All beginnings are hard.

I can remember hearing my mother murmur those words while I lay in bed with fever. "Children are often sick, darling. That's the way it is with children. All beginnings are hard. You'll be all right soon."

I remember bursting into tears one evening because a passage of Bible commentary had proved too difficult for me to understand. I was about nine years old at the time. "You want to understand everything immediately?" my father said. "Just like that? You only began to study this commentary last week. All beginnings are hard. You have to work at the job of studying. Go over it again and again."

The man who later guided me in my studies would welcome me warmly into his apartment and, when we sat at his desk, say to me in his gentle voice, "Be patient, David. The midrash says, 'All beginnings are hard.' You cannot swallow all the world at one time."

I say it to myself today when I stand before a new class at the beginning of a school year or am about to start a new book or research paper: All beginnings are hard. Teaching the way I do is particularly hard, for I touch the raw nerves of faith, the beginnings of things. Often students are shaken. I say to them what was said to me: "Be patient. You are learning a new way of understanding the Bible. All beginnings are hard." And sometimes I add what I have learned on my own: "Especially a beginning that you make by yourself... that's the hardest beginning of all."

—Chaim Potok, *In the Beginning*

Potok's quote almost stands as an editorial by itself. However, to use only his words is an editorial cop and plagiarism besides. But what Potok's Jewishutor David Lurie says about his own community is true for the Calvin community as well: beginnings hard, harder than merely deciding what clothes to put on or how to preserve your I-worked-on-this-all-summer-tan. Even answering the proverbial question "Are you looking forward to going back to school?" is not as easy as a simple "yes" or "no."

All this is not meant, however, to discourage all of you who now face the beginning of a school year; instead we must work at those beginnings we make ourselves. But this is more than a "get involved at Calvin" pep talk. True, the beginning of your edification may depend on your signing up for SVS or buying a Five-for-Five ticket. On the other hand, perhaps the beginning you make involves keeping a journal or setting aside a time for daily devotions and really sticking to it this year.

Thus we who stand at the start of this year are helpless in the face of what's to come; we can make a beginning—and thus a middle and an ending—good by deciding now that we are not content with the friends we already have or not deciding that this year can't possibly be as good as last year. Instead, in all ways acknowledging the Lord to direct our paths, must set to the task of making a beginning. After all, beginnings are hard, but they are not impossible.
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In fitting with the theme of "Beginnings," this month's cover of Dialogue features the ideal representation of the beginning of life: a human fetus, already sucking its thumb at only eighteen weeks of age.
As the usual group of students and staff converged on campus for another year of the expected teaching and learning, reading and writing, many members of the Calvin community began special projects, either at other institutions or here at Calvin. Professor Ed Ericson of the English department began a year’s sabbatical this September to write a critical study of Mikhail Bulgakov’s novel The Master and Margarita. Ericson has explored Russian literature before, most notably in a book on Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Ericson admits to working outside his field when he studies the twentieth-century Soviet writers Solzhenitsyn and Bulgakov, but says that he was drawn to them because of something in their work which “satisfies the soul.” The fascination which their work holds for him is the Christian presence which Ericson finds lacking in most modern literature written in English. Ericson accentuates this Christian presence in his writing and his speaking about the two authors.

Ericson restricts his work on Bulgakov to the puzzling novel The Master and Margarita and concentrates on Solzhenitsyn’s mammoth history of the Soviet penal camps, The Gulag Archipelago, which Ericson recently received permission from the author to condense. Both books were written as the Russians say, “for the drawer,” because of the author’s personal need to see it written but not necessarily published immediately. Fortunately, both books were published, but they remain inaccessible to most Americans: The Gulag Archipelago because of its formidable length, The Master and Margarita because of it mysterious form. Ericson hopes his eventual book on The Master and Margarita and his condensation of the Gulag will draw more readers to the books and also expose them to the Christian elements which first fascinated Ericson. Dialogue recently spoke with Ericson about his plans for the coming year, his interest in Russian literature, and his work on Solzhenitsyn and Bulgakov. First he describes his work on The Master and Margarita.

“This year will be spent in writing a book about a book. Bulgakov dates 1891-1940; he’s well-known. Stalin knew him personally and approved of having a place put in Moscow. Bulgakov asked Stalin for permission to emigrate to the West, but Stalin refused. Although Bulgakov was a well-known writer, mostly known for his plays, it turns out that he also wrote quite a few novels. Only a quarter century after his death did we learn all of The Master and Margarita, second half of his writing career, while he was still alive. He was always working on this novel—what was to be his testament—which came out in the late 60’s. Bulgakov is very interesting, a fascinating writer with a lot of grotesque fantastic elements in his writing. There is a long line of the grotesque and fantastic in Russian literature, starting in the nineteenth century. But once we got The Master and Margarita, everyone agreed that this is worth more than all the rest of Bulgakov’s works put together and is as good as all the rest are. When it came out, it was widely reviewed and highly praised by everyone who commented about it. ‘Puzzling,’ ‘fascinating,’ ‘hilarious,’ ‘a book of deep spiritual insight,’ ‘a good theology of metaphysical dimensions,’ a critic would say. Someone even said ‘Christian elements.’ But, as Irving Howe says...”

Nancy Jacobs, better known as Jancy and the token proletarian member of the Dialogue staff, is having trouble graduating. When Nancy leaves, she hopes to be the perfect “Renaissance woman.”
all the pieces of the puzzle are there, we can't put them together, certainly not on the first reading, and I'm sure if we can ever.’ Well, here I am, an English teacher, writing outside my field... writing about a Russian writer. But, this [book] is something I can explain. For the most part, commentators are secular critics who see the high art involved but can't figure out what to with the total meaning of this multiformed book. And, a Christian, I think that I can understand... not every tail, but the overall picture of what's going on. Now the college graciously has given me the money to work on The Master and Margarita this year. I think if the novel were understood, it would be much more widely read. The reason that it isn't read is that people don't understand it. People read it and say, 'This is really interesting.' It's one of the few novels I know that you enjoy reading even when you know you're not getting it. There are all these threads that seem loose; there's no design. But at the end they come together, if you have eyes to see. It's not that only Christians can understand, but a Christian has an inside track to understand it and is in the best position to explain it so that others will see. If I'm right, this is a really major novel of the twentieth century—a major Christian novel, which will come to be seen as such. Now that's about as high a goal as I could set for it...."

The Gulag Archipelago is already recognized as a major book of the twentieth century, and some consider it a major Christian book. But it is also a book which badly needs condensation to make it popular with American audiences. "I say often in public lectures when I'm talking about The Gulag, 'It's the most widely bought recent book that sits on shelves of cultured people. All sorts of people read about a hundred pages with good intentions to finish it but never go back. Invariably somebody will come up and say, 'You were talking about it; that's exactly what happened.' The book is written for a Russian audience, particularly for a future Russian audience, with a faith that some day there will be a second parenthesis in the Soviet era. Meanwhile, the truth of the history of this period will be retained. This means that there is a great deal of Russian history in the book which causes most Westerners to get bogged down. The book is from Solzhenitsyn's own experience and from the experience of the 227 people to whom he liked. It is not a work that is designed to have the kind of artistic unity that we expect from Milton. Solzhenitsyn works hard to bring in artistic elements to keep the reader's attention. He uses many detailed stories and stilted narrative accounts, for example, and he also keeps changing pace to do whatever he can to keep the reader interested. But he says several times, 'Does it seem as if I'm repeating myself? But see it's not I who am repeating myself; it's the Gulag which keeps repeating itself.' Well, if he's going to tell the Gulag story it's going to be repetitious; and so for most Western readers the book becomes a catalogue of horrors, one ght after another. Pretty soon the cumulative effect that becomes overwhelming and readers can't take any more of it. Nobody gets to the third volume. Volume I sold a million copies; Volume III sold 40,000. But the stories of hope are in the third volume. Here's something I realize the more I study Solzhenitsyn: his vision is one of hope. In the West he's seen as this gloomy prophet of the end of the world and all that. He'll give you all the warnings that you could ever want and more, but that's never his final word. His final word is always, 'But there is hope, but there is hope.' That's not the main sense people are getting from the book."

Ericson's goal is to strip The Gulag of some of its necessary repetition to enable readers to reach the chapters of hope at the end. When corresponding with Ericson about the condensation, Solzhenitsyn himself reinforced Ericson's notions on the optimistic nature of the book.

"I have here a letter from Solzhenitsyn. Here's what he says about The Gulag: 'For the most part, it will be necessary to retain all that leads to a moral uplifting and catharsis, the main goal of, the main sense of Archipelago.' That's what Solzhenitsyn says his work is about, and I think that note is not understood by the West."
Are You Normal?

by Mary-Lee Bouma

If you are one who occasionally considers this question, you probably answer yourself by looking around at your immediate group of friends, and then at your classmates, and maybe at the other people in your church, or at the people you see when you are shopping or driving through town, and you decide that since you fit fairly well into modern society and in many ways you are just like everybody else—you are pretty normal. And because the continual challenge by ministers, parents, and friends to your Christian—or not so Christian—lifestyle causes uncomfortable guilt feelings, very likely you find alleviation by comparing yourself favorably with those who have more obvious sins or worse shortcomings than you. If you have a hard time expressing your faith to non-Christians, for instance, perhaps you console yourself with the thought that at least you are not like those too-talkative, emotional, “Jesus saves” Christians who turn people off. At least once in a while, almost all of us seem to find this reassurance of our “normality” necessary.

Yet, when we comfort ourselves by contrasting our actions with the worse behavior of others, by whose standards are we judging our normality? In his book The Normal Christian Life, Watchman Nee states that “the normal Christian life... is something very different from the life of the average Christian.” He goes on to say that indeed our standards should be based on “a consideration of the Word of God.” “Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you,” are Paul’s words to us in Ephesians 5:12. If we, in fact, imitate God, we will love—in action, not just in feeling; we will not be average. In fact, many people will not even think us normal. We will not be normal human beings, normal college students, not even, unfortunately, normal church members. But we will be living by God’s norms, not the norms of average people.

Granted then: being a normal Christian is to be different, radical, perhaps even considered fanatical. How can we begin such a transformation? Merely attending Calvin College and even being kind to these Christians within our community is not enough. Although Christians need the security and the strength of the body of Christ, just being part of the Christian community is not our reason for existence; we are here to transform the world. We are called to be in the world and not of the world, and means we are to be visible in world, living undeniably Christ lives. Christ calls us the light of world and the salt of the earth, he cautions us against losing saltiness or hiding our light under bushel. In fact, he commands be as cities built on a hill so that cannot be hidden. This commar stand out like cities on hills app to us now, tonight, tomorrow, and next day, not when we decide are ready to face the world. CI does not say that we sh transform the world after we fi college, nor that we should wa show our light until the fellowsh other Christians has made it smore brightly and without danger flickering out. No, he tells us “Greater is he who is in you th who is in the world” (I John 4:4).

She Walks On Rainy Night

I saw her trying to fish the moon out of a puddle—He’s a bit slippery tonight—she remarked—Gotta get him before he goes.
I looked up to snicker with the moon—but the sky was empty.

—Patricia Westerh
promise to us is one of victory. After the same Christ who gives us this
sacrifice says, “And, lo, I am with you
everywhere” (Matt 28:20).
If we use our time at Calvin as a time to hide from the world, hoping to
grow in faith by staying away from in-Christians, rationalizing our
behavior by saying that we are preparing for future Kingdom work,
we are not just fooling ourselves; we are also disobeying Christ’s implicit
command, and we are wasting the valuable time that he has given us.
Instead, we must use our time at Calvin, our time of enjoying good
fellowship and the support of other Christians, to empower us for our
work now.
We have no choice if we are to call ourselves Christians. We must
choose activities that bring us out of the world and into contact with
in-Christians. We must use our time to actively love and serve not just
Christians, but those who
linger and seek for the Word of
God that lives in the words,
examples, and companionship of
exciting and dedicated Christians.
Not only through campus outreach
services, but through the work of
inner-city churches and in off-
campus jobs, we can make
ourselves available for God to use
us. If we not only prepare to do the
work in the world to which God has
called us but also actually begin this
work, we start a revolution. And it
starts with normal Christians.
"Creation is God's project and science is man's project," states Professor VanDragt of Calvin's biology department. But man, especially Christian man, has long struggled with the relationship between creation and science. Heated arguments arise when a person suggesting the possibility of evolution confronts another person who believes that any concession to evolution will mean that man descended from the ape. Professor VanDragt attempts to explain why people get so upset over the question of evolution: "For many people, belief depends greatly on two historical events that happened to a real time in history: the creation and fall and the coming of Christ. To surrender the historical event of creation makes Christ's death unnecessary because if man is a product of natural process, he cannot be held responsible for his actions. Therefore, sin is a myth, and there is no need for redemption in Christ."

The problem with such an argument, however, exists because this view requires that man be sure of science in order to validate his faith. "Implicit in this scientific view," continues VanDragt, "is the idea that science builds truth, that is, creates reality. The point that is missing is the fact that scientific 'law' is really only man's best shot at explaining the world around him. What we all must realize is that what we [men] put together stands apart from what really is."

But such theoretical arguments become daily lesson plans for many instructors because they must teach the origin of life, somehow incorporating creation, evolution, or a combination of the two. In order to help teachers "re-investigate how they teach origins," the seminar committee of Calvin's biology department is sponsoring a Saturday seminar for teachers. Junior and senior high—mostly Christian schools—who teach earth and life sciences, were invited to personally involve persons known to be struggling the relationship between creation and evolution.

In the morning seminar session Professor TenBroek and a biology teacher will be speaking some of the pedagogical probe involved in presenting creation science and evolution; for exam should these two views be treated as equals in schools? In afternoon, Calvin professors give two more specialized specific speeches, each address one of the traditional arguments given by creation scientists. Professor Menninga will speak the evolutionary idea that all forms evolved from the simple to complex, an idea which is contrary to the second law thermodynamics, which says processes tend toward a more simple state. According VanDragt, "misapplication misunderstanding of physical law are present on both sides of argument."

Second, Professor VanDragt address the notion of "intemediates" in the evolution process, that is, life forms that seem to be a link between two very distinct groups such as birds and reptiles.
rious points on the “tree” of changing forms can be identified from distinct fossils, or “random snapshots,” as VanDragt calls them. What is lacking is the linkages between branches on this tree. The “missing links” imply that intermediate forms never existed, or do they mean that scientists perhaps have not found necessary fossils?

The disagreement about such intermediate life forms often comes about because a scientist’s own bias determines how he views the fossil record. As VanDragt muses, “When creation scientist decides that there are no intermediates and there never were any, there’s a dismal aspect of ever resolving the true.” This same creation scientist believes that the absence of data concerning intermediates implies that creation occurred only according to kind,” and, therefore, intermediates are an impossibility. It, explains VanDragt, “negative data never supports anything; it is consistent with creation by groups, but it is not evidence for it.”

VanDragt is quick to explain that his view, which says that intermediates are a possibility, does not mean that he is immediately swallowing all of evolution. Instead, he simply points out that judgments of fossil evidence are always being made by the scientists involved. VanDragt’s work with the genus Archeopteryx, a creature which appears to be an ideal link between past reptilian forms and modern-day birds, especially illustrates this idea of judgment calls. “If Scripture said, ‘all things with feathers are birds,’ there would be no problem. Unfortunately, however, we lack that kind of revelation.”

Instead of basing his investigation on a skepticism of intermediates, VanDragt has chosen to assume that intermediates are a reasonable possibility. VanDragt believes this because he sees all of nature as a spectrum without clear-cut lines between species. Already some distinct categories established by scientists have been abolished because nature has proven them wrong; for instance, several species of birds have demonstrated the capacity to interbreed, thus dispelling the idea that they were very separate species. “This means that what we thought was a dividing line was really a product of our increments. We chop up the living world and make strong boundaries on what is really a prism of life forms.”

Thus, the question of creation/evolution comes full circle, back to the work that man has done to explain God’s work. “Scriptural accounts must be the basis for our faith commitment, not the accounts we have created,” stresses VanDragt. “We must rely on the Holy Spirit to guard the truth or we’ll have to work very hard to guard it ourselves.”
President Diekema’s First Annual State-of-the-Reunion Address

By the same token, it is appropriate to consider how we measure progress. Without engaging in a lot of unwarranted mendacity, let me say that we cannot use life’s little obstacles as an escapist for failure. The responsibility is ours and ours alone. It has been said that to succeed we must watch our p’s and q’s. But it takes more than that. To truly succeed, we must also dot our i’s and cross our eyes. Go the extra mile; walk in the other person’s shoes, ever mindful of the fact that those shoes could have been yours.

Be that as it may and without reason, we ought to savor each moment as it occurs. Every second of our lives is unique—an unprecedented, unparalleled, untimely event. Insofar as we fail to recognize this, we live lives that are sure to terminate. Emerson put it well when he said, “Man sheds grief as his skin sheds rain.” At our misanthropic moment as it occurs. Every second of our lives is unique—an unprecedented, unparalleled, untimely event. Insofar as we fail to recognize this, we live lives that are sure to terminate. Emerson put it well when he said, “Man sheds grief as his skin sheds rain.” At our misanthropic moment as it occurs. Every second of our lives is unique—an unprecedented, unparalleled, untimely event. Insofar as we fail to recognize this, we live lives that are sure to terminate. Emerson put it well when he said, “Man sheds grief as his skin sheds rain.” At our misanthropic moment as it occurs. 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big puddle in the dust. I watched for at least thirty seconds, and I couldn’t help thinking, “Wow, what an allegory!”

The point of my anecdote is this: till now in our consideration of matter, we haven’t made a distinction between fine arts and liberal arts, but now we must lest we accused of creating unnecessary confusion. Expositionically, the liberal arts has always been a stem of education covering the arts, the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. A liberal arts education, something we Calvin are quite devoted to, allows the student to acquire a knowledge the significant relationships between various disciplines, an understanding of the methodologies those disciplines, and an acquaintancesn with alternative approaches to the same subject matter.

On the other hand, the fine arts invoke the inner voice of humanity in the making and performing of beautiful products that appeal to mankind’s aesthetic tastes and emotions. Generally speaking, the function of the fine arts is to display the intended messages, to capture and envelope a unique quality of beauty, and ultimately to pluck at the aesthetic harpstrings of the human heart.

Aesthetic beauty—how can one appropriately define it? It remains an eternal and proverbial question. Beauty is altogether a unique concept, yet it embodies many universal characteristics. It is, however, a most elusive and subjective phenomenon. The question is posed: Why are some individuals engrossed by a work of art, while at the same time that work strikes within another individual a much more discordant note?

Admittedly, the artist’s intent is often inconsistent with what are perceived to be the norms of society, i.e. art does not necessarily portray beauty or issue a pleasing stimulant, for the artist may choose instead to arouse an audience negatively, perhaps to a degree of shock. As Richard Wagner once said, “I shall write a peppery article on the theatre of the future [for]... my task is this: to bring revolution wherever I go.”

Wagner achieved this revolution by throwing art into a state of confusion, confronting both reality and unreality. As Jacques Barzun has put it: “Art for art’s sake... gave way to life for art’s sake.”

In a few minutes you college-age adults will be entering the realm that the modern world calls the fine arts. Heretofore, you have been preparing for this task. From your first stages of pre-pubescent dawdling and on through the experimentation and transition of the adolescent years, your tastes were nurtured, bringing them to their present oracle of unmatched prowess. This year you will be presented with a variety of art which may take the form of music, drama, poetry, or extra-terrestrial skill. You, the audience, are to ingest, interpret, analyze, and reflect on the things you see and hear. This is my challenge for you this year. Thank you.
In the old days
a man slew animals in various manners
and inhabited their skins
Or he slew trees and stones
and lived among their still sturdy frames
Later he would convince the animals
by reward of food, constriction of chain,
and threat of death
to stay with him
he would persuade the wood and coal to
sacrifice themselves
as burnt offering
All this for the inner fire
But he never found
such willing warmth, Thoreau,
as this water bottle filled with blood.

—Tom VanVillig
I love the beginning of a school year. The enthusiasm and joy of students and profs are contagious. But there's a hazard. For colleges, Christian ones too, are not aven. As in any other place, one can starve herself spiritually.

For all I know, Elijah never went to college. But what happened to him, a spiritual giant, can happen to any of us this year. He got in a spiritual slump so severe that he wanted to quit—quit his work, quit his friends, quit his God, quit life itself. Read I Kings 19 sometime. That was in an awful predicament.

In this little essay I propose to analyze Elijah's problem and offer some preventives so that we, while riding the exciting crest of a year just begun, may not lose our balance and sink as he did.

Elijah was a busy man, far busier than any of us will ever be this year. He was a defender of God's honor before Ahab and Israel, both of whom couldn't make up their minds. Who would it be: Jehovah or Baal? Elijah worked tirelessly to keep the nation on track. Finally, the hour for the showdown on Mt. Carmel arrived. We all know the outcome: the lightweight prophets of Baal never had a chance. Elijah, though standing alone, won hands down. He is delirious with joy, but twenty-four hours later, having heard Jezebel's threats, he is so depressed that he wants to die.

Why is this stalwart victor now paralyzed before the terrors of one pagan woman when a day before not even 450 of her prophets could make him flinch? It was the problem of imbalance, one of the most frequent tripwires of good prophets and excellent college students. Let me explain.

It's easy to become lopsided in college. We forget that God made us delicately complex persons, a combination of bodies, emotions, relationships, etc. If we neglect one aspect, we run the risk of throwing the others badly out of kilter. Take, for example, a college's strong—and quite superficial—emphasis on hitting the books. It is, after all, an academic institution dedicated to shaping the life of the mind. But tax and rigorously discipline your mind to the neglect of the other sides of your person—your notional, social, and spiritual—and you'll become a rong candidate for a spiritual slump and depression.

Again, overemphasize, as Elijah did, the busy, active, antically Martha-like side of your life to the exclusion of the quiet, meditative, reflective Mary-like side, and you'll run stuck.

The problem is that most of us in college—students to be sure, but professors, too—tend to jump between extremes. We flip-flop wildly back and forth. Rather than establishing a proper and finely-honed rhythm, we throw ourselves so furiously into our studies for a time that we can no longer take it, and then replace the books by a mad and thorough pursuit of friends and pleasure. Then, sated and weary from overindulging in this area, we turn to still another. And, amid the press and pursuit of these many competing centers of activity, we try to slip in edgewise a few minutes for God. After all, He deserves His due, at least before we eat.

Don't think that it's the doing of sins, as opposed to virtues, which causes the imbalance and makes us lopsided. Sins may cause it, but so can virtues. Take Elijah, for example. He committed no overt breaking of one of God's rules which then landed him in his slump. Far from it. It was rather the doing of a good thing to excess, in his case prophesying, which tripped him up and trips many of us too. To adapt Jesus' parable, wheat has a way of becoming weeds when sown too thickly.

What am I proposing to keep us out of any potential slump? I suggest that we with His aid begin this year to introduce some balance into our over-extended and lopsided lives. Notice what God did when Elijah was caught up in the vise-grip of spiritual depression. He didn't come with a quick ready-to-hand Bible text to cheer him up; He didn't ask him to pray; He didn't force him to go to church; He didn't ask about Elijah's quiet times; He didn't inquire about his devotional life. God did something quite uncomplicated and unspiritual: He put Elijah to sleep, and, when he arose, He fed him, as if to say, "Elijah, you're neglecting your basic needs as you try so feverishly to serve me. Now sit still and restore some balance to your scattered and senselessly busy—and quite religious—life!"

May I as one of your college chaplains be so bold as to recommend some vitamins for maintaining a balanced life as we hit the books again this year? Here they are: Nutrition, Exercise, Relaxation, Attitude.

Dale Cooper is "the man with the open office." As one of Calvin's chaplains, he spends many hours talking with students in his Commons annex home. We all wonder: how did he have time to write this article?
Listening, Scripture, Friendship, Celebration. Try your own hand at expanding the list.

Nutrition: More and more, doctors are coming to realize how vital proper eating habits are to the life of the mind. You know it by experience. If you stuff yourself before going to the library, you'll fall asleep. If you deprive yourself of good food, in the long run your mind runs dry. Be careful about eating this year; establish good habits. It can affect your performance. Caffeine and nicotine freaks are just that.

Exercise: It's all been said before, and far more eloquently, by the physical education instructors, but as one who is called to practice and to proclaim the discipline of the spiritual dimension of our lives, I must add that regular exercise has for me been an important component of my spiritual growth.

Relaxation: For some academics (Christian ones too, I might add) to relax is forbidden fruit. They pretend one ought to feel guilty for taking it easy and savoring how beautiful and delicious are a useless few moments or hours. Not so. More and more, production-oriented scholars must learn the usefulness of the useless and not think that time is wasted unless one is fully riveted to the books. In this connection, may I encourage us all to cultivate the routine of a weekly sabbath? Our bodies, minds, and spirits require the rhythm. God knows this; He gave it to us -- as a gift. We ignore it at our peril.

Attitude: In Philippians 4:8, Paul commands his readers to dwell upon what is "true, lovely, and of good report." We are to meditate on these things, keep them in our mouths, taste them again and again, and twirl them around in our minds. We are not to jerk the negatives in our lives out of perspective trite but so true that we need each other for each of us to live fully and well. Cultivate a positive mental attitude is a daily discipline, a vital component in our spiritual growth.

Listening: For jabberers such as we are, listening is hard to do. We must listen to others, to God, even to ourselves. To listen is not easy. It's hard work and takes discipline. Mary at the feet of Jesus was no less busy than Martha in the kitchen, as Henry Zylstra reminds us in his Testament of Vision. But listening is vital.

Listening is a component of genuine prayer, for genuine praying takes its starting point in God, not in ourselves. So often our praying takes the form of talking to God, not with Him. We issue Him our mandates desires, allowing Him scarcely to get a word in edgewise to us. The Psalmist rouses his own soul to listening: "My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62:1). Begin to practice discipline of spending daily some brief but precious moments alone with God, for to obey God requires we hear Him.

How can college students do this? May I suggest you begin to use the psalms as aids to devotion. Read them rather as prayers, your prayer, to God, the psalmist's powerful words become yours as you enter God's presence.

Another good aid listening to God is regular and reflective reading of a devotional book. Go for the very most -- only one of them per day. Read slowly, meditatively, and well, pausing to consider the words or phrases which have special significance for you at that moment. In this setting, them not as treatises for study, analysis, and dissect; read them rather as prayers, your prayer, to God. The psalmist's powerful words become yours as you enter God's presence.

Friendship: Having mentioned above some way use the Scripture as means to our growth, I shall further mention here and comment upon friendship. It is trite but so true that we need each other for each of us to live fully and well. Cultivate a wide acquaintance of many people; develop a deep friendship with four to six friends; friendship can lend sparkle, color, and zest to our lives, in turn to theirs. Joy shared is always joy multiplied; pain shared is pain divided. Amid all your single pursuits, remember that God calls us to live as persons in community, never as individuals in isolation. It is good for you to be alone.

Celebration: So few of us really know how to revel in life and celebrate it for the good gift that it really is. It is often go at it so grimly and routinely, as though it were complicated drill. We clobber our spirits again and again with the negative and overlook—oh, the sheer ing...
The myriad little and big things for which God and others deserve our most appropriate thanks. The scriptures encourage us to develop a thankful spirit and hence to be joyful. This is a command, something addressed to our wills. We are to practice the "discipline of celebration," as Richard Foster puts it so aptly.

But how? Let me suggest several ways. First, make it your goal this year to take joy in the simple and excellent things in life. Try to find at least one incident or person or thing each day which you can seize with delight and for which you can thank God. It will insulate our spirit against meanness and brittle callousness.

Second, turn routine events into times of celebration. It may be your meal with friends in the dining hall, or a good lecture you attended, or your oratorio practice, your band rehearsal, your intramural game, your jogging—whatever it is, deliver it from the routine and go at it with gusto. Begin to think of it as an instrument of praise.

Third, celebrate, really celebrate, special occasions. A roommate’s birthday, Christmas and Easter, the conclusion of exams, graduation—the times for thorough celebration are never too many. Jesus came to bring us joy (John 15:11), and a sour-faced person, as someone once said, is the crowning success of the evil one. On the contrary, joy, as Chesterton once remarked, is the infallible proof of the presence of God. Except we become as little children, even in our celebrating, we’re never going to see the kingdom of God (Matthew 18:3).

Ludwig Feuerbach’s famous dictum, "Man ist was er esst (One is what he eats)," the heart of materialist, communist philosophy, is, of course, not true. Nor is it, however, wholly untrue. For, applying it to our purposes, in a sense one can become more than the woman or man God intended her or him to be by ingesting the health-giving vitamins of proper nutrition, exercise, sufficient relaxation, attitude, listening, Scripture, friendship, and celebration.

Ars Departmentica
(To Ken—and all chairmen—on his "headship")

A head should be
pliable and mute
As a soft fruit
Dumb
When we talk to 'im
Accept without question
Each suggestion
Praise
All our eccentric ways
Work
Even though we shirk
Above all . . .
He should agree
With me

—Henrietta TenHarmsel
(With apologies to A. MacLeish)
are hard.
As part of the final exam last semester in Modern Poetry (English 313), Professor J.H. Timmerman wrote the beginning of a story which his students had to complete. Here is that beginning and some of the educational and entertaining endings.

It was a sweltering June day, one of those days that starts out hot and intensifies as the day goes on. A middle-aged woman groaned her way into the laundromat ("Gert's Laundromat: Cleanest Clothes a Quarter Will Buy"!), her hefty figure nearly hidden behind an overflowing basket of dirty wash. A box of Tide tumbled out, and she kicked it awkwardly toward a washing machine. The box left a wavering trail of white granules against a wet floor. Unraveling the maze in the laundry basket, the woman muttered unimaginative curses at the soiled garments. Next to her a young man sat on the edge of his thrumming machine, reading poetry. The machine clanged and gurgled a kind of counterbeat measure. Moved by a line from his text, the young man read it several times aloud. On the third reading, the woman stood back aghast, mouth gape as if slowly into the recesses of her mind it occurred to her what the young man was doing. She sputtered for a moment then found the words:

"What's that?" she crowed. He read the line again. "Not those words; I heard them the first time. Whad'ya think, I'm deaf or something? I mean, what is it?"

"Poetry, ma'am."

"Poetry. Poetry! What's things comin' to? Poetry won't get no wash done."

"But I like it."

"Like it? But what use is it?" she cried.

"Does it have to be good for something?"

"Don't be stupid," the lady answered pragmatically. "A body's already got so much to do just keeping the clothes clean and food on the table to take time out for something that won't do anything for you anyway. Poetry doesn't feed kids or give the husband his supper or clean the house or make the mother-in-law feel better if you haven't seen her in a month. I just don't have time for something as worthless as poetry."

"But ma'am," responded the young man. "Poetry never said it would do anything like that. Poets have never said their poems would do everything you don't have time for. Poets never said their works would make life easier. But poetry can be fun. It provides you with a new way of looking at things you see around you every day. Take the Tide you spilled on the floor, for instance. What do you see?"

"Twenty-five cents wasted."

"Exactly," continued the young man. "But in that trail of Tide a poet can see much more. He can see a woman, overburdened with clothes, going about her daily duty of love. He can see the children and husband at home who expect the woman to keep their clothes clean. He can, if he looks hard enough, see a whole trail of humans in that trail of Tide, and he can picture the lives each of these people and why they come to the laundromat."

"So what? That still would be worthless—I'd never read it. A poet could just as well have stayed in bed that day. Besides, probably would have used them high-falutin' words nobody understands anyway."

"Poetry tries to speak to every one today. Poets—good ones at least—don't use words people can't relate to. The purpose of poetry isn't to sound impressive, it's to help the reader live what the poet is describing. You should read Robert Frost. He always wanted people to enjoy his poetry, and by enjoying it, learn something from it. He has"
"But," replied the lady, "poets always write like everything's just right. They don't see the Tide on the floor and figure it would have one more load; they don't feel the heat, and they didn't stay up half the night with a sick kid."

"Oh no, ma'am," the man quickly responded. "Poetry speaks to reality today. Sometimes poets use awful words and are very harsh to their readers. You should read some of Sylvia Plath's works. That lady had all problems and ended up killing herself. Her dad let an infection spread and died from it. Her husband left her and went out hasing other women, leaving her with the two kids. Her poem "Daddy" is awful; there's rage and hurt and hopelessness in it. I can cry every time I read it. And some of the war poems are bad, too. Owen wrote about bureaucracy, but he applies it to nature. So he says the things you've never seen before, or
taken in time and was sick with gas Jones."

"What good would that poem do me? I don't know what the title means."

"But there are footnotes to tell you things like that. Poets try to deal with things around them that concern them. e.e. cummings is pretty cool. He talks about bureaucracy, but he applies it to nature. So he says the next thing you know we'll have.

"The Fathers"; you can hear the people talking. A lot of black poets like Hughes are easy to read, too. Most people don't realize that poets divide their lines for a reason, but when you read the lines you do what the poet wants you to without thinking about it. Besides, poets use pictures to help you understand what they're saying. Remember when I talked about Sylvia Plath? She uses a picture of a cut telephone wire to say that all communication around her is cut off. Berryman uses a ball falling in the water to symbolize childhood."

"You just lost me—I hate symbols. Nobody around here ever understands symbols."

"Sure you do. Most of the pictures you read of in poetry are symbols, but you never even know they are. What do you think of when you see a little child running around a farm on a sunny day?"

"I wish I was little and could do that again."

"Okay, then you see the child as a part of the youth you no longer have. Thus the child is a symbol of youth and, in your case, lost youth. Maybe you can think of poetry as a kind of vacation. You know how nice it is to go away for awhile and then come back home. Especially if you do some sight-seeing you can come back home with something totally new. And when you come home, you're always glad to be home again—you know, "Home, Sweet Home" and "There's no place like home." Well, poets sort of try to get you to take a little vacation. They help you see things you've never seen before, or at least things you see every day but don't really notice.

"Take the old guy in the park who's always trying to sell your kids ice cream. You probably get sick of harrassing with the kids about whether or not they need the ice cream and about you not having any money. Well, e.e. cummings wrote about a man sort of like that—this guy has a bum leg—who sells balloons. Kids are probably always coming to ask their mom for balloon money. But cummings likes this guy and makes everyone else like him too because he says this man means that spring and freshness is here, and it also shows the healthiness of the kids who can run around in the sun and puddles (which you consider a pain because they mean dirt and more washing)."

"Sort of like that Tide stuff you were talking about?"

"Yeah—I think you're getting it. Say, would you like to borrow my book? It's a book by Langston Hughes, and it's quite simple. I think you'd like it."

"Thanks young man, but if I read anything, I should probably read the paper. Besides, I hate to borrow things from strangers. I might not see you again or the dog might eat it. You were quite interesting, though. I can't believe my wash is already done."

—Sandy Scott

"Well," said the young man as he pulled out his Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry and his English 313 class notes, "there are many reasons why it is good—and useful, too. The woman put the rest of her children's grungy socks in the washer along with a cupful of Tide and a few curses. Still staring at the young man, she sat down heavily.

"Well?" she said, "Go ahead then—explain it to me, but do it before my laundry reaches the spin cycle, o.k.?" He smiled and opened his notes.

"It's like this..."

"Many authors we've read over the semester have special traits which they exemplify. Perhaps every poet has a niche of some kind, and perched in this niche the poet may comment on life as he sees it, giving probing insights as he goes. Yet he can do more than just observe from his niche. Every chance he gets he may sing out about his own feelings, preoccupations, world and life views, and anger or indignation."

"Many poets are affirmative of life and against any spirit of negation, like e.e. cummings, for example. His poetry rejoices in things like seasons, and he rejoices in people and religion. Moreover, cummings wants to make poetry fun. He uses the whole space on a page as part of his poem."

"E. A. Robinson also has a
sarcastic, playful attitude, but he does something else extremely well.
He gauges human life for us. Robinson creates an entire menagerie of curious
characters in "Tilbury Town." He gives us Eben Flood, Bewick Finzer, Richard Cory, and
Miniver Cheevy. "Tilbury Town" is "everytown," and Robinson's insights help us understand
depth emotional feelings people have even in the lowest circumstances.

"Other poets have more somber
things to tell us. T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," 
"Geronton," and The Wasteland all work together to explain the
dried spiritual nature of man and the lack of communication or action in the world. Nevertheless, Eliot gives a
beautiful blessing, too, at the end of "Little Gidding."

"Many poets tell us about what it's like to be a different color. Brooks
paints sympathetic pictures of her society in "Sadie and Maud" and her poem about "nothing but a poor
black boy." Cullen seems bewildered at the race problem:
"Yet do I marvel at this curious thing: To make a poet black and bid
him sing." McKay's poem "If We Must Die" speaks nobly about the
black race, and he has insight into the true lives blacks live beyond
their stereotypes. Others, though, like Don Lee, speak in the tough
language of the streets, defying the white critics to say anything
meaningful about his poems. Lee's tone is more indignant and militant.

"Poetry is useful because it takes
us to places we will never go—or even want to go to, in some cases.
For example, we can learn about the
harsh realities of war from Jarrell's "Ball Turret Gunner." MacLeish can
tell us how the propaganda romanticizes war in "Memorial Rain." Many of the war poets are angry, too—at you and me, perhaps—at those who would talk
about the honor of serving in the war as we sit around at the club.

"Some poets stir excitement
inside of us with their diction and rhythms. Dylan Thomas can tell us
that "Death Shall Have No
Dominion" as we sit spellbound in
our seats. Perhaps we can be more selective, though, and sit in our arm
chairs by a fire with a slim volume of
Frost's poems. We can learn about the
subtleties of beast and man in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," or we can learn about the
curious walls people build in "Mending Wall."

"Yet one of the greatest things a
poet can do for us is to sympathize with us. I don't mean sympathize in a
gaudy, sentimental way, but I mean sympathize in a way James Dickey
sympathizes with mankind; in the "Lifeguard" Dickey uses his
"dangling man" motif, and he knows how to explain that alone, detached
feeling everyone experiences at some time or another.

"What's the use of poetry? All
these authors found uses for it; what would we do without it is what I ask.
Can we never write what stirs around and inside us?"

"O.k.—o.k., I get your point." The
woman was standing now and smiling at the picture of the young
man lecturing from atop the washing machine. "What I want to know," she
questioned, "is whether you believe
all that you've said to me."
The young man smiled as he slid
down from the washing machine, neatly closing his book as he
moved. He smiled back at her. "Believe it?" he said. "I'm turning all
this in on an exam—so I better believe it." He turned and walked out
the door and went home to write the
world's greatest poem.

—Todd Soule

"Same use as the newspaper," the
quick-thinking lad replied, hoping to catch the woman's
curiosity.

"The newspaper? That stuff with
all the funny rhymes? The newspaper has stories about what's going on—and pictures besides."

Hardly knowing where to begin,
the student plunged in. After all, any conversation that had lasted this
long was here to stay. "Well, ma'am, poems may not have pictures, but they certainly do talk about what's going on. Take Siegfried Sassoon, for instance . . ."

"You can skip all those fancy
names 'cause they don't mean nothin' to me."

"Take him anyway. He was a
man who had fought in a war, so he kn
what it was really like to be a soldier. It bothered him that other people made war sound so wonderful, he wrote poems about what it really like."

"Hmm, I've always kin
wondered if those reporters w
tellin' the truth."

"And this same guy wrote about
how much soldiers miss the li
things back home when they're
stuck in trenches with rats and rain."

"I never thought of it that way.
"But I'll bet you'd like to shut
some of those big-wigs who always talking about spend
money or our duty to help o
people kill each other."
The woman's first silent re
lame in the form of a resolute n

"So did one poet. He wrote ab
a politician who didn't quit talking it started to rain on his speech. B
was that poet glad for rain."

"O.K., but the war's over now.
What about life here in 1983?"

"Well, lots of poets are writ
about how things have chang
recently. Especially black po
They talk about how at first blac
had to write like whites. But n
blacks can write about anythi
Sometimes they even make it so like blues or jazz instead of j
words."

"But sometimes my neighb
talk so funny. I wonder if I could e
understand somebody who wr
like that."

"Would you believe—a poet even
wrote about that. He tells ab
writing a paper about himself
English. He doesn't know quite h
to do it so he can really tell ab
himself and still please his wr
teacher."
The woman turned to machines again to see if perh
the "unbalance" light had gone
The boy realized he would ne a
kicker to keep her int
"Poetry is a lot like TV too, know."

"Oh yeah? How's that?" Succe
"Well, TV shows how other peo
live. They let you get an idea of w
makes other folks tick. Poetry do
the same thing."

"Like what?"

"Well, ever wonder why a per
night want to kill himself? Some poets even clue you in on that. They let you know how a person sees the world as so bad that he wants to end it all.

"That's pretty bad. I've felt bad in my day, but never that bad."

"A lady—a mom with laundry just like you—did. She had a mean ather, a husband who messed around, and she wrote all about those awful things that were happening to her."

Hmm....

"And a man named James Dickey wrote about how he felt like a 'dangling man' sometimes, like somebody caught between the spiritual world and physical reality."

As soon as he'd said it, the young man knew he'd gone too far. The dydy began pushing a metal cart toward her first washerful of clean clothes. He'd have to remember to think about dropping those names; his audience today was hardly impressionable. As he watched her unload the heavy clothes, he began to swe.

"What don't you like about poetry?"

"Oh, I guess all that high falutin' language. And most of them poems are strange and about stuff I don't care about."

"Lots of people today feel the same way you do. They've started using ordinary language."

"And what about..."

"Just a second. I've got to dump another quarter in my dryers. Don't forget your question."

When the boy returned the lady debated beginning a conversation about the length of a quarter's drying time, but instead she continued her question. "But what about the stuff those poems talk about?"

"Believe it or not, many poems are about things we all care about. Like someone dying. One man wrote about his sick father. The son didn't want his dad to give up and die, so he wrote a poem to encourage his dad."

"My dad died...," the lady quietly mused.

"And another man wrote about picking apples. Anyone who's done that can understand picking apples in his sleep. And Robinson, uh, somebody else wrote poems about people in a small town and about how everyone knows everyone else."

"But what about some Elot guy? One of my friends read some of that and I couldn't make heads or tails of it."

"Elot? Oh, maybe Eliot?"

"Whatever. What about him?"

"O.k., maybe you won't like everybody. I didn't ever care for Eliot that much myself. But you've got to start out with something easier and work up to it—just like you don't give a baby steak to eat. You start him on something soft, so he'll like to eat."

"Like what?"

Resisting the urge to bring up "The Emperor of Ice Cream," the boy chose cummings instead. "Well, there's one poet who doesn't ever use punctuation. He writes about stuff everyone knows about: young kids, spring days, and how animals are sometimes kinder than people."

"Hmm. Why don't you write her name down for me. Maybe I'll go to the library and see if they've got any of that." With this, the woman turned resolutely to her laundry, heavy whites in one cart, colors in another.

As the young man wrote "e.e. cummings" on a corner of his notebook paper and tore it out, he gulped down a smile. He didn't think the conversation would last even as long as it did. He had inserted quite a few words in edgewise. Besides, his laundry was all dry, and folding it the way his mom had shown him required all his concentration. "I only wish my English professor could have heard that," he mused to himself. "I'd surely get credit for that defense of poesy." —Mary Boerman

**World's End**

*What happens when worlds end?*"

The little boy who held his father's hand wondered as they walked in dusk where slanted light made ghosts of trees. Does fire charge the land?"

**Is father smiled—**

fierce destructive end might seem appropriate for his troubled world. But the only end that he had known as a quiet change to brown from green.)

They walked below awakening stars:

*Will there be thunder and light?*"

The little boy asked, because the stars seemed armed with sharpness, "when the end strikes us swiftly in the night?"
Challenged and Changed by Chicago

by Sharon Watson

"Society," said Dr. Donna Spaan, "is becoming increasingly secular, moving steadily towards a post-Judeo-Christian world." She paused, her bright, intense eyes scanning the faces before her. "You professionals are going to have to be the tools to transform our culture, the minds that rethink how Christianity can make our world a more humane one. Your time in Chicago should show you your part in this process."

The meeting room in the Palmer House was still a moment as some thirty students tried to figure out if they were in the right place. I was certainly a little confused. No one at Calvin had mentioned transforming culture. I was in Chicago to do some sort of journalism internship, to make contacts, to brighten my resume', and I knew that the kids around me had similar motivations. So what on earth was Donna talking about? Yet I was soon to find that such strong, idealistic, challenging words as those above were a specialty of Donna Spaan and the Chicago Metropolitan Center.

The Center is administered by Trinity Christian College and is sponsored by Calvin, Hope, Dordt, Northwestern College and Central. Students from these colleges are placed in internships that correspond to their major field of study. The placements may range from working in an alcoholic rehabilitation program to learning the computer system at a large financial corporation. Students do not receive a salary, but are given full college credit along with practical experience—a much valued commodity in today's work market.

The Chicago Metropolitan Center is much more than an introduction to the workplace, however. In addition to guiding interns through their entry into business, Spaan and her staff lead interns to a new awareness of their beliefs, values, and roles as Christians in a troubled society. This formidable task is made only slightly easier by Spaan's unflagging faith in the group of pale-faced novices who cling to her during the first days of orientation. "You're all good kids," she would say, "but you need to be more assertive. You have talents and skills just like other people, but sell yourselves short. You can't waste your potential that way, though; each of you must exercise your brain more, think through your beliefs and how you as a Christian will make a contribution to the world."

Donna's words were sometimes hard to believe as we muddled our way through the first weeks of our internships, trying hard to look poised and unhurried during the morning rush hour (a feat most Chicagoans don't even bother to attempt), cautiously exploring State Street and dodging murderous cabbies on lunch hours, braving the crush of the "el" trains and subways at night. But as new thrills wore into routine, we found our real challenges were in dealing with Metro Center's courses: the VaI Seminar, the Fine Arts Seminar, and the Metropolitan Seminar.

The Metropolitan Seminar, led Dr. David Claerbaut, is really a acquainted session with Chicago. Under Claerbaut, we toured Gold Coast with its Magnificent Mile then drove a mere block to view crumbling tenements of Cabr Green, one of Chicago's large housing projects. He also show us evidence of the various lifestyle on the North Side—the gay bars, tarot rooms, galleries, boutiques, bookshops, theatres, etc., that form the character of that half of the c

For some interns these tours were a highlight of their stay in Chicago. Others found in them reasons to scoot back to Holland or Pella as soon as the semester was over. Claerbaut is a firm believer that Christians have a God-given responsibility to minister to the area he good-naturedly and thoroughly teased those students who found Lincoln Park and New too artsy and racy for their liking. Those students who thought the Metropolitan Seminar too inter found the Fine Arts Seminar n

unbearable. Once again we had a wide variety of experiences: Orchestra Hall, the Auditorium Theatre, and the Art Institute were our classrooms; Solti, Baryshnikov and Pollock were our instructors. But it was Donna Spaan who pulled the course together for us—it challenged some of us to the breaking point.

Donna is a unique professor that she is willing to learn from her students. She encouraged us to free with our impressions and reflections, to question h
Generally, to say whatever we wished. Although her openness was approved of at first, eventually class sessions got very quiet, and Donna was outspoken as to what she thought was the cause of our lack of enthusiasm.

"Your minds are lazy. Most of you have been so sheltered and protected as to never have been confronted with ideas different from our own. What you don't understand—lifestyles, art, music, and so on—isn't worth understanding. And that's utter nonsense. How can you transform culture—let alone fitness—when you hide on your campuses and then hide in your mall towns? You must understand the world you live in if you are to take a Christian response to it."

That speech, and others like it, didn't go over very well. No one likes to be told his mind is mushy. Still, a few candid people did admit that they had gone through a number of their courses without considering how the material fit into their Christian framework. All they had done was take notes and write bluebooks. And as Spaan puts it, "That's memorization, not learning. Yet it is a habit to young people like you to process information, analyze and evaluate it, then accept or refute it. His must happen if we Christians are going to fight secularism in the world and keep it out of our churches."

For the skeptics who didn't believe that was a valid Christian mandate, Donna caught them out in the final course: the Values Seminar. In that class we were required to write a paper outlining our values, i.e., the qualities or characteristics in ourselves or in other people that we wanted to develop or emulate. All of us ranked our faith as our number one value. That was where Donna had us.

Although she never put it in so many words, Donna did intimate that since Christ had commanded us to witness and to develop our gifts, to do anything less was to disobey Him and was also a slam against our integrity. Her definition of "anything less" was failing to develop our minds, being afraid to challenge and to be challenged.

In the end, not everyone was willing to pick up this gauntlet. I don't think anyone managed to completely escape Chicago's or Donna's influence although some built very strong walls against both. Some, however, saw Chicago as a new beginning for the rest of their lives. As one Metro alumna puts it, "The whole Metro program made me a much more open-eyed person. I don't run out and buy books or theatre tickets quite as much as Donna would like, but at least I'm not blind to the diversity in the world anymore. Even if I don't always like it, I know how to respond to it and I think it's one of God's blessings to us."

Certain of these students left Metro annoyed with themselves that they had let three or four years of college go by without much of it making an impression on them. Donna's condolences for such people are simple and apply to everyone: "The Chicago Experience is a lifelong process—and it need not begin in Chicago. All of your education and life experiences can contribute to your knowledge of who you are and how you'll help the Church transform culture. Each day is a learning experience, each friend a catalyst for ideas, each class the means to strengthen your Christian understanding of the world. We all have the mandate to discover how we can use our minds and gifts to a Christian purpose, and we all must consciously carry out that mandate each day."

Thus some thirty-odd students left the Chicago Metropolitan Center last semester with practical experience, impressive résumés, and some new awareness—great or small—of what it means to be effective Christians in the world today. Donna never said it would be easy, but it is much more fulfilling and joyous to live life as a "wide-awake" person than to reluctantly blunder from one core course to the next. Calvin may not seem as exciting as Chicago on the surface, but there is as much to be learned and conquered here as anywhere else. That may be a thought to ponder when the buoying excitement of the new school year starts to wear off.
The beginning of another year

Why Are You Here?

by Patricia Westerhof

I got into many discussions and arguments this past summer. I discuss and argue a lot during the school year too, but my summer's discussions weren't the witty, playfully vicious arguments of Calvin students—the thoroughly enjoyable kind that generally have few noticeable results. Instead, the discussions I had this summer were painful. I and my beliefs were the main topics, and I often felt like a rare and ugly insect being examined by exterminators. The strange part is that my co-workers did not try to tear me apart for what I believe; that I am a Christian didn't seem to bother them. But they were puzzled and irritated by the fact that after having attended Christian schools all my life, I now go to a Christian college. "What's wrong with Canadian colleges and universities?" one man demanded. "You couldn't get accepted into university?" a woman suggested. So then I launched into the spiel about developing a world-and-life view and preparing for a life of service. . . . They met these catch phrases with suspicious stares. I was ready to try again when one of my co-workers burst out, "If you think you've got things straight, if you think you know how to solve people's problems, then why not go to a university where you can do something with what you believe and start helping now?"

My co-workers caused me to think hard this summer, but, obviously, I'm at Calvin again, back at this sheltered little school where most people believe the same as I do. Why did I return? Because shining knights riding out into a despairing world to do kingdom work don't accomplish much. People's lives are a mess, but bubbly, over-eager Christians working alone can't clean them up. My enthusiasm soon weakened this summer when co-workers who knew their theology as well as I did directed their cynicism and despair at me.

But I'm not here because I failed this summer or because I think I couldn't cope in a secular school.

Attending Calvin isn't a cop-out. I'm here for the same reasons for which I was here last year: to develop a Christian world-and-life-view and to prepare for a life of service. The difference this year is that now I've thought about what those reasons for being here mean.

We all know that we go to school in order to develop our minds. At Calvin we are exposed to new ideas and philosophies by Christian thinkers—and because professors are Christian, the tendency immediately shut out any ideas different than those with which we have been brought up is lessened. There is no need to be on the defensive here; we can sort through ideas calm, unthreatened way. Thus, here we are taught to think.

I stated that I am here to prepare for a life of service and a great part of that preparation is the developing

Perhaps Calvin College somewhat like a cocoon.

the mind. But there is more to it than that. I can know sort of facts, I can have learned how to think, I can have a close relationship with the Lord; yet if I went into the world, I probably would still feel like a helpless insect and end up crawling back into a cocoon. It doesn't mean for his people to work alone. At Calvin we learn what it means to be part of the body of Christ. Calvin is a Christian community, that is, a place where the majority of people are not "leading lives of qi desperation," a place where people can develop faith and learn what place they have in the body of Christ, a place where people can depend on the stability provided by community. Perhaps Calvin College is somewhat like a cocoon. Our responsibility here is the this: to eat, to grow, and to do what we can to keep the environment stable. When we have learned how function and serve in a Christian community, we will be prepared to go out, equipped with the support of community and the knowledge we have gained. When I leave Calvin, I will have learned how to serve.

Pat Westerhof, one of Dialogue's token Canadians, does not smoke, but she does wear a blue-jean jacket.
In Review

This year's Dialogue will not review books on the current best sellers list. Instead, Dialogue brings to the reader older classics and books on subjects appropriate for any era because these books should not be lost in the contemporary shuffle.


Ever since her poems were published posthumously around the turn of the century, Emily Dickinson has elicited various and changing responses toward her poetry from readers. While she was yet alive she was most commonly known as the “white-clad recluse,” and the publication of her poems seemed to verify her oddness. Her writing style was markedly apart from that of her contemporaries and predecessors because it displayed a keen psychological insight which was handled in a blunt, unpretentious, and—best (or worst) of all—unapologetic way.

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born on December 10, 1883, in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her grandfather was a leading figure in the founding of Amherst College, where her father served as a trustee for forty years. Emily was educated at Amherst Academy and went for one year to South Hadley Girls' School. Apart from a few trips to Boston and one trip to Washington and Philadelphia, Emily never left Amherst. It was rare for her even to leave the house, and it is for this reason that her reputation as an oddity grew. She may have been "odd" in that she did not associate with many people apart from her immediate family and close friends, but it was her preference to remain alone. She disliked the superficialities of social engagements and much desired the solitude of home life where she could put of her energy towards reading and writing. Her love of books and words is uniquely expressed in one of her poems:

He ate and drank the precious words
His spirit grew robust
He knew no more that he was poor
Nor that his frame was frail
He danced along the din
And this Bequest of Win
Was but a Book—What life
A loosened Spirit brings!

Perhaps it is because Dickinson shunned society rather than let society shun her that has gained superiority in her reputation. Karl Keller, author of The Kangaroo Among the Beauty (Emily coined for herself) gives Dickinson her due respect as a and a unique person in a refr ingly different study on her. He her the most prominent positiv America's literary history and pares the work other leading wr to her insightful, succinct pc Keller unhesitatingly announces introduction that "Ameri literature cannot be defined wit her" and goes on to inform reader that his study is an attempt "demolish the stereotype of E Dickinson the Recluse." His me of comparing Dickinson, in turn, several notable American write done in order to "restore multiplicity, ambiguity, complexy . . . ."

Keller states three addit intentions for his study as well:
to define Puritan aesthetics. He feels that Emily Dickinson presents Puritan aesthetics in a far more detached manner than her precursors and, therefore, gives a "moribund" and more "observable" nature of it. Keller's second intention is "to fix Emily Dickinson's essence among her American contemporaries a little more firmly." A third is to prove her as an example of teaching her successors, particularly those of the twentieth century, how to write. Such convictions indisputably link Emily Dickinson with writers before, during, and after her time and they give Keller the assurance to hail her as indispensable to America's literary heritage. Giving reasons for such, Keller compares Dickinson with writers before, during, and after her time and thereby hails her among the best of American writers.

The Beginning of a Contest

The Tyranny of Trivia

With this issue begins Dialogue's contest of wits. Each Dialogue issue will feature a game requiring skill, insight and especially humor. Contest entries should be marked " such and deposited in the Dialogue office. (This month's entries are due on Friday, October 4.) Yes, winners will see their names and entries in lights, or at least in print. This issue's contest is two-fold. Feel free to do one part or both. On this page are listed several quotes. The first challenge is to name the author of each and in what poem, play, etc., these lines may be found. But that sort of contest is unfair to non-literary types, you say. Therefore the second part of the contest: complete the quote yourself. Your entry may be reasonable, outrageous, potential Pulitzer material, or just good for a laugh. Happy contesting!

1. "Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble . . ."
2. "When I was one-and-twenty, A wise man said to me . . ."
3. "'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves Did gyre and grumble in the wabe . . ."
4. "I know a thing that's most uncommon, . . ."
Beginning a Western Year

Handling Hunger

by Ellen DeHaan

Going away to college, a major step in our lives, requires major adjustments. Freshmen must learn to study into the wee hours of the morning, harvest fungus from the shower curtain, and survive on cafeteria food like Beef Goulash and Beef Barley Soup. This traumatic period is often filled with anxiety, but dramatic personal growth can result. Unfortunately, for many students this inner growth is accompanied by outer growth, as many of our eating habits also undergo full-scale remodeling. We girls apparently suffer the most, gaining an average of five pounds during our first year—the infamous “Freshman Five.”

Although initially overwhelmed by the cafeteria’s magnificent array of deliciously fattening foods, by our sophomore year most of us have learned to control our impulsive eating habits to some extent. Females quite often develop a set of rules for constant dieting: turn down chips and desserts; avoid sweet rolls, cakes, and pies; refuse all greasy fried objects, items requiring syrup, and any mysterious lumps covered with gravy. Instead, fill up on veggies and salads with diet dressing; drink diet pop, skim milk, water, and tea (sweetened only with saccharin); and exit through the back door to avoid grabbing the handle of the ice cream machine.

Unfortunately, knowing how to eat and actually eating that way are two different bowls of soup. Thus, we sophomores have concocted several dieting methods which allow us to have our cake and eat it too. By constantly dieting to lose the weight which we constantly gain, we can successfully maintain an equilibrium.

I. The Salad and Snack Supplement Diet

This method works especially well for girls who tend to gather and store food like chipmunks, who have difficulty studying without chewing on something, who prefer to avoid the line at the Commons, and who like other people to think they are on diets.

The diet is simple: just go straight to the front of the line, flash your meal card at the line-checker, grab a tray and fork, and make a bee-for the salad bar. Do not look like Lot’s wife.

After arriving safely at the salad bar, you may open your eyes. You will be awed by the many nutritional possibilities for decorating your lettuce: chopped egg, shredded carrots, alfalfa sprouts, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers, lentils, soy beans, mixed rooms, bean sprouts—truly a square meal in a bowl! But go easy on the bacon bits and Chinese noodles, and be sure you know which two are diet dressings. A look for cottage cheese, excellent source of protein which occasionally appears at the salad bar. With practice you can learn to love it; it’s the closest you’ll get to cream.

If, after the first salad, you still feel as if you haven’t eaten anything ahead and eat another one, when you leave, be sure to stuff your pockets with crackers for snacking later on.

Once you have mastered
sic technique, you may wish to try variations requiring additional self-control. Try checking the vegetable-jou r with one eye as you sprint. Green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, and brussel sprouts make good low-cal stomach fillers. Or check out the soup since it is eaten a safer distance from the

Broth soups have the fewestories, and creamed soups are acceptable; chili should be avoided. Fresh fruit best tops off the meal, though obtaining it may prove difficult for the novice. Usually the fruit has been interspersed among theer salads, dangerously near the

The dieter must use extreme caution not to mistake a puffed for an apple or to accidently ask for the banana pudding instead of the banana. And watch for cookies that tend to stick to your hands as you grope for the
downstairs toward the study room, the munchies attack her again. Suddenly, the candy machine spits a bag of M&M's at her. At nine p.m. the smell of popcorn permeates the hall, and her air-popper begs to join in on the action. She gives in this once, since air-popped popcorn is less fattening, as all sophomores know. She sprinkles it with water instead of melted butter to make the salt stick. At eleven she can almost hear those chocolate chip cookies breathing softly in the tupperware, so she lets them out for fresh air. Then her sugar-coated teeth request to be cleaned by a crunchy green apple, so again she obliges. After all, she only had a salad for dinner.

The Salad and Snack Supplement Diet will maintain fairly constant weight as long as the snacks consist mainly of popcorn, fruit, and crackers, with cookies and candy rationed sparingly. However, sometimes late at night, a larger snack, or "Pig-out," must be absorbed into the system. In these cases, a second dieting method is called for.

II. The Pig-out/Fast Diet

Picture this: on Thursday night, the innocent dieter returns from the library at 11:45 p.m., just in time to witness the departure of a green-vested delivery man. The entire lobby reeks of melted mozzarella and pepperoni. She races upstairs to avoid the smell, but it only gets stronger. Outside a door she crouches, listening to the "ooohs" and "aaaahs" and the smacking of lips. It's too much. She and her roommate order a thick-crust combination pizza and devour two-thirds of it by morning. She vows never to eat so much again and decides to make up for it by skipping breakfast and maybe lunch too. And for dinner she'll have only a salad, right? Wrong. She only says that to relieve her guilt, but she knows she'll eat dinner and probably lunch too. And she will eat that much again, maybe even more.

The next Saturday night she refills her plate three times at the Sveden House, but then she sleeps through Sunday breakfast and lunch. Monday night she inhales four-and-a-half donuts at the floor party, but then she studies through Tuesday's breakfast. And then, two nights later, her suitemates order pizza, starting the whole cycle over again. Although her weight seems to fluctuate as much as ten pounds at one sitting, she somehow manages to keep it steady from week to week by fasting through several meals.
Some may find that the Pig-out/Fast Diet involves too much guess work. With Spring Break coming up in less than six weeks, perhaps a handful of students seriously desire to lose some of that winter flab. In these cases, a third method is necessary.

III. The Lose Three/Gain Two Diet

This diet involves counting daily caloric intake and exercising regularly. The serious dieter begins fresh on Monday with a boiled egg and grapefruit for breakfast. For lunch she dines on a salad with shaved turkey, and for dinner she nibbles on boiled chicken, raw celery, and cooked cabbage. Then she adds up the calories for the day—only one thousand!

Thus inspired, all week she sticks to the diet like peanut butter to the roof of the mouth. She even jogs two miles on three different days. On Wednesday she does slip up and eat a raisin bagel, but when she weighs herself on Thursday she discovers that she has lost three pounds!

However, on Friday she still weighs the same. Discouraged she consoles herself with one fattening thing—an ice cream cone—which she consumes slowly, savoring every lick. That night she consents to walk to Chi Chi's for chips and cheese, but only because the walk will work off the calories.

By Saturday morning she is sick of eggs. She has been so faithful this week that she deserves something more. So she slurps up a bowl of Fruit Loops (with skim milk, of course) and two waffles. Saturday night is steak night, so she had better take advantage of it. In other words, she'll have fries with her steak. Then after the movie her date wants to take her to Cork 'n' Cleaver for mud pie; not wanting to let him down, she eats a whole piece herself.

On Sunday afternoon her grandma has invited her over for "real" food, so she feels obliged to eat it. "You certainly don't need to be on a diet," remarks her grandma. The apple pie does slide down much easier with ice cream. According to Grandma's scale, she has gained back two pounds, but that's with shoes on and just after eating.

Sunday night is Sundae Night, and for the first time all semester Western has her favorite flavor: Caramel Pecan. Her diet was already shot this weekend, so why not go for a little scoop? Oops! That second scoop was huge. Oh well, can't put it back. Better take chocolate to cover it all, and a nuts for the chocolate. No, Just bury it in nuts. Now, one dr. whipped cream. . . . Rats! It clumped together. She'll have to the whole thing. At least she did one pound this week. After all, has all next week to diet. . . .

If this serious dieter can stick the Lose Three/Gain Two Diet six weeks, she will lose her pounds before Spring Break. Hopefully by then she will be so of her yo-yoing weight that she determine not to gain it all it during her vacation.

None of these diets has approved by the State Board of Health or even by Calvin's nurse all three have been tested and been found reasonably succe: by countless students. You, too, have your cake and eat it too, sh you decide to try these diets. whatever you do, don't wait; ten the Freshman Five now, before too late.
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