American Pie

Individual servings inside:

The Schuller-Amway-CRC connection
Meet Me at The Fair
Our Daily Bread
and more
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In the Kingdom of Wealth

You could say that wealth was attendant upon the father of philosophy, just as materialism was attendant upon its birth. Thales, a foxy, old (6th century B.C.) Greek, made it big by catching the olive-processing tycoons of his ancient land napping. Because his meteorological observations indicated that it would be a good year for olives, he hired all the olive presses in Miletus and Chios early in the year for dirt cheap. Sure enough, that summer the farmers brought in a bumper crop, and Thales could name his price for the use of his presses.

What history remembers Thales for, however, is his marvelous assertion that water is the source of everything. His is the first recorded attempt by man to determine in his mind the exact nature of the Cosmic All, the Universal Principle, the One out of which the Many proceed. And to name a physical substance as the One certainly implies some materialistic presuppositions. Whether or not those presuppositions had any connections to Thales' famous fortune, we do not know.

We do know that Thales never came up with a good argument for his idea, that he spawned a number of imitators who snapped up all the other ancient elements (earth, air, and fire) for their respective Ones, and, most importantly, that he made "a startling break with mythological and theological concepts," according to Mark P. O. Morford. Even so, perhaps in his heart he was right, for he did it all out of a love for truth. He made his fortune to prove that a philosopher is not an idle man, and then produced one of man's best tools for obtaining truth.

And so, it is good to remember that not money, but the love of money is the root of all evil. The rich have a vision, too, of peace and prosperity for everyone.

Dan Hawkins

Arthur Jensen's speech to anchorman Howard Beale, in the movie Network, puts it quite nicely:

We no longer live in a world of nations and ideologies, Mr. Beale. The world is a college of corporations, inexorably determined by the immutable bylaws of business. The world is a business, Mr. Beale! It has been that way since man crawled out of the slime, and our children, Mr. Beale, will live to see that perfect world without war and famine, oppression and brutality—one vast and ecumenical holding company, for whom all men will work to serve a common profit, in which all men will share a hold a share of stock, all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquillized, all boredom amused.

The problem is that Mr. Jensen's kingdom of wealth has been slow in coming. In the bastions of free enterprise, the rich disburse their largesse through philanthropic foundations that, more often than not, bear their names, and in which they hold, of course, the controlling interest. In the citadels of communism (where, we presume, the most effective methods of distributing the wealth are practiced), the dictatorship of the proletariat is barely able to spray a thin drizzle of goods over the masses.

Somewhere between vast riches and the poor, between plentiful supplies and the needy, there always stands a man, or an organization of men who, try as they might, seem to be unable properly control the flow of the economic system. Perhaps that is why it is true that the poor will always be with us.

But another kingdom, already come, demands that its subjects take up the causes of the poor, advocate justice for them, and use personal means to supply their needs. We believe that this kingdom, which is Christ's, will be final and victorious. It is the one in which we want to be found.
The Schuller-Amway-CRC Connection

Are big churches worth the big money they bring into the Church?

(Editors note: Steve Van Till interviewed several CRC ministers in the course of gathering information for this article. The material quoted from them will not be attributed by name, however, for two reasons: 1) so that their observations will give neither comfort nor condemnation to particular parties within their congregations and, 2) because they requested it. Two of these ministers have attended Dr. Schuller's seminar on church growth.)

Some forty years ago W.R. Inge, then Dean of London's St. Paul's Cathedral remarked to this effect: "We complain today that the churches are half empty. I know of some that would be emptier still if the gospel were preached in them." Robert Schuller's Garden Grove Community Church might be one such example. Schuller, founder and head minister of this church, has been accused by many of greatly diluting Christianity with American values in an effort to gain wider acceptance. One minister called Schuller's message a "baptism of the American Way." Others praise him as a man with a plan, gifted with the ability to call millions into the fold. Schuller has been flogged in The Banner and featured in The Ladies Home Journal, but the one issue that those on both sides of the fence agree on is that of Schuller's materialism. On the drawing board right now are plans for a $15 million "Crystal Cathedral," which for many is the deafening crescendo of his contamination of the church. Why spend such an obscenely large amount of money on a building when millions are dying of starvation? This question is often asked but seldom answered satisfactorily. I hope briefly to examine a few of Schuller's teachings, but more importantly I want to take a macroscopic look at materialism and how it can threaten the church. For the church in America especially, the accommodation to secular, materialistic values is a movement to be stopped.

I find that many people hardly even know who Robert Schuller is, much less what he teaches. Therefore, some background and biography is in order before an examination of his ideologies and practices. Schuller graduated from Western Theological Seminary in Holland and not too long afterwards moved to California. Once there he purchased a run-down drive-in theater near Disneyland, and transformed it into a drive-in church where he preached some of his first sermons from the roof of the popcorn stand. Very soon he was able to purchase a few more of the acres surrounding his parking lot parish to form the site of what is now the Garden Grove Community Church complex. Where there was once only a dilapidated concession stand, there is now a skyscraping glass-and-steel spiritual center called the "Tower of Hope." Eight thousand members are presently on the roll at his church with another 3 million "Hour of Power" television viewers augmenting the size of his congregation. In a recent television broadcast he called it "the best congregation in the world." There is strong monetary evidence that his viewers feel as good about him as he does about them—20,000 letters per week bring in over $80,000 in contributions. Surprisingly, all of this has taken Schuller only twenty years to build and he points to these accomplishments as a living contradiction to the assertion that God is dead.

No doubt, the statistics speak very highly of Schuller's work. In two short
Schuller's message as 
"a baptism of the American Way."
Abraham Lincoln at Disneyland does to the American Civil War."

Allman expresses some of the same sentiments that motivated one minister to ask discerningly, "Is that what America really needs? What is the result if we are only being confirmed in our materialistic goals?" Another minister disagrees and maintains that Schuller's organization is "admirable in many ways." But just how admirable is the work in Garden Grove if it is polluted with self-centered American values? Allman makes his point wittily, but we must be more discerning in our choice of ideologies than in our taste for chicken.

Particular discretion must also be exercised by our own church as it takes a stand on the mixed bag of happenings at Garden Grove. The stand we take will be reflected in our interaction with Schuller. If the claim is true that Schuller has only an adulterated version of Christianity to offer, then why are CRC ministers attending his ministerial seminars? Although it is said jokingly that the ministers went for the trip to Disneyland included in the package, we really do have a lot to learn from Schuller in terms of how to organize a church and increase membership. Schuller has been highly successful in both of these.

The trip is free for both the ministers and the CRC. Someone else picks up the tab. As it turns out, that 'someone' is Amway. Rich De Vos, one of Amway's two Presidents, and a member of LaGrave CRC, felt that Schuller has something to offer the CRC and he was willing to cover the costs of getting our ministers out there to hear him. It is not surprising that one of America's wealthiest private rich, as listed in Fortune magazine's most recent issue would find Schuller's message appealing. T. D. Allman, in the same New Republic article, informs us that "The guides point out that the brickwork in the glassed-in sanctuary runs vertically, rather than horizontally, in keeping with church's philosophy of upward mobility." The mystery abates further as we read in Schuller's book on self-love: "Every person owes it to himself and to society to earn the most money possible in the best possible way if he uses it for a real contribution to society." [emphasis mine] Of course, De Vos' motivation in providing funds is not entirely relevant to the question of the workshop's worth, but it is nonetheless indicative of Schuller's appeal to the rich. After all, even though the trips were organized through the Board of Home Missions, the Board itself was not the initiator.

None of this has really shown yet just how exactly the materialistic disease manifests itself and threatens the church in practice. One striking example that comes to mind to illustrate this point is Schuller's own Crystal Cathedral. One thousand stars decorating the ceiling of the cathedral will be monogrammed with the names of those whose contributions have exceeded a set amount. In this apparent tribute to the works of men, we can't help but wonder who is really being glorified by the costly cathedral. A timely and telling feature in The Wittenburg Door, Sept. '78, lists "How to spend $15 million." Among the suggestions which taken together add up to that sum are: build 100 food canneries in poor countries, feed 11,000 starving children for five years, build housing for 1000 families in India, build 100 new schools in Haiti, and give a Bible to everman presently incarcerated in State and Federal prisons. Their final sneering suggestion reads, "Or you can spend it this way: Build a big glass church." Although Schuller is often the Door's whipping boy, it is glaringly obvious why the Crystal Cathedral is considered by many to be the extreme in self-indulgence. For the other side, a seldom heard but insightful remark was made by one of the preachers I interviewed. He said we should look at the Crystal Cathedral in perspective: most of our churches have a replacement cost of about $1 million; the Crystal Cathedral costs 15 times more but it also has that much more seating capacity. The building of the cathedral is still hard to justify but perhaps it is not so offensive with this perspective in mind.

Materialists tend to be insensitive to social needs and the churches who adopt the materialist philosophy seem to pick up its bigoted attitudes as well. Materialists, even some who are Christians, preach that poor people are poor solely because they are unwilling to be positive-thinking, success-motivated people. However, this is not the biblical view. The Bible is well acquainted with the oppression of the poor by the rich. Christ lived with, spoke to, and made followers of the poor and downtrodden. For those who had wealth, Christ suggested generous giving and even complete disposition of all goods if they would be true followers of His. The question "who is my neighbor" is begging in many of Garden Grove's policies. Los Angeles' Chicano ghetto is one of the largest and foulest in the country yet $500 donations buy breakable panes of glass instead of housing and food. Christ ordained the office of deacon for the express purpose of caring for the poor, but he showed no concern for the constructing of buildings. Neglect of the poor is one of the obvious effects of the church's accommodation to American values.

A more subtle effect of adopting materialistic practices is that a wishy-washy acceptance of all that is American tags in practice. Compromises in doctrine and teaching must be made so as not to step on anyone's toes. If the church is too busy trying to please everyone, then it can lead no one. Social issues must be treated either super-

"His critics contend that Schuller has done for Jesus what Col. Sanders has done for chicken."
The danger is sacrificing purity for increased membership.

fluously or not at all. People need the church for answers to the many complex social and political problems that belong uniquely to the Christian citizen. Allman writes: "When recently asked where Schuller stood on abortion, race relation, premarital intercourse, homosexuality, divorce and female ordination, an aide replied: 'We try to avoid doctrinal controversy at the Garden Grove Community Church.'" Doctrinal controversy is a fine thing to avoid because it so often divides instead of unifies, but the church should at least take a provisional stand on some of these issues. The focus on pleasing the populace rather than seeking God's truth is an issue clearly spoken to in the Bible. For us the danger lies in the sacrifice of purity for increased membership.

We have seen that through accommodation to the American Way, religion becomes psychologized, resources become misdirected, and the leadership role of the church is lost. All of this is traded for the single goal of increasing membership. Christ mandated us to preach the gospel and make believers of all men, but it is doubtful that electronic evangelism is what he had in mind. What are we to do, then, about men like Schuller who are undeniably doing an excellent job of gaining a following for Christ, but who seem to be forgetting Christ in order to do so?

This is not an easily answered question. Materialism runs rampant in our society, but too often we forget to look for it in our churches. Our church buildings are monuments to the idea that bigger is better. Here at Calvin it has been noted that our worship services look like fashion shows. Some preachers, like Schuller, have even allowed their message to become infected by the American Way. Of course, we condemn materialism and all that it stands for, but these proclamations are made easier by the assumption of many that the church is immune to this American social disease.

The subtle symptoms of the disease are not immediately obvious because they are often disguised as pious beliefs. We see some of the more obvious examples in churches such as Fountain Street Church where the uplifting of man's spirits is the central focus. Most visibly and most easily, this uplifting is achieved by the expenditure of money on social programs. Money then, instead of the Word, gains a high value as a tool of the church. Certainly money has its function in the work of the church, but its value must not be overestimated. Still it seems better to have an emphasis on the power of money to transform society than to self-centeredly build Crystal Cathedrals. Another effect of adopting the materialistic outlook is that at the same time a tacit acceptance of all that is American follows along. This is especially true of institutions which, like Schuller's, are aiming for universal appeal. Doctrinal compromises are made so that anyone may feel at home. Most threatening to our church is this internalization of American values which blurs the distinction between popular and pious beliefs.

If we really are internalizing undesirable values, then we should do something about it. The ideas about church size and the importance of an expensive church building should be rethought. If we find ourselves catering to the secular only to gain approval, we should stop, trim off the excess, and redirect ourselves to what is truly biblical.
Salting the Earth?

Communal living and the struggle for a holy life-style

Jim Lucas

Long before I even heard of any contemporary Christians living communally, the biblical record of the first-century church intrigued me. The book of Acts describes some very tangible ways in which the early Christians loved each other: every day they worshiped together, prayed together, ate together, and shared all their possessions together. Acts 2:44 sums it up by saying, "All the believers were together and had everything in common." As I used to read this account, I realize that I wanted to experience this same practical and spontaneous love. But I had never encountered anyone who thought this passage had any relevance to twentieth-century Christianity. It's not that I considered this account of daily communal living as a rule for Christian life; I recognized it as a description of the Holy Spirit's work at that time in history. But I questioned whether the Spirit might work similarly at this time in history. Then about five years ago I began to discover that the Spirit did work in that way today. In fact, for years already he had been drawing together many Christians into fellowship amazingly similar to that of the early church. One of the most vibrant examples of this work of the Spirit is Christian communal living.

I have lived communally in a Christian household for over four years. It is not a temporary experiment; it is an established life-style. In this article I would like to disill some of my reflections on this life style. I would like to offer a description of it, the principles behind it, and some of the challenges it presents to the world. At the end I would like to concentrate on the challenge it presents to the spirit of materialism of our day.

I am one of approximately fifty people living communally in the five households of Christ's Community, a Christian Reformed church here in Grand Rapids. These households constitute approximately one-quarter of the church and play an integral part in it. The five households operate in many ways as a unified group (something like a big family) with a common leadership team of fourteen people, a common treasury, a common commitment to each other, and many common experiences. Each individual household operates as a group within the larger group; each person performs certain tasks within his household. Our houses lie in the inner city, all within walking distance of each other. This proximity facilitates our getting together with each other, as well as our sharing practical things like cars. Many of us are single adults, but there are also several families, some with children and some without.

Becoming a Body

Communal living has meant sacrifice to me. Because an average of about ten people live in each household, I've sacrificed some privacy. I've sacrificed some independence by agreeing to be accountable to others for how I spend my time. In the economic sphere, I've sacrificed direct control over the money I earn: we put all of our paychecks together into a common treasury out of which we distribute the money according to need. Also, I've sacrificed individual ownership of everything except personal items: our houses, house contents, and cars are held in common. For some people these sacrifices are too difficult to make. I can understand that. For me, however, the benefits far outweigh the sacrifices. Our households are filled with activity and variety. Through our giving and receiving of love we have committed ourselves to relate to each other with openness, honesty, confrontation (when necessary), sensitivity, trust, concern, and tenderness. I am thankful for the growth which has occurred in my life. Christ's Community emphasizes both healing of our own lives and ministry to others.

Probably the most significant reason I like living communally is that I see it as a faithful response to the gospel. The foundation of our life together is our love and worship of the Lord. It is an individual commitment to him, which each of us has made, and it is an individual relationship with him, which each of us maintains. On this foundation we form our corporate life. For we believe that the Lord has chosen to live out his life in the world not through isolated individual disciples, but through a united group of disciples. This group is the church. But the theology of the church becomes meaningful only when individual Christians come together to flesh out the principles of the Gospel in everyday life. It is for this reason, to flesh out the principles of the gospel together, that we live communally. We do not claim that our way is the only way, but we do claim that we have found it to be a particularly effective way.

We have found Paul's image of the body of Christ very helpful in understanding our corporate identity, both as a church and as a group of households.

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within the church. It is not that we see our households as a church within a church or a body within a body. We see ourselves, rather, as a unique family structure within the church or the body. But the concept of the body of Christ has proved essential in understanding our communal life. The body, Paul says, is made up of many parts working together harmoniously to demonstrate the life of Christ in the world. Building the body of Christ requires living out the principles Paul talks about in his description of the body. First, it requires treasuring each member—tending to his hurts, nurturing his gifts, and encouraging the expression of his individuality. Second, it requires working together harmoniously—functioning as an organized unit, resolving conflict and persevering in mundane responsibilities. Third, it requires demonstrating the life of Christ in the world—practicing love for the disciples, revealing redemption to the world, and simply expressing the creativity of Christ’s character in every area of experience.

Prophetic Witness

I have seen Christian communal living demonstrate Christ in a variety of roles. The role which I would like to concentrate on in this article is that of prophecy. Christian communal living is a prophetic lifestyle: it presents a challenge from the Lord to our prevailing contemporary culture. And it presents a challenge to the church, which has compromised the gospel in order to conform to that culture.

One of the primary things our communal life challenges is the individualism of our day. The role which I would like to concentrate on in this article is that of prophecy. Christian communal living is a prophetic lifestyle: it presents a challenge from the Lord to our prevailing contemporary culture. And it presents a challenge to the church, which has compromised the gospel in order to conform to that culture.

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Confrontation and Renewal

One specific form of individualism which our communal life challenges is the isolated nuclear family structure of our contemporary society. I believe that the family structure is sacred, but I do not believe there is anything sacred about the attempted self-sufficiency of our families today. The poor success rate of our families should indicate to us that our families may need some help. Our communal life offers an extended family structure in which the nuclear family can open itself up to the observation, advice, and emotional support of others. This is not the ideal setting for all families, but it does challenge families to recognize their need for the input of others.

Another of the primary things our communal life challenges is the individualism of our day. We do not merely challenge people to live more economically and less wastefully—even though to live communally may be more economical than to live individually. Nor do we merely challenge people to live more simply—even though we attempt to do so. More importantly, we challenge the entire mindset of materialism. The mindset of materialism is wealth-oriented and thing-oriented, whereas the mindset of our communal life is God-oriented and people-oriented. As our society becomes increasingly complex and unpredictable, people appear to be trying harder than ever to find security in material comfort and stability. Our communal life challenges people to find their security in the Lord and in his people.

One specific product of materialism which our communal life challenges is the economic inequality in our society. As the rich in our world continue to accumulate more wealth at the expense of the poor, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. Our communal life challenges this inequality by redistributing our economic resources among ourselves. In II Corinthians 8:14–15 Paul talks about a similar economic sharing:

At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little."

Individualism and materialism are inextricably intertwined in our society, so to challenge one is to challenge the other. On the one hand, individualism facilitates materialism. For example, our society pits individual against individual in a competition to gain more material things. When one begins to live and think corporately, rather than individually, economic inequality among those with whom one lives becomes nearly inconceivable. How can I say I love my brother when everyday I see him needing something which I have but refuse to share? On the other hand, materialism facilitates individualism. For example, when people, driven by materialism, accumulate personal wealth, they no longer need each other for mutual economic support. When one becomes God-oriented and people-oriented, rather than wealth-oriented and thing-oriented, dependence on God and interdependence with one’s brothers and sisters becomes a necessity. How can I continue to accumulate personal wealth when it alienates me from others?

I would seldom challenge anyone to live communally. The first reason is that it’s a risky lifestyle. Because of our humanity and in spite of our ideals, we make many mistakes; some people leave disillusioned. The second reason is that I’m convinced that there are other ways to respond to the gospel with integrity. Many churches, including our own, are continually struggling to discover those ways. What is essential is that we respond to the gospel the best we can with the grace which the Lord has given us. If Christian communal living succeeds in challenging people to examine how they are compromising that gospel, then, I believe, it is succeeding in its prophetic mission.
Conspicuous Consumption

An American Standard for the world

Long before each new year dawns upon us, Detroit uncurtains its latest models of shiny spanking-new automobiles. These new Omnis, Gremlins, Charters, and Swingers may be longer or shorter, plainer or sleeker, or even less expensive than the previous year’s models. There seem to be no bounds to the innovative creativity of the Motor City technicians. The advertising media tell us that the new and the innovative are necessarily better, and many Americans tend to accept that fabrication.

One glaring example of this is the 1979 Cadillac. Of course, even without yearly innovations, the Cadillac strikes a luxurious image and bestows status upon its owner. The 1979 Cadillac advertising brochure points this out:

Cadillac means many different things to different people. For some, it’s an integral part of the good life. For some, it’s the “someday car”, the fulfillment of a promise they made to themselves long ago. For yet others, it’s simply an American standard for the world. 1

Whether it be a Seville, an Eldorado, or a Fleetwood Brougham, the new Cadillac implies status and wealth. Even the names for Cadillac exterior colors have an expensive ring: Sterling Blue, Pottery Gold Firemist, Platinum, and Burnished Gold, for example. With oil today being such a scarce commodity, one wonders why “Petroleum Black” is not included in the list. The vinyl roofing of the Cadillac, in addition to the various rich exotic colors, comes in either Elk Grain or Tuxedo Grain, to suit both the wealthy hunter and the smart suave cosmopolitan type. Naturally, the interiors are equally plush. One has a choice of “Slate Gray Dante knit cloth with color-coordinated carpet”, Dark Cedar Durand, or Venetian Velour (with the d’Elegance option). Genuine leather, of course, is also available.

But it seems that the Cadillac “look of luxury” is not enough. If Cadillac is to be an “American standard for the world”, it must also be packed with the latest in electronic quackery, much of which is standard on all models. The list is worth mentioning: Electronic Level Control (helps keep the car level automatically), New Digital Display AM/FM Electronically Tuned Stereo Radio with Signal Seeker and Scanner (this helps you find radio stations while driving through the Mohave Desert at 3 A.M.), Lamp Monitors (show you if your headlights are working), Power Windows (of course), Power Antenna, Remote Control Outside Mirrors, Six-Way Power Seat Adjustors, Three Speed Wipers and Washers (instead of merely two), Seat Belt Chimes (courteously urge you to buckle up), Opera Lamps, a Freedom Battery (never needs watering), Automatic Parking Brake Release, Washer Fluid Indicator Light (ever wonder if you were out of washer fluid?), and an Illuminated Vanity Mirror (at least the mirror is aptly named) on the passenger side of the front seat. Now there is no excuse for being late for church.

Some of the newest and most “innovative” of the features are the Twilight Sentinel (turns headlights on and off in response to outside light conditions), the Illuminated Entry System (little flashlights shine on outside keyholes), and the Cadillac Trip Computer. This Trip Computer, Cadillac’s “latest innovation in luxury automobile options”, displays the temperature of the engine coolant, displays battery voltage, determines elapsed time from the start of a trip, average speed, number of miles to destination, etc. Now if people could only figure out how to work the thing. With such a confusion of kinky gadgets it’s a wonder more 1979 Cadillac drivers don’t run off the road while fiddling with the control panels.

Cadillac advertising, however, maintains that the car is a “delight to drive”. In fact, promoters even apply human characteristics to the car. She’s your baby:

Here is a ride that’s smooth but lets you retain the feel of the road. You are in command. When you turn the steering wheel, it corners eagerly. Meanwhile, your Cadillac handles all the menial tasks for you (such as controlling the temperature and raising or lowering the radio antenna)... 1

Your 1979 Cadillac is beautiful and eagerly responsive and delighted to take care of your menial chores.

Why do people buy the 1979 Cadillac, the American standard for the world, the American standard for luxury? Is it really worth paying from $10,000 to $20,000 to have one’s antenna raised and lowered automatically? I think the image is most important to most buyers. The image of the Cadillac is a prestigious image of luxury.

Carl Plantinga is a senior philosophy major. He drives an orange utility van.
leisure, status, and wealth. No one really needs the gadgets, but they are luxurious, fun, and expensive. They add to the image of the car—an image designed to bring a peculiarly American status to the owner.

In formal terms this may be called ostentation—in informal terms "showing off". The phrase used in the Bible is "exalting oneself." Thorstein Veblen, who has been called the "anthropologist of economics," called it "conspicuous consumption". In his book, The Theory of the Leisure Class, Veblen attempted to explain the nature of economic man and more specifically, the economic meaning of leisure itself. The classical economists saw and many people today see the world in terms of individuals rationally seeking to better their self-interest. It is all very simple—quite civilized and reasonable, actually. Thorstein Veblen, on the other hand, saw modern man as "only a shade removed from his barbarian forebears." Whereas men, and especially the leisure classes, in the past demonstrated their valor while hunting or in battle, modern man has resorted to other more “civilized” means. The leisure class today, and the classes which seek to imitate it, hunt for money. For Veblen, "the accumulation of money and its lavish or subtle display became the modern-day counterpart of scalpings hanging on one’s teepee." Thus, through the conspicuous consumption of luxurious and expensive consumer items, modern man demonstrates his prowess. These consumer items need not be useful in a practical sense. Conspicuous waste is another form of subtle display. The wealthy husband, for example, (although styles always change), has his wife wear expensive clothes and jewelry. So much the better if these clothes, such as high heels or platform shoes, restrict any free movement like running, climbing or lifting. These are people of leisure, people who should not be expected to do such things. The owner of the 1979 Cadillac, in the same light, is rescued from the "menial" task of raising and lowering his radio antenna.

Veblen gives us an insight into the nature of social cohesion itself. The Marxists would have us believe that Capitalist society is constantly torn by conflicts between its component classes. But, fortunately or unfortunately, Veblen saw that the "lower" classes are bound to the "upper" by common attitudes. Witness the Cadillacs and other luxury cars in the poorest areas of our city.

According to Robert L. Heilbroner, Veblen’s principal insight is that "the motives of economic behavior can be far better understood in terms of primitive irrationalities than in terms of the . . . prettification of behavior into reasonableness and common sense." In light of the large number of Cadillacs sold every year across the country, this would seem to be true. So next time you take an afternoon stroll down the street and feel Adam Smith’s "invisible hand" prodding you toward a Cadillac dealership, be sure to give it a good slap.

House of Cards

Max Vreugdenhil

The imminent depletion of oil reserves has deeper, more serious implications than the prospect of leaving millions of useless automobiles cluttering fields, garages, and highways of Americans. Some people think that the depletion of oil will increase our dependence on nuclear energy; I sympathize with them but do not personally fear that America will be forced to install a nuclear generator in every home. Others warn that the Arab petro dollars will eventually purchase everything in America from steel mills to Camp David; however, I do not heed their warnings, for American inflation will shrink the petrodollar before the Arabs can land in New York City and buy a hotdog stand on Coney Island. The implications are much more subtle.

That subtlety may leave the American economy ruined like a card house flattened by a gust of wind. In fact, the American economy is a card house based on and built with credit and credit cards. When Exxon pipes the last drop of oil on earth to Dow Chemical which, with that last drop, produces the last piece of plastic and sends it to Master Charge which, with that plastic, issues the last credit card ever to be made in America, the credit card house that the American economy has become will be trembling. A society that depends on credit and credit cards cannot grow, ultimately cannot function, if its people do not have credit cards. As the American population increases, more and more Americans will not have the credit cards to purchase the necessities of life. Then anything can happen, but one event you can be sure to see: the card house will collapse. No more oil, no more plastics, no more credit cards, no more national economy. And to think that America feared destruction through a nuclear war.

The urbanization of America developed the situation in which credit cards became necessary. In the largely agrarian society that existed in America until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a merchant knew most of his customers well enough to evaluate their credit rating by himself. And in 1979 this situation of familiarity still exists in many of the small communities across the nation. Even in the cities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, neighborhood merchants knew their customers, people who lived within several blocks of neighborhood stores. But as the streams of immigrants and rural Americans flowed into the cities, creating huge reservoirs of people, stores expanded to serve hundreds of different customers. In 1950 how could the grocer give Mrs. Smith a credit account if she could not personally acknowledge her honesty and financial reliability? The credit card solved the merchant’s problem.

But the credit-card solution produced credit-card problems. As urbanization continues, as cities expand past subur-
bria into the "sticks," that is, South Dakota, Iowa, Tennessee, Montana, and, in the summer months, even Death Valley and the Everglades, an increasingly impersonal American society requires credit cards as proof of financial worth. And, fueled by increasing inflation, today's high prices have produced an economy that must function through credit as more and more Americans find that they can only pay for goods in installments.

The situation can only become worse. Rumored to be already in production, new piggy banks will have a wider slot to accommodate credit cards instead of nickels and dimes. Similarly, computerized vending machines will have a slot for a credit card instead of a quarter; the coin return compartment will no longer be probed by eager youngsters looking for forgotten nickels.

True, this prognostication is overstated and pessimistic, but credit and those three-and-one-half-inch plastic cards play an important part in every American's life. If you have credit and cards, you can buy anything from gasoline to real estate; if you do not have them, you need cash for every purchase. Banks encourage customers to use credit cards and checking accounts: transactions involving millions of dollars each day, millions which move from one end of the country to the other as well as out of the nation, can be handled efficiently by computers if Americans use credit cards and checking accounts. And Uncle Sam agrees with the banks, for the government must replace the paper money, currency which wears out after a few years, and spend millions of dollars to do so. It seems credit cards will be around forever.

But will they be around forever? Remember, no more oil, no more plastics, and no more credit cards. However, whether or not the credit card becomes extinct in fifty years, the Americans of today and the future must operate within an America that depends on credit. Perhaps a more immediate question is "How can I get credit cards?"

A twenty-one-year-old college student approaching graduation and supporting a wife, I find that I need to establish credit. Checks are not always accepted in a large city, and loans are hard to get without a full-time job. Especially as a married student, I need the credit that allows me to spread big bills, expected or unexpected, over several months so that my part-time job can pay those bills. A credit card or two would help me establish credit for those hard-to-get loans and give me purchasing power without carrying too much cash on my person (I, in turn, could stop supporting muggers). But without a good credit rating, the very loans and cards that establish credit are hard to obtain—it's a vicious circle.

There are, however, ways to break out of the circle. If you know your banker well enough to arrange a loan of a few hundred dollars, do so. Leave the money in a savings account, pay the loan when it is due, and thus achieve your own credit rating. But if your banker will not give you a personal loan because of your age or your financial status, have your father or a friend with a good credit rating undersign the loan. The banker will be taking less of a risk, but you will still be taking out a loan in your name that should establish your credit rating. Another method involves waiting to apply for a loan or credit card until you have a full-time job. With a steady income, you should be able to acquire a card or a loan. Still another method, one which I personally recommend, entails waiting for a company to send you a credit card application that simply asks "Do you want our credit card?" Last year Amoco, Sears, and Mobil sent these applications to college juniors and seniors. Naturally, this method involves nothing more than being selected at random, but through it I became a two-credit-card person.

After you acquire your credit rating or credit cards, use them immediately and frequently. Buying anything on credit—a dollar's worth of gasoline, a tube of toothpaste, a pair of underwear—will legally prove on credit records that you have been trusted with credit, that you have used your privilege, and most important, that you have paid your bills. Breathe a sigh of relief (if your bills are paid), for your credit rating is established.

Since you may be unfamiliar with your newly acquired credit card, a few words of warning may be necessary. My Midwestern, rural neighbors label credit cards as tools that the merchants invented to tempt people into buying more goods than they could afford. Whether or not the merchants created credit cards with such nasty motivations is irrelevant. Credit cards, however, in the hands of careless consumers can leave bigger bills than expected in mailboxes across the nation. With your newly purchased item in one hand and the same amount of money that you had when you walked into the store still in your wallet, you may forget about that bill coming at the end of the month. A conservative friend of mine had an opportunity to obtain a credit card, but he turned it down: "If I buy something, I will use cash like every person should, for that way I buy when, not before, I have the money." He does make some sense.

Because my friend lived in a small, rural, midwestern town, he did not need any extra plastic in his world, for he knew the banker, grocer, and hardware manager well enough to get credit without a plastic rectangle. But many others, myself included, find ourselves in the opposite position.

We can function much more conveniently with these plastic cards, and, unfortunately, we can look forward only to becoming increasingly dependent on them until we cannot do without them. Yet, one day we may have to do without them after the oil is gone and plastics cannot be produced.

As for the credit card house that the American economy has become, armed with our sesimographs and Wall Street Journals, we must constantly look for any signs of trembling. Perhaps we can reinforce the card walls with gold bullion or stacks of silver dollars. Perhaps American technology and ingenuity can develop cheap synthetic plastics without oil. Also, we must not forget the possibility of metal credit cards. If the situation becomes too drastic—heaven forbid, we can enforce credit card rationing. And if America survives the depletion of oil and manages to produce a substitute for plastic, maybe we can still anticipate destruction through nuclear war after all.
"Bad enough to be at the fair
On Saturday night," Auntie scolded,
"But then to play bingo! Tell me,
What was going on in your head,
Anyway?"

Uncle, sitting at the Sunday dinner table, shrugged
And took a slice of dried beef.

"And you an elder too, yet,
Whatever possessed you,
I don't know.
I cannot understand it.
   Has anyone said anything
   To you about it?"

Uncle, finishing his dried beef,
Shook his head,
And reached for the tomatoes and sugar.

"Why we had to go in the first place
I can't figure.
Nothing at those fairs anymore.
And the people there—they look
Like something you'd turn over in the field.

And you, as if you were
No different than the rest of them,
Go in that tent and gamble.
Gamble!
There is no other word for it."

Uncle finally spoke, quietly.
"Ma, I wanted to see those new balers
Up from Sioux City.
That's why we were there."
He paused, and sighed,
"Besides, it was only a dollar.
I didn't think I would win."

Larry VanderSchat is a Calvin alumnus.
The Fair

Church people.
("Not so bad," you thought, "they don't know
About the money, and they can't say they
Saw me here, because
Then they were here, too.")

You gave Hoekstra your best, brotherly
huis besoek smile, the one that says
'I won't tell a soul,'
And you could have collapsed with relief when
He sealed the pact with a nod.
You turned to leave
And the loudspeakers declared in electric judgement,
"Our congratulations to Andrew Nienhuis
From Spencer, Iowa,
Tonight's One-Hundred-Dollar Super Bingo winner!"
Your heart crumbled,
Your wife wilted,
And you knew you were a goner.

Sunday morning, the collection plate
Was never so full.
No pink envelope for the budget;
No blue envelope for the building fund;
But a plain white envelope with 100 dollars,
Justified, sanctified, and sacrificed.
Surely,
A sweeter savor had not risen
From that sanctuary before.

My aunt will not talk of it;
The swollen offering was no balm
To her offended antithesis.
But Uncle, with just a little coaxing,
Tells the story happily,
And ends it laughing, saying,
"The Lord works in mysterious ways
His wonders to perform,"
For he knows, I think, that
One way or the other,
The Lord prepares us
For His Sabbath.
Macyn Bolt's paintings are about painting. They go beyond presenting images on the surface of the canvas to showing the painting as a total structure. Mace calls his works "painted stretchers," pointing out that frame, canvas, and paint contribute equally to the whole work along with the artist's involvement with these elements.

"About a year and a half ago," Macyn says, "I was working on a painting—an abstract expressionist piece—and I found I couldn't resolve it and couldn't finish it the way it was going. So I painted the entire surface over in a deep prussian blue. Then I scraped through the wet paint. Not only did the layers of paint underneath show through, but the outline of the stretcher was perceptible. That's when I began to concentrate on the total process of painting."

"My art is about making art. What I do follows a sort of formula. I paint the entire surface one color and, while it is still wet, scrape it to reveal what lies beneath—other layers of paint and the contours of the stretcher." The surface texture is made with short, downward strokes reflective of his hand movement while applying and removing the paint. Although one color is dominant, upon close examination, the layers of different colors are visible. The ghost of the stretcher comes through, and the effect is subtle and mysterious.
Macyn thinks that it is important that his involvement with his work be clearly recorded. With his arms and hands, he builds paintings that expose all of their components after they have been completed. "I want to hide nothing," Mace stresses, "and make sure everything is accounted for." The painting conveys a sense of time as the structure is traced from its skeleton to its full body, from its frame to the canvas stretched, and then through the layers of paint.
“This formula leaves me with infinite possibilities to explore. I feel comfortable with what I'm doing now, but I'm never satisfied to the point where I think I need not change. I'll continue to make alterations and explore the variety of ways of dealing with process and structure in art.”
“My stretcher paintings appear to be repetitious,” Macyn admits, “But I'm not as interested in the images they provide as I am in the concept they embody. In fact, the images are neutralized because of this. My paintings, though not monumental, are large so that they occupy the space in front of the viewer—confront him. For all that, the viewer may pass them by. But if he stops to look, he will be required to explore the painting as a whole by discovering the colors, the texture, and the structure in addition to reflecting on what art and making art is all about.”

reported by Kate Harper
photos courtesy Macyn Bolt
The petition in the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread”, is the only petition which makes mention of our bodily needs. It does so by focusing on food, thereby acknowledging that food is a basic daily need for human life. The petition (give us) also acknowledges that God provides us with this basic need. The petition simply expresses what God reveals to us in Genesis 1:

I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food.

This is reiterated in Ps. 104:

Thy creatures all look to thee for their food; thy hand opens wide, they gather the good.

I believe you and I often have difficulty praying the petition: Give us this day our daily bread. It’s difficult to ask for something when we have no hunger pangs because of the abundance of food we are blessed with. It’s just as difficult to be thankful for something so readily at hand which requires so little of our personal care and involvement.

Given the abundance of food in North America, it becomes very difficult for North Americans to exercise stewardship over this resource, a resource essential to our daily needs. Stewardship of things that are hard to come by is usually much easier to accomplish than stewardship of things which we have in abundance. I believe the waste in our society readily attests to that difficulty.

Nevertheless, the hunger and malnutrition in a world with an ever-growing population is a constant reminder that God put us in charge of the food resources in the world. We have to assume responsibility for the just stewardship of our food resources.

There are two sides or aspects to our stewardship of our food resources: 1) consumption; 2) production. The consumptive aspect is not only related to the quantity of the food we consume. Overnutrition, undernutrition and malnutrition are expressions of the consumption patterns. In asking God to “give us our daily bread,” we are petitioning God for the food our body needs so that we can remain in good health. The abundance of so-called “junk foods” I believe is not what the psalmist had in mind when he wrote of God “bringing bread out of the earth.” As we continue to discover more about the intimate relationship between food, nutrition and health, it becomes our responsibility to make full use of the nutritional quality of the food which God provides in keeping our bodies healthy. This may mean that we petition the grocer and supermarket manager to stock a greater variety of nutritional food in place of the abundance of highly processed food products. Or we may seek other avenues of getting our food supplies which circumvent the highly processing food industries.

Stewardship of the production of food involves the resources required to produce the food: land, water, and energy. Most of our food production is based upon fertile agricultural land. In order to provide food for the present as well as the future world populations, it is of extreme importance that we preserve the rich agricultural lands spread over the face of the earth. The developments in North America during the past 50 years point to a lack of stewardship with regard to both the preservation and maintenance of fertile agricultural land. Every year about 2.5 million acres of arable land is lost to development, mostly in urbanization and highways. The pattern of urban development indicates that cropland is twice as likely to be urbanized as non-cropland.

The apparent lack of appreciation for our rich agricultural land perhaps arises from the fact that the U.S. is blessed with an abundance of arable land. Twenty-five percent of U.S. land surface is arable, compared with a global average of eleven percent. One would think that the U.S. would strive to be self-sufficient in food crops that can be grown under the climatic conditions of the U.S. Nevertheless, the U.S. is the largest importer of beef, much of it coming from South America. About one-half to two-thirds of many of our winter vegetables is imported from Mexico. The U.S. does export more food in terms of dollar value than it imports, but most of the export goes to developed countries rather than the under-developed countries, whereas much of the imports come from the underdeveloped countries where hunger and malnutrition is widespread. In general, there is no flow of food from the poor countries of the third world to the developed wealthy nations. In this respect North America is certainly not setting a great example in sharing its food production resources with countries that really need it.

Another aspect of stewardship of agricultural land relates to the preservation of soil fertility. It is estimated that one-third
to one-half of the topsoil on agricultural land in U.S. has been lost through soil erosion, etc. If the present trend continues, very little topsoil will be remaining in 40-50 years. The application of excessive amounts of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides has resulted in a decline in the organic content of the soil and a subsequent decline in the number of microorganisms present in the soil. Both elements are important ingredients of soil fertility. Our handling of the other resources required for food production shows a similar pattern. The misuse of our water resources as a depository for industrial wastes makes it increasingly difficult to use that water in irrigation of food crops.

Furthermore, the increasing mechanization and the application of advanced technology in the food production and processing industries jeopardizes our future food production potentials. Presently, the energy consumption by the food industries is about fifteen percent of the total energy consumption in the U.S. Nearly ten calories of energy is used to produce one calorie of food energy bought by the consumer. This is nearly double the amount used in 1940 for the production, processing, transportation, etc. required per food calories made available to the consumer. This trend of increase in energy utilization by the food industries is in tension with our declining energy supplies. Stewardship of our food production resources appears to point to a necessity to reform our attitudes with regard to the preservation and cultivation of our agricultural land resources. We face that task as individuals and as a community seeking to be obedient to our calling of stewardship.

As individuals this involves a concern over the food we consume, a responsibility which rests in the first place upon each individual. Our concern as a community of Christians can take on various forms. A very significant form would be to support and/or join organizations such as Bread for the World, Christian Farmers Federation, and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

We often are discouraged from taking up the task of stewardship because we believe that it will have so little effect. But our Lord does not call us to witness to his Lordship because we believe people will listen and respond to the witness. Rather, our Lord calls us to witness as stewards of his creation because that's the way of discipleship. In our prayers, let us remember that the petition for "our daily bread" is asked in the context of petitioning that God's will be done one earth as it is in heaven.

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**Suburbanite Rescued**

I. Breakfast time
   and Lisa cries
   'cause she can't find
   the free surprize
   prize
   inside
   the box of Captain Crunch

   Maybe
   baby,
   what you need is
   a Batman rubber raft.

II. Run me round
    your electric can opener, baby,
    and smile like he told you,
    that analyst man,
    (with a beard, perfect
    like your lawn,
    and a family picture, glossy
    like your dreams)

   You got
   training pants
   and training wheels
   and water wings
   and training schools
   and you cry
   if the mailbox is empty,
   don't you, baby?

   The raft
   is an old raft,
   scrounged from my attic.
   Batman has four or five patches
   but the silent running river has rocked you to sleep.

   **Scott Joling**
Jane VanderPloeg graduated in 1978 from Calvin with an English major under her belt and a desire to become involved in neighborhood activities. While working on the KIDS staff and, later, while studying at Chicago Internship Program, she developed an interest in community work. At the end of 1977, she joined the Heartside Neighborhood Association on a part-time basis. A foundation grant allowed her to devote full energies to her work under the title of assistant director. Heartside is of special interest for our purposes because it involves considerable business support of social action. We asked Jane to outline the structure and goals of Heartside.

Q: Can you tell us something about the origin of Heartside Neighborhood Association?
A: Heartside Neighborhood Association came into being in early 1977 as a result of neighborhood anger and concern over an incident involving a medically unattended man unnecessarily dying in the drunk-tank. The first concern of the local residents resulted in a discussion of the needs of the area. This discussion led to the formation of our organization.

Q: What are the main purposes of the Association, and how do you go about achieving these goals?
A: Our main purpose is to work in an organized way on neighborhood problems, to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood, to foster community identity, and to promote a neighborliness among us.

The Association attempts to achieve these goals through the formation of various alliances and committees, and by working with the city government to get some physical changes in the neighborhood.

Q: What kind of membership base does Heartside have?
A: All elements of the neighborhood are represented in the Association. We are presently supported by 98 corporations, institutions and business, as well as by local churches, and some doctors working in the neighborhood. Also, we receive help from some smaller social agencies such as Cherry Street Center, the Guiding Light Mission, and the Dégagé Coffee House. Lastly, we solicit members from the local populace and from individuals working outside the community who are interested in our work.

Q: What kind of responsibilities does membership bring with it?
A: Well, we have a due-structure for members. This involves businesses donating up to $100 according to size. Smaller agencies pay less, according to what their budgets can bear, and individuals give up to five dollars. Members voted on to our board of directors take on additional responsibilities. Seven directors are from the corporate entities, five are resident members, and three are from the interested individuals category.

Q: How would you characterize local business response?
A: At times support has been slow in coming, but in general business response has been very favorable.

Q: How do you account for this positive response? Do you feel part of it might be compensation for guilt over possible wrongdoing?
A: Many people who are members in the Association operate local businesses. These people are probably in the association for many different reasons, Christian good-will being one. The businessmen supporting us have a real interest in the economic vitality of the neighborhood, in creating a better quality of life here. For struggling businesses, Heartside represented possibly the last hope before having to decide to move out of the neighborhood to the lucrative 28th Street area. The businessmen are
the Neighborhood

Jane Vander Ploeg

committed to maintaining economic diversity. There is no desire to purge the poor in favor of wealthier residents. Development can be pretty scary, but some is needed to improve neighborhood conditions.

Q: What kinds of concrete activities is Heartside involved in to secure improvement of local living conditions?
A: Some of our first efforts were directed at getting Federal money for such things as better street-lighting, additional parking, the Sheldon Mall Development, a residential service center, and beautification of the South Division area. We were very encouraged by the response which met our initial proposals.

Another major project involved improving local security. The residents, social agencies, and businesses worked together to lobby the city commission manager to permit a citizens’ beat control. It is too early to evaluate the success of the project, but it seems to be just what the residents wanted.

We have discovered that safety, a good grocery store, recreation, and job opportunities are what the community is in greatest need of. We constantly work on satisfying these needs. Also, there is a unique attempt to make what resources the neighborhood does have available to all the people living in the neighborhood and/or affected by it.

Q: Could you give us an example of your own work?
A: Yes. A while back, a situation arose at a certain hotel where there was tension between the property owner and the business operator. The property owner wanted to evict the business operator, and she in turn wanted to evict the tenants. I was able to step in as a neutral party and mediate a closer relationship between the owner and his tenants. This led to the owner taking increased interest in the condition of his property and resulted in some definite material improvements.

Q: How does your Christian commitment fit in as motivation for your present work?
A: I have been nurtured by insights gained from The Other Side and Sojourners magazines. Ministry to the poor takes on real meaning when one identifies with them and helps them find ways to gain power. My role is to apply middle class political/economic practices to the situation.

I did experience a real sense of calling to this work. My best joy, and the thing I am called to do, is to bring Christ’s love to people by showing them they are worthwhile, they can work on their own problems, they needn’t stay in a state of dependency. If people dare break down some barriers between themselves and others, they could work together and they could tap onto other neighborhood sources and make this a better environment for themselves.

Q: What advice would you give to Calvin students interested in doing work for the community?
A: Social agencies are always in need of volunteer work. If there is interest, there is always work to be found. From personal experience, I would encourage students not to go directly into CRC-related causes, but rather to opt initially for state agencies. When I stopped comparing myself to standards at Calvin, I discovered I was better equipped for many tasks than I had given myself credit for. Also, I developed a broader perspective on social issues by getting outside of my traditional CRC-habitat.

Q: Obviously the homogeneity of the Christian Reformed community is in some ways going to have a profound limiting effect on one who has grown up in it. How severe do you feel those limits are as concerns social vision? Do you feel the community is guilty of deliberately restricting its social scope?
A: No, well, it is hard to say. There is a need for Calvin to reach out to the public arena. We have so much to offer and we feed ourselves. I really cherish my tradition, but getting outside the CRC circle allows me to recognize how well I’m equipped to do certain kinds of work which I did not have opportunity to do within the community.

reported by David Murphy
Square Series #6

Bruce Bouma
The Moon

(Seung Ho Choi's story, set in post-war Korea, uses several Korean words, and he has provided a gloss on each. The words are as follows, in order of their appearance in the story: yangyom: a term of derision, referring to Americans manghal: a mild oath Palangi: North Korean soldier The General of Heaven and Mrs. General of Ground: wooden totems chima: a woman's garment

In order to reinforce the symbolism in this story, Choi has chosen not to capitalize the name of Sun Myong Moon.)

The American missionary had thin, yellow hair and a nose which sat inelegantly on his face. His hands were hairy, and they were holding the Bible. Moon was glaring at the yangnom as if he held a matador's red flag, and was drawing nearer to him, brooding on his hatred for the missionary. But the yangnom looked too strange and remote to get really angry with, and moon felt as if he were separated from the American by some invisible, impene-trable veil. Then the missionary dropped his conversation with the Korean pastor and turned to him. Moon met his eyes, which looked blue and queer. They were smiling. Suddenly the invisible veil was gone and the yangnom became a real man, and moon's aversion for him became a living, unsuppressable rage.

"You came a little bit too late, sir. Five thousand years too late, sir," said moon, malignantly. "If there is one thing I agree with you on, it's that your God is a spirit without a mouth, eyes, or ears. That spirit certainly was mute to my forefathers, blind to their sufferings, deaf to their wailings. And we have endured poverty, disease and all the oppressions and miseries for five thousand years. Why have you come now with your impotent God on your back? You say we are a blessed people because so many of us are miserable enough as to find comfort in your spirit?"

A sneer crossed his lips. "They may come here and listen to your sermons and let you pour your holy water on their heads, but you never know where their hearts are."

The Rev. Brown could have kept his smile with perfect serenity if this man was like other insolent argument-lovers, or he could have pitied him if he were like other exasperated sufferers who cry out and rebel against Him. But behind the defiance of this Korean soul which he knew so well, there was an incomprehensible, mysterious force which made him afraid of this Korean. His eyes were fierce, full of hatred. His high cheekbones, typically Korean, formed a relentless curve extending to his firmly closed lips. It was only a Christ-like love which enabled the Reverend to bow deeply to the Korean and speak formal greetings in a most humble manner.

"Choun hoepget sunnida. I am called Mr. Brown, and I am most honored that you desire to have a talk with me."

The Rev. Brown's unexpected courtesy and his awkward Korean accent almost made moon smile. He involun-tarily bowed his head and said, "I am called sun myong moon." The Rev. Brown sighed in relief, and thanked the Lord silently for delivering him from the disheartening situation.

"Mr. sun, sometimes we do wonder during the stormy and rainy seasons why the Sun should hide above the dark clouds. But we can only thank the Sun for just being there, faithfully shining, for eternity... .” Mr. sun? moon puzzled. He said his family name first because he wanted to be called moon. He wondered, shall I tell him that my name is moon? He never realized before that his name meant Sun and Moon in English. Shall I also tell him that myong( ) means light, or illumination which consists of Sun( ) and Moon( )? A small Sun and a big Moon, to be precise. Koreans always wrote big and vigorous as if it were going to swallow up the petty, insignificant. Sometimes moon tried to write as a dot so that it could not be recognized as Sun. "Yes," moon thought, "I will have to do that so that my name would be moon moon instead of sun-moon moon." But he remembered that his first name was sun, a name he could do nothing about. But, then sun and moon does not mean Sun and Moon in Korean anyway. He smiled faintly at his folly. All this stupid play with words started because of this manghal yangnom. The Rev. Brown saw that he was not listening and raised his voice to conclude briefly.

"Mr. Sun, just remember that God is always faithful, like the Sun which shines eternally.” moon could feel his anger rising up again.

"I'm sorry, Rev. Brown. But I am not sun, I am moon."

"I am terribly sorry," the Rev. Brown apologized, confused. He felt as though all his argument was nullified.
Moon turned his back on the fumbling yangnom and walked out of the church.

The air outside was hot and dry, and the August Sun was mercilessly sucking up the sap of withering flowers which grew alongside the road, thickly covered by dust. On the field six lazy cows lay yawnning and ruminating. Some of them were leaning on a rotting bunch of thatches which looked like a dead mushroom with a dry, split stalk. It would have been long ago thrown into someone's kitchen fire were it not a devil shrine. Its wall was so old and loosely built that he thought he could see the cow behind it, with its head, back, tail and all. But there was something white inside which blocked the view. It was moving up and down, up and down, mechanically, monotonously; he could hear a woman praying for the smallpox devil to eat the chopped bat and come out of her little son. Then he saw a stray cat in a bush a few yards away from the shrine ogling the food on the altar. Moon had a good mind to kick the guts out of her belly, but when he approached her, she sensed his intention with an animal instinct and climbed up the tree, meowing and still eyeing, the sacrifice.

As he passed by another bunch of rotting thatches (this time a bigger one which was more strongly built with logs and mud bricks), he overheard several young men talking inside of it. They were talking about the paigangis who had burnt up the whole cornfield, how they raped so and so's sister, and how they killed Jesus people with sharp bamboos. One of them said he could still smell the blood. Yes, moon thought. The ground still reeked of the smell of blood, and the bullet holes on the trees, bridges, and houses still gave off an odor of gunpowder. Two summers' rains and two winters' snows had not wiped them away. The General of Heaven, who was supposed to protect this town, also had an ungraceful bullet hole in his face, and Mrs. General of Ground, who was carved so profiler, how they would have been long ago thrown into someone's kitchen kettle. Along with the soft breeze came the good smell of slightly burnt rice. She always overboiled it to make rice tea with the burnt portion scraped from the bottom of the kettle. It had a certain bland taste which soothed the hot mouth and stomach after a spicy meal. He heard her removing the cover of the pot which was buried in the backyard, and the delightful smell of fermented garlic, red pepper, and fishes quickened his nose. These are the smells of Korea, moon thought, bland rice and pungent kimchi.

After a while, Sook came out of the kitchen with a black rice table and began to unfold its legs beside him. The table was quite an old one but it still smelled of pine wood and black lacquer. More Korean smells, moon thought, the smell of perennial, mysteriously old pine tree, and dark but glistening lacquer. As Sook began to clean the tabletop, it glowed wonderfully. Sook's dark, rich hair wavered on her immaculately white chima. She looked beautiful under the scarlet twilight. She felt his eyes on her, and her lips curved in a soft smile which slowly reached to her eyes. Moon even sensed her blushing a little bit. After ten years of marriage, she still flushed when he touched her. She had never learned to be a "new woman."

Chong-suk and Young-tae, moon's two sons, came running out of the kitchen carrying bowls, chopsticks, and spoons. Chong-suk, the younger, almost stumbled on the ground, and looked at his father, laughing, feeling guilty and happy. They were all excited to have dinner at the garden yard. There might be some mosquito biting followed by scratchings and denunciations, but these were always greeted by laughs which elevated the family's spirit.

When the dinner was ready, moon thanked the Lord for the food and asked Him earnestly for peace to him and his family. Prayer had been essential in his life since his earliest infancy. His mother, one of the earliest Korean converts, always prayed for him, and he desired all the glories she prayed he should find. Yes, he wanted power—he wanted to speak to the world with the authority of God. But lately, especially since his mother had been killed by the paigangis, he prayed for peace with a kind of passive resignation.

Moon's meditation was cut short by notice of his son's odd behavior. Chong-suk was not eating with his usual appetite, and he looked rather restless. He seemed to have something important to tell. Moon thought he should ask him to speak out, but he refrained. Let him brood in his secret, he thought. He will speak when the story is ripe and sufficiently dramatized.


"Americans?" moon thought. They must have been sol-
diers. But he thought it was rather queer that yangnom soldiers should come out here to the country from Chun-chu which was pretty far off.

"Oh, God, they were real Americano gentormanos. They were wearing watches and they were so shiny that I thought they must be real gold. One of them had a camera and was wearing glasses and they also looked so shiny that I could hardly look at them straight. Gosh, I bet he must be a movie star. No, he must be a real rich Americano gentormanos."

A gentleman? Moon knew they were not soldiers. The Sun may rise from the west tomorrow but one would never take yangnom soldiers for gentlemen. They must have been tourists who had decided to see Korea on their way to Japan or Hong Kong so that they could tell their friends how they had actually stood, like brave adventurers, in the midst of the debris of war and poverty. He imagined the shiny yangnom telling other equally shiny yangnoms how Koreans still used dung in the field, how shabbily dressed Korean boys were, and how Koreans lived under rotting thatches. His hands and mouth moved mechanically, but he had no idea of what he was eating. He felt anger slowly creeping back into his heart like a snake.

Chong-suk felt he had everybody's attention and began to assume an important air now.

"Father, they gave me chocolates and candies." He paused for a while and said, "And they also took my picture."
Sook looked at moon anxiously with misgiving feelings. He was a big, raw-boned man and had on his face an empty look which she feared. His mind sometimes seemed to wander off to another world, a world she never understood, his body became a hollow kernel which saw or heard nothing. She desperately prayed that he would come back, safe and intact. But Young-tae was too young to hear his mother’s silent prayer. He only felt jealous of his younger brother who made something of himself. “No, father, it wasn’t so,” said Young-tae. “In-chul first said ‘gimmi, gimmi gum, Americano gentormano!’ and Chonk-suk followed him and said ‘gimmi gentormano, gimmi chocolates’ and followed the yangnom like a beggar.”

“Shut up, Young-tae!” Sook said, intensely, almost pleading. She saw moon coming back, looking deranged. But Young-tae went on, feeling triumphant.

“Yes he did, mother. And the yangnom threw candies on the ground and they ran to pick them up, and Chong-suk went with them even though I told him not to. And the yangnom took his picture when he picked them up from the ground, like a dog.” Moon suddenly stood up and went into the house like a mad man and came out with a whip.

“No, father,” Chong-suk squeaked, half crying in terror. His abject quailing aggravated moon’s rage. He howled, beating his son. “Did you say ‘gimmis’, you dirty dog? Bark, crawl, and lick the ground, do you hear? Go and suck the yangnom’s feet, do you hear?” Chong-suk convulsed in pain and fear and cried with all his breath.

“No, father, he didn’t. I told you lies, it’s a lie,” Young-tae protested, defending his brother.

“Stop that!” Sook shouted sharply. There was something in her voice which unnerved him. She was looking into his eyes as she never had before. Her eyes were filled with deep resentment and hatred. Moon felt as though all the life in him was draining out.

“Did you say ‘gimmis’?” moon murmured, abstractedly. He swallowed. Something hot came up in his throat. He swallowed again. He dropped his whip and went out of the house.

He walked in a kind of daze and he roamed around the mountain like a maniac. Anyone who had seen him in this state would have sworn he had seen a tokaebi and described him in detail without much exaggeration and have convinced others that it was a real tokaebi. His mind obstinately went over the brawl like a broken record, and some words were so acutely vivid that they gave him a strong electricity went through his spine, and he was up on his feet in an instant. All the universe was suspended, and his nerves became extremely tense. What was it? He felt someone’s presence. Who is it? He seemed to be everywhere, nowhere, far away, inside of him. His eyes looked into the sky as if pulled by a magnet, and he saw an enormous moon pouring down its mysterious light, baptizing him, soaking him, filling him with it. He was so overwhelmed by its force that he collapsed under the ginko tree and burst into profuse tears. When he finally exhausted his tears, he saw the spirits dancing out from beneath the fountain, under the roof, inside of the kitchen, from water, air, and under the ground. The General of Heaven was running from mountain to mountain. The voice spoke again.

“You art standing on a holy ground, and thou shalt take thy shoes off, and throw them away.”

Moon took off his rubber shoes. They were old and his feet were comfortable in them. “What’s wrong with these?” he asked.

“You shalt throw them away.” The voice spoke again. Moon shot a last glance at the shoes and threw them away. “And now behold the time is ripe, and I shall send thee to the world to get my children back to me.”

“But what shall I tell them if they ask your name?” moon asked.

“I am the Light, the Illumination, and thou shalt say to them that the ‘Light and the Illumination’ hast sent thee.” Moon pondered for a while and said to the Moon. “But I am just a poor farmer and they will not believe me or listen to me.”

“What hast thou in thy pocket?”

Moon looked into it and saw a coin of five chons. “Five Chons, Lord.”

“Cast them on the ground.” He threw the coin to the ground and it changed into a hard, crisp dollar. The dollar began to multiply, and soon formed a small hill of money. Moon stood in a daze for a while and a sudden laughter seized him.

“Watch? Camera? Chocolate?” he giggled. The yangnoms would follow him like beggars, and fawn on him like
dogs, and he would trample on their face.

"Why art thou laughing so?" Moon asked, amazed. Moon went on laughing, unable to answer. But when he finally stopped laughing, a sudden revelation came over him, and he realized that everything is useless. He remembered how helpless The General of Heaven looked under the Sun. He stared at the hill of money, feeling despondent.

"Why art thou worried now?" Moon asked, perturbed. "This won't work, Lord. They will look impotent and disgusting under the Sun." There was a long silence. Then the Moon said finally, "Cheer up, moon. They will work as long as I shine on them, and I shine as long as there is darkness."

Yes, moon thought, as long as there is darkness.

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**Doc's Bar and Grill**

My eyes
are a gift from the old snake
that preyed on rats that ran
outside the garden wall.

My eyes stalked loin-cloth prey
the shame of Eve.
They laid siege against her pressing thighs
and shot about her porcelain grace.
My eyes were wounded, though,
when they fell to her ripening belly:
Primed, volatile,
gravid.

"Eve, you are a blinding curse
of pain,
pain that isn't prey."

And yet
her knowing lips,
tongued a dripping red,
kissed
my naked vision.

*John Suk*

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**Memories—Toledo**

Some nights she said no.
Then we all sat in the big couch,
Mom, Sis, and me,
All night in the blue light of the T.V.
With my head in her lap.

When I got older, mother died.
My sister lives with my aunt now.

Last night after work:
In a bar among beers and stories,
Ol' Ed slaps my back,
says, "She was one of the best."
All night in the blue light of the T.V.
I didn't tell him she was my mother.

*Ross McElroy*