couch any part of it in a bland generalization.”

I don’t know Aunt Jo, I just don’t know. Can I look at those pictures of Barb and Jerry’s baby? Gee, he’s cute.

Well, maybe I am just a cocky intellectual. Who said it? Hemingway? “Happiness is often presented as being very dull but . . . that is because dull people are sometimes very happy and intelligent people can and do go around making themselves and everyone else miserable.”

And then there’s Grandma. Eighty-five years old. And just waiting it out. Just waiting and waiting. Not impatient. No. She’s seen too much, experienced too much, waited too much to fall into that pastime of the young. She smiles, straightens her dress, and says hello and is terribly self-conscious that all these people came here just to see her.

III

Z: You should see it, S. You can’t imagine the amount of boozing that goes on. Everybody, the smart and the dumb. And divorce—the unmarried students are living with someone, and the married ones are getting divorced. I know a guy who’s known this girl for one week—one week, can you believe it—and tonight they’re planning to go somewheres after the party and have sex. I don’t know, S, I just don’t know.

S: And in the midst of Marquette Law School—you stand, giving the light of Christian witness.

Z: Oh yeah, sure, uh-huh.

S: Z, it’s so doggone frustrating. You can’t begin to touch those problems, but the bummer is you can’t begin to touch those around you—all the misunderstanding, and missed opportunities, and envy and trying to outguess the other person—our own relationships are so feeble and functional.

Z: But we have serious friendships.

S: I suppose, but they’re not all they’re cracked up to be. And take our seriousness, or my seriousness or moodiness or whatever—I enjoy it too much, thinking I’m somehow more profound or more sensitive or aware. Bull. I’m beyond the victim-of-life stage. I’m a fool.

Z: So then what?

S: I don’t know. The question: What, in the final analysis, do we take the human enterprise to be? We’re too with it to point to money or success. We’re not quite too with it when we point to academic success or spirituality. Maybe the answer’s integrity, morality. Live a good solid life. Sound values. Quiet good works. Keep a low profile. Don’t look too good. Don’t talk too wise. Try and raise good kids. Keep your nose clean. Remember the higher up you go, the longer and harder you fall.

Z: That’s profoundly mediocre.

S: Yes, isn’t that refreshing?

Z: Well, there’s got to be more than just sitting on it.

S: Yeah. But look—everything’s getting pretty bad. People are running around, and drinking, and struggling, and they’re scared and bitter and if nothing else they’re just so tired of it all. But what’s Christianity? Aren’t we supposed to reinterpret things? Rise above it all?

Z: Yeah, there’s enough sickly thought around, but you know what happens—we rise above, we assert, we faith, but sooner or later, we’re again battered and beaten into emotional or spiritual Punch-drunkleness. Our religion is a little brown around the edges. Oh, we’ve had our dreams and ideals, but a lot of it’s just tired now. I don’t know.

S: And you wonder if it’s not just a great big joke.

Z: Uh. That’s a truly ugly thought, S, truly.
S: Thank you.
Z: So it's all nothing, huh? You're in the nothing. I'm in the nothing. Everybody's in the nothing.
S: Until those times, every once in a while, when we experience beauty, or show tenderness, or witness a noble act, or listen to powerful music, or read a passage that makes all the sense in the world. Then we say (perhaps that latent Christianity coming out)—I know, I don’t always feel it, but I know that there’s got to be something behind it all.
Z: Yes, but what of those who never do or can’t anymore?
S: Ouch. Ouch.
Z: God? Out there, peering from behind the stars, looking at the men running around trying to find him, searching and struggling, hateful and lonely, and so tired of it all.
S: That’s not too bad either, when it comes to ugly thoughts.
Z: Thank you.
S: Somewhere, sometime, at some point in the game, He’s going to have to make the move, break down and come down and say, “OK, this is the way it’s supposed to be.” He’s going to have to wade through the muck, show us how to separate and distinguish the mess, and tell us what to do about it.
Z: But, He’s already done that.
S: Yeah, I know.

Creating a Writers’ Community at Calvin

Marianne Scholte

Calvin College is beginning to feel a little more prestigious and self-confident these days, in the wake of its first hundred years. Calvin graduates have become respected persons in almost every field of life—from academics to music, from literature to the ministry. The appearance of writers from a Christian tradition might be seen as especially encouraging, for when the writers finally pick up an idea and express it artistically there is little doubt that that idea has blossomed into fullness. Knowing that Calvin students can compete among the world’s best is quite a comfort; at last we need no longer compensate for an inferiority complex. That’s nice, but...

... but, before we start feeling too pleased with ourselves, let’s examine the other side of the coin—in this case an important side. Do these writers really express a uniquely Christian viewpoint? Do we really want to single out someone like Peter DeVries or Paul Schrader as an example of how far we’ve come? I would venture to say that most of us would have serious doubts about accepting these writers as our spokesmen. It seems that rather than expressing uniquely Christian attitudes, these men point to the fact that Calvin-produced writers have dissociated themselves from such attitudes.

The work of writers who have left Calvin is (at least in part) an indication of what they experienced while they were here. It is therefore important that we examine the present situation among the aspiring writers on campus to see what reveals about the ones who have left.

For the most part the writers on campus are a fragmented group. They are, as writers, lonely and isolated for one of two reasons, or perhaps a combination of both. In the first place they tend to be motivated by a rugged individualism that insists on a personal, strictly subjective account of experience. Secondly, the only attempt to unify writers on campus—the Writers’ Guild—caters to a sophisticated, intellectual mentality which alienates those outside this category. The result of these elements—individualism and exclusiveness—is that there is no community of writers on campus, and, more particularly, that there is no Christian community of writers here. Our writing has become a strictly personal account of experience, and the concept of struggling for a uniquely Christian concept of literature or of the writer has been lost.

It has been argued that this problem is the product of reactionary generation which has had to fight for its right to existence as artists. To an extent this is a valid argument. Certainly the reputation of many writers for obscenity, sexua
community in rugged individualism is unacceptable, both because man by definition is a member of that community (it being part of his task to work that out) and because he must be responsible to his fellowman as well as to himself.

Another idea that aspiring Christian writers have borrowed from contemporary thought is the notion of a “hierarchy of art.” Generally, a hierarchy of art is built on the idea that the best and most important art is that which has been variously described as “highbrow,” “intellectual,” “artsy,” or “art for the artists.” This kind of art is considered the ultimate that an artist can produce and the kind that he should strive for. Consequently, art for ordinary people is deemed to be of second-rate importance, and so it is neglected. Here we find the explanation for the “exclusiveness” which characterizes much of the writing on campus. Both *Dialogue* and the Writers’ Guild have a reputation for just this, and a possible explanation for it is that they have accepted the idea that “artsy” art is the most important art.

Again, this is in defiance of a proper understanding of the world, the nature of art, and the role of the artist. The aesthetic aspect of life can be found everywhere in the world, along with the potential for art. Art is not confined to a narrow range of paintings and poems and sculpture. The place we live, the utensils with which we work, and the everyday newsprint we read are full of potential for art. What's more, they are every bit as important as other kinds of art. It is the artist's responsibility to develop all of these potentials. He must not just work within a narrow range of “artsy” art and leave the rest of the world in aesthetic poverty. An “elitist” attitude among writers or among any group of artists is totally misguided and harmful. The whole range of literature and writing must be explored and aesthetically developed. One aspect must not be emphasized at the expense of another, as often occurs at Calvin.

The opportunities for artistic service are endless. As Christian artists and writers we must recognize our responsibility and joyfully respond. Let's rid ourselves of harmful individualism and damaging exclusivism. Let's band together as aspiring writers to define our uniquely Christian approach to our task and support each other in our work. Let's stand secure in our tradition and develop our ideas within a Christian perspective instead of blindly adopting the contemporary secular ideas. One day the work of Christian writers may then represent a dynamic Christian expression rather than a strictly personal one.
Gislebertus Hoc Fecit (Gislebertus made this) is one of the first known signatures of a medieval artist on a work of art. About 1130 A.D. it was carved into stone at the base near the Christ in the Last Judgement tympanum of the great Romanesque church of St. Lazare (Lazarus) in Autun, France. Of course we know nothing of this sculptor’s life, but we do have the dynamic record of his work not only in the tympanum, but also in the capitals throughout the cathedral. We know nothing of the incredible sculptors who worked at Cluny, the Benedictine Abby which exerted such a great influence that some 1,500 monastic communities were spawned by it. We do not know the sculptor or sculptors of the works at St. Madeleine in Vézelay, not far from Autun and Cluny, or those who created the many pilgrimage church sculptures that can be found along the pilgrimage routes from northeastern France down to the great pilgrimage church of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. However, for 800 years these works have survived to inspire those Christians who have travelled to see them (except for an eighteenth-century bishop who plastered over the Last Judgement tympanum!). Now millions can contemplate the works through fine photographs in publications.

Today we can only wonder at the mystery and inspiration that motivated such an outpouring of ecstatic design as a response to Christian truth. We have only one name, Giselbertus, but countless sculptors reflected one great spirit that ran like a current throughout France in the early twelfth century.

In the twelfth century the artists were in some way part of the monastic community. We do not know the exact relationship, but we do know that they were able translate the affirmations of faith of those religious communities into visible form. Obviously there was a context within which the artist could and did work. There was an interaction between the members of the community by which visual expression took on meaning not only then, but throughout history since that time.

What this great historical moment reflects is the need for the artist to work within a community. If that community is essentially a religious one, his work should reflect that allegiance.

At Calvin College we claim to have a Christian community. (I shall not even comment upon the analogy to the monastic form referred to earlier.) As art in the past has reflected man’s ultimate hope in God, so today that idea must still be held. If Christ is central to our lives we have no alternative but to reveal it in our acts. Obviously we no longer have the ecclesiastical or social structure of the twelfth century, but we do have a community and it within that form that we must define and articulate our ideals in the twentieth century.

It is in the affirmation of our Christian faith, expressed by the community, that we reveal the positive nature of Christian life. Art in this sense whether in the twelfth century is an act of discipleship. It becomes that means by which we become involved in life and with life. Art is the vehicle by which we relate to both God and th
world. How else but by the “tools” of words written and spoken, sounds, movements, shapes, colors and textures can we perform our task as servants of God placed by God in His world to rule?

As God’s stewards we are commanded to subdue the earth, to take possession of His world both in the twelfth and twentieth centuries. In this role man realizes something of his identity as created in God’s image. In the fall man lost sight of his real activity as centered in God and sought rule and serve only himself. In Christ’s coming the true purpose of man became clear once more; all life, including the arts, was to be claimed for Christ. Christ came to declare God’s creation good and that creation is not to be unned as evil, nor as an encumbrance.

We find ourselves in a Christian community defined by the structure of a liberal arts college and we must ask ourselves how can we reflect Christ amongst us? How can an educational structure prepare students to live the Christian life, a life that in part is defined by and expressed in terms of art? In many cases the artist has worked independently, outside of not only the Christian community, but any sense of community. At Calvin College we are attempting to create new unity or communion. It is true at this is only barely becoming evident for we are the heirs of a tradition which not only viewed art with suspicion but banished it in all of its forms. As a result the artist and art found other objects of faith. As artists departed from a disinterested church, so art left the church’s concern. If and when art with a Christian concern did exist it was purely individual without reflecting the understanding and/or sympathies of other Christians or of their church. As such we can say that this art is the result of a Christian’s response to his faith, but it can hardly be identified as Christian art, since Christian is communal. It is only when the Christian community embraces the artist and his art that art can be called Christian art.

Our task at Calvin College is to train a Christian community to respond to art and artists to express the faith of that community. For that reason we not only have courses for the general college student in the understanding and doing of art but also a degree program in which students and instructors can grow together to shape and form materials to respond to the Christian faith. In the Bachelor of Fine Arts program the art department is attempting to give students an education within the community of scholars so that their statements may be within the unity of believers rather than on the outside.

As Christians, and as Christian artists within the Calvin College community, we believe art has the power to proclaim, declare, and celebrate the Christian life. We believe it is the responsibility of all mature Christians to acquire the “tools” necessary for expression in art so that the community of believers may together affirm Christ and glorify God.

_Giselbertus Hoc Fecit, XII c._
—_Made This, XX c._
The new baby monster that was occupying the second floor of the FAC last month was first conceived in the mind of Andrew Brown of the Visual Arts Guild in the summer of '76. He excitedly announced his idea to Sandy Russell, his co-chairman. Together they nurtured the idea, wrote proposals and finally received permission to go ahead with the show. Initially the two chairpeople wanted to involve all of the Michigan colleges in the competition. Russell states, "Our idea was to expose Calvin students to the art that is being produced in other Michigan colleges. We felt that the show would get out of hand if we went too big in our first attempt, so we decided to limit the show to the MIAA colleges." Thus the name M.I.A.C., Michigan Intercollegiate Arts Competition. Invitations were extended to the students of Adrian, Albion, Alma, Calvin, Hope, Kalamazoo and Olivet colleges. Aquinas was also included, although not a member of the MIAA. Professor William A. Lewis from the University of Michigan judged the competition and selected 102 works from the 193 submitted. Regarding the competition, Professor Lewis remarked, "This was a very interesting show to judge. Certain characteristics of the works presented reflect trends current generally in colleges and among younger artists, though not so well recognized by the museum curators, I have been told."

The Visual Arts Guild chairpeople seemed pleased with the results of the first M.I.A.C. Says Russel, "The work involved in getting a show like this off the ground was incredible, but with the help of a few trustworthy Guild members, art students and of professors Overvoorde and Matheis, the idea has become a reality. The response was good and we feel that the goal of the show was realized—to promote intercollegiate competition on the undergraduate level and to offer students a chance to share with each other ideas and expressions in the visual arts."

**Two-Dimensional Works:**
- First Place Award of $100
  - Andrew Brown of Calvin College for "Ghetto Walls", oil
- Second Place Award of $50
  - Barbara E. Thomson of Olivet College for "Night is as Bright . . .", color woodcut
- Third Place Award of $25
  - Myra J. Herr of Hope College for "The Pigeonhouse", mixed media
- Fourth Place Award of $10
  - Carol E. Gerke of Aquinas College for "Classical Composition", oil and to
- Honorable Mentions
  - Debra Reid of Aquinas College for "Cindy", oil and to
  - Calvin Niemeyer of Calvin College for "Self-Portrait", lithograph.

**Three-Dimensional Works:**
- First Place Award of $100
  - Mark Packer of Aquinas College for "Sieggy's Madonna", polyester and marble dust sculpture
- Second Place Award of $50
  - Paula Vander Wall of Hope College for "Jewel Box", ceramic
- Third Place Award of $25
  - Leslie Moore of Alma College for "Big Quilt", fibers
- Honorable Mention
  - Tom Koole of Calvin College for "Stoneware Bowl", ceramic

photographs by Steve Talsma
Creme Créole, fibers
Leslie Moore, Alma
Movement #3, plexiglass and brass
Marian Lambers, Calvin

Sieggy's Madonna, polyester and marble dust
Mark Packer, Aquinas
ceramic bowl
Tom Koole, Calvin

Jewel Box, stoneware
Paula VanderWall, Hope
Woman . . ., drypoint etching
Michael A. Sonia, Aquinas

The Pigeon House, mixed media
Myra J. Herr, Hope
Movement I, mixed media
Holly Hughes, Kalamazoo

Classical Composition, oil
Carol E. Gerke, Aquinas
Untitled, collage and acrylic
Cal Niemeyer, Calvin

Standom, Éric, oil
Debra Reid, Aquinas
Self-Portrait, watercolor
Thomas Dykstra, Calvin

Reflection, acrylic
Sandy Russell, Calvin