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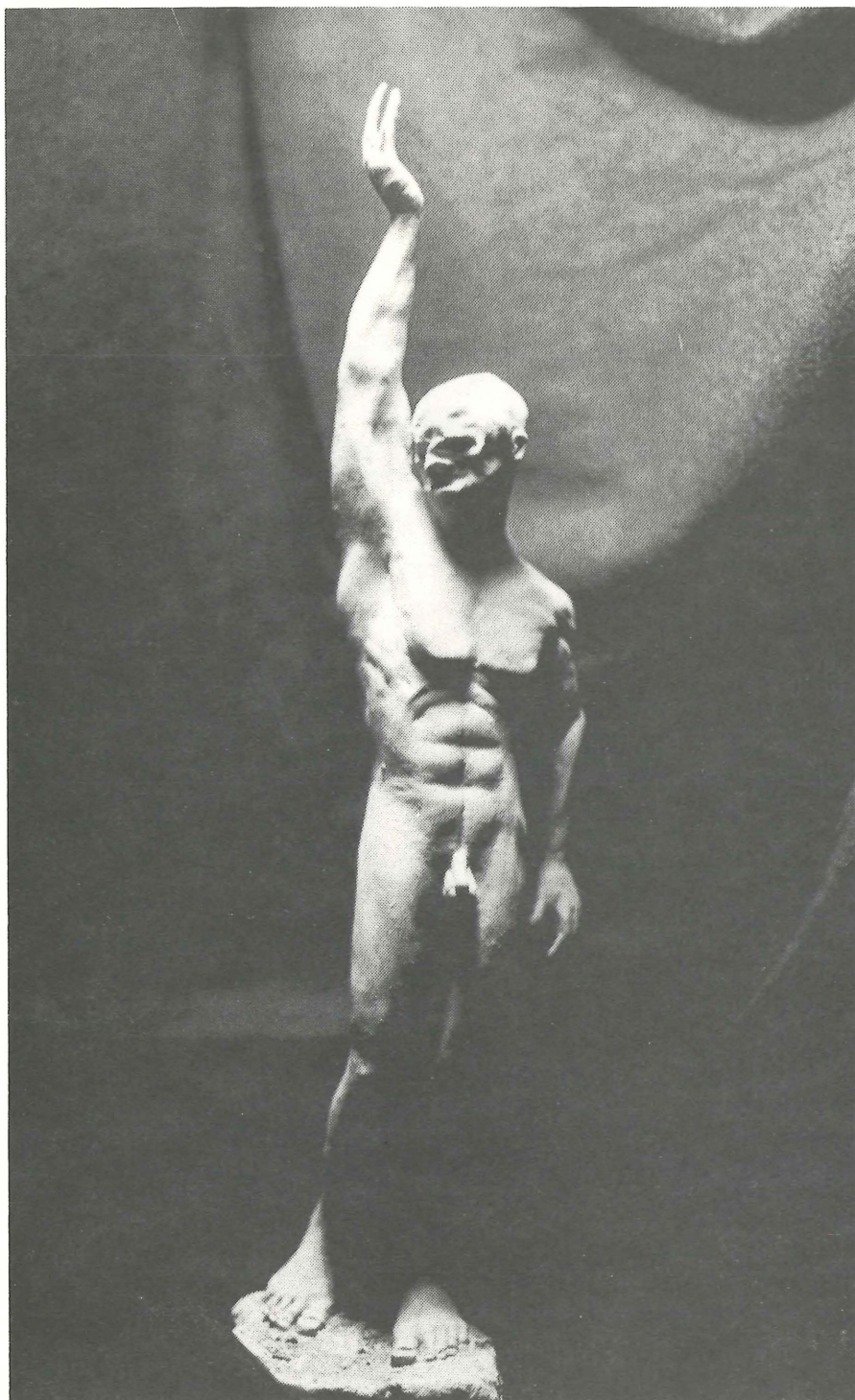


dialogue

dialogue

Vol. 19 no. 2 1986

Cover, *Marking Pole*
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Edítorial

What are we doing *here*? This may be the most important question a Christian can ask. If we avoid the challenge to do good in our immediate contexts, our choices of exciting mission opportunities may increase rapidly. Instead of bringing a neighbor to church, we can send Bibles to Russia or India. And rather than exposing the lies in our lives, we can find grander hypocrisy farther afield. Such larger projects as we are often pulled toward, promise recognition and easily gauged results. Unfortunately, often such mission efforts are edifices constructed without foundations, merely cloud-capped towers which “shall dissolve/ And, like this insubstantial pageant faded/ Leave not a rack behind.”

But the dangers involved in over-extending our Christian works ought not dissuade us from all outreach. An entirely personal or intra-communital faith is one prone to rot. In fact, Christ came to earth because God’s people had not proclaimed His word, but kept it to themselves. In response to God’s mandate, Christianity is a religion with a long tradition of extroversion, expressed in aggressive proselytizing and teleological visions. We have to build God’s Kingdom but avoid ostentation.

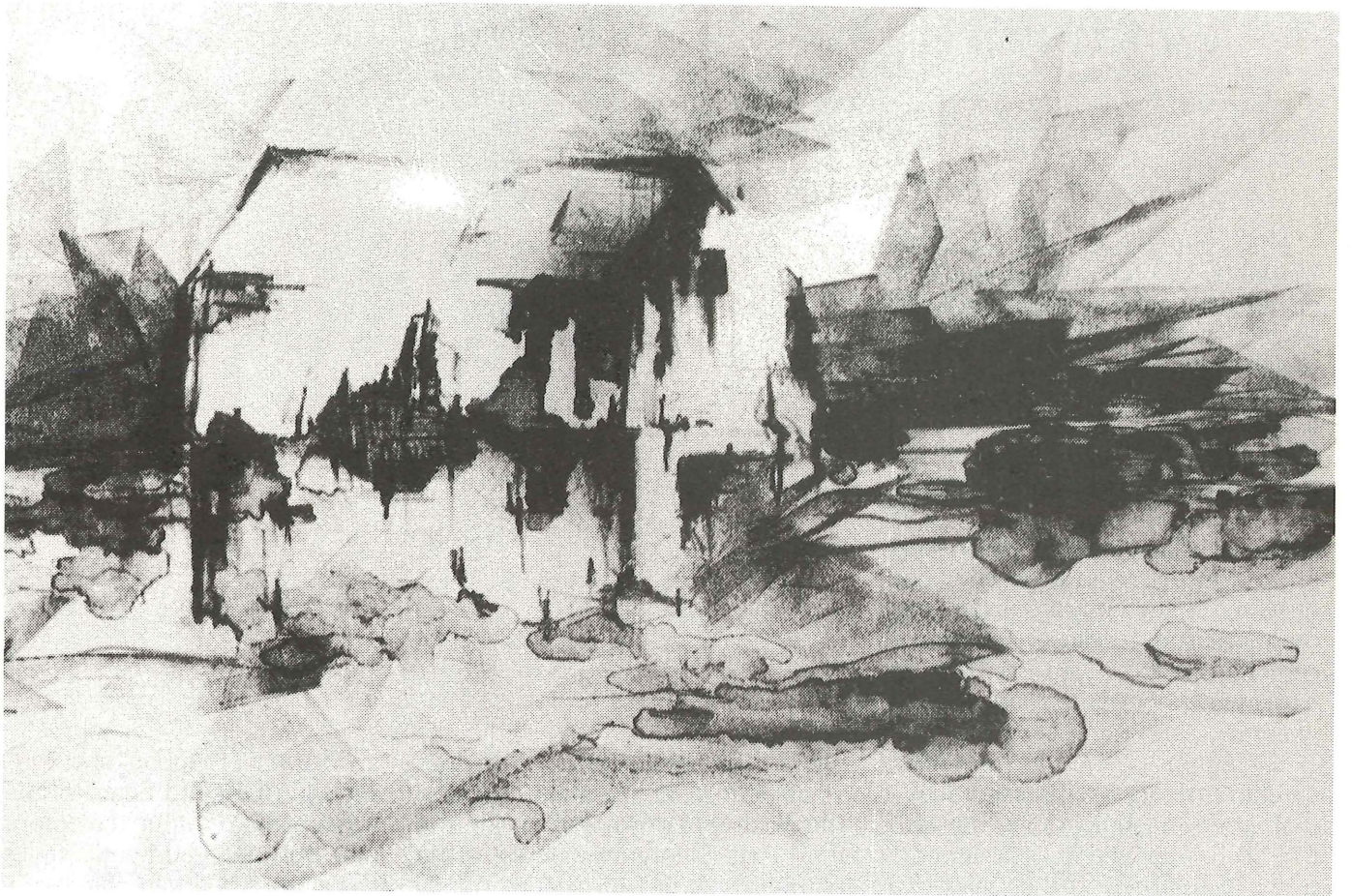
The balance we need in our action can be found in a commitment to backyard action. Jesus’ command to go and make disciples of all nations begins with the command to go. We cannot wire money to those in poverty, help the helpless with our eyes averted. Nor can we build God’s Kingdom in any real way long-distance.

We must always ask ourselves what we are doing here, and order our priorities accordingly. Thus any need to speak out on issues such as the arms race or the injustices of apartheid pales in comparison to the need to bring love to Grand Rapids’ inner city. We must struggle with the problems of race relations, but not by going to South Africa. We need to see the economic slavery on the corner of Union and Franklin, the hatred and injustice in our city. Freedom should lose its bitter aftertaste in our society before we try to liberate others.

It is a simple fact that we as individual members of the body of Christ cannot live in community with a million people in any meaningful way. Our experiences, our limitations as single humans in time-bound bodies place us in contact with perhaps a thousand people at best. It is in meaningful communities on this scale that we ought to fight our most important battles in Christ’s name.

If we find ourselves only touching other Christians, only preaching to the converted, we are called by Christ Himself to go and make disciples of others. This does not mean thinking in larger terms, but it does perhaps commit us to an ever-changing community and to the constant challenges involved in witnessing to our neighbors.

—DL



Mark Veldheer

Words

&

Works

Lambert J. VanPoolen

poem A.D.

language
lean
in
the
mind
spades over
bones
flesh covered
but
still

.
:
.
bones.

My poems are nets to catch thoughts. Often they snare a singular thought or impression and weave it into word sets. They usually focus on that layer of life where truth dwells, i.e., they go below the necessarily polite language of ordinary discourse and dwell where the truth of the matter lives. Questions of truth and the nature of reality float freely or bang around in my mind everyday. The answers to such questions can best be expressed, I believe, in novel or poetic form. Can truth be expressed in ordinary language? I wonder.

The poem "poem A.D." was a net catching the idea expressed above that poetic language digs beneath the fleshly appearances and penetrates to the bones—the reality of a given situation. The title part "A.D." alludes to the Lord's ability to do just that—know the heart not the skin. The poem is a pithy statement of what most of my poems are about—the truth which is not seen on the surface.

I brought my net along one evening to a performance of the Grand Rapids Symphony. At the end the audience applauded as expected. The thought caught in the net was—why have we chosen these performers for special applause? Not a heavy philosophical question but

yet an interesting one. From that singular idea or question emerged the poem "performers." Inside the Fine Arts Center we applaud the band bowing in appreciation of our adulation while other performers mowing hear only the wind. Why?

The truths of God or Good Friday demand a poetic response to unfold some of the mysteries. "Friday order" attempts to encapsulate an idea that goes right to the "bones." The extension of the wooden pole connecting heaven to earth just seemed to come and sit in my mind. The mystery and wonder of it all then arranged itself on paper in the manner you can see. Can you see a mystery more clearly? I wonder.

"Summer Planting" started with me the moment I heard of Sietze passing. Soon after that moment was on Iowa I-80 heading west the summer. Every field of corn every rolling hill, city signs, brought Sietze alive in a haunting fashion. The poem rattled around in my mind for two months until it came out back home in Grand Rapids. There truth there? I'm afraid so.

Now, one asks, what is an engineer doing writing poetry? I thought about that question a lot. My thoughts went in two directions. One thought is that only poets write poems. If I'm honest with myself I would have to say I view the world around me more as a poet than as an engineer. In fact, I'm not a

Summer Planting

Monday,
Iowa
I-80,

not
a
good
time,

the
rolling
corn
sucking
hills
were
haunted,

Sully
sign
evoked
ghost
filled
pulpits
(alone
today
in
window
streaked
sun).

Mother
earth
had
planted
a
poet.

how an engineer looks around. What I see and experience seems to always come in poetic images rather than in structured boxes more attuned perhaps to engineers' ways.

But, in another vein, I must admit that there seems to be some relationship between poetry and technology. Some hints occur in the writing of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. In his essay "The Question Concerning Technology" (*Harper's*, 1977), he seems to (after the ancient Greeks) equate the artistic efforts of the poet and the craftsman doing pre-modern technology. He sees both poet and craftsman as revealers of Being. He says, "Techne (gr.) belongs to bringing-forth, to poiesis (gr.); it is something poetic." Modern technology is seen by him as more of a challenge to Being rather than a revealing of the truth about Being. But, I believe, the design process even as applied to modern technology is an important way for truth to be revealed. Poetry and design reveal truth in a different way than the analytical methods of mathematics and science but they surely deal with the questions about truth and the nature of our existence. In fact I suggest they are a way to escape reductionism that has so sorely distorted the truth, particularly since the time of Descartes.

Having said this, I still find it difficult to wax analytical about the nature of the relationship between poetry and engineering. God has given me such a rich world and such wonderful spectacles through which to view it that I want to revel in as many of its aspects as my talents will allow. I do sense that my interests in poetry (and philosophy) have made me a better thinker and doer of design and science (my summer occupation). To constantly view and sense the creation through the eyes of being of poet-philosopher-engineer is almost too much to handle. It is mind-boggling!

Style. A few comments. The urge to be uniquely creative (isn't that how God made us?) has driven me to search for my own style of poetic expression. A few years ago I did a poem about the Incarnation that was simply one word lines using the alphabet as an organizing tool. Since then, I have been at ease with short, single word line poems. It suits what I wish to say. I see it as a unique style. I ask each reader to probe each word and its fellows to develop images. I would hope that images arise in the mind as these words are sensed by the reader.

The challenge for me is to get across a profound idea in as few words as possible letting the "picture" do the rest. Perhaps economy of thought arises from my engineering background and practice. Be that as it may, I'm always impressed how philosophers beat their readers over the head for several hundred pages to get across one concept. I wish to go the other extreme, seeing how economical one can be and still create images with words that communicate a single idea.

Today? I'm walking around with another poem in my head. While at a mall in Kalamazoo I observed an antique show. Several tables had heaps of jewelry—old rings, brooches, etc., from, I envisioned, several estate sales. Juxtaposed on that scene was the image in my mind of piles of jewelry, gold teeth, etc., outside the gas chambers of Germany in the 1940s. Perhaps someday a few "lean words" will tumble on the paper and I'll discover another essential truth.

friday order

tall	
pole	
	fastening
with	heaven
	to
cross	earth
beam	
	bearing
	earth
	to
	heaven
delivered.	

performers

band
 bell
 sound
 draws
 us
 up
 as
 our
 thunder
 leans
 them
 over
 while
 mowers
 drawing
 grass
 circles
 hear
 only
 wind.



Murder She Wrote: A Theology of Murder Mysteries

The resounding success of *Murder, She Wrote*, the television show featuring Angela Lansbury as a detective novelist who solves real-life murder mysteries, is another reminder of the appeal of that genre. Different people choose different kinds of novels for their “escapist” reading: Heinlein and Herbert devotees extoll the merits of science fiction, fantasy buffs perpetually search for an heir to the Tolkien/Lewis tradition, and others enjoy hanging over the cliff constructed by a Ludlum or a Trevanian. But many readers seeking to relax turn first to the traditional detective novel.

Murder aficionados usually acknowledge the genius of Agatha Christie and debate the relative merits of her supposed successors. For many of us, Dorothy Sayers’ decision to stop writing her Sir Peter Wimsey mysteries dealt a crippling if not mortal blow to the twentieth-century detective novel. We continue to search for another Christie or Sayers. Although I had a brief infatuation several years ago with Rex Stout (perhaps inspired by the television show about Nero Wolfe), I find that my recent candidates tend to be women authors who sometimes write about female detectives.

Ngaio Marsh, a New Zealand writer of part-Maorian descent, seems to be achieving a success close to Christie’s. Marsh’s elegant stories feature an upper-class detective, Roderick Alleyn, whose investigations often take him into the theatrical or artistic worlds of England and Australia. In Wimsey-like fashion, Alleyn even meets and courts his wife, a famous painter, when she is embroiled in a murder case. Other recent favorites of mine include P.D. James, who introduces her young female detective in *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, and Amanda Cross, whose protagonist is an English professor encountering murder in her academic and social life. Cross’s *Death in a Tenured Position* has Dr. Kate Fansler investigating the mysterious death of the first woman to be granted tenure in the Harvard English department.

Although my own academic setting somewhat more sedate, perhaps I like to try identify with these super-women employing the intellect to fight crime. But why, even when they feature distinguished British gentlemen-detectives, do I enjoy these tales of blood, murder, hate, revenge, and psychopathic behavior? Do (and the thousands of other well-educated, normally sedate, evangelical Christians who like murder mysteries) harbor a deep-seated, perverse streak? How do we explain or even justify the mysterious lure of the detective novel?

Much could be said with respect to this question from the perspective of human beings—*homo ludens*, creatures who play, but a more subtle yet important aspect of detective novels may contribute to our enjoyment of Christie and Sayers. Our very theology is inherent in the genre and explains, I believe, the sense of satisfaction and fulfillment that we get when we reach those last gripping pages of a mystery.

A fictional detective story reader depicted in Graham Greene’s novel *The Honorary Consul* may give us a clue to the underlying theology of murder mysteries. Father Rivas leads a Paraguayan revolutionary group that has kidnapped the British consul in an attempt to free political prisoners being held and tortured by the military dictatorship running his country. Rivas is an ex-priest; he has lost his faith in God and the church. He passes the time in hiding by reading an English detective story. Why does he choose this kind of work?

He explains, “Oh, there is a sort of comfort in reading a story where one knows what the end will be. The story of a dream world where justice is always done. There were no detective stories in the age of faith—an interesting point when you think of it. God used to be the only detective when people believed in Him. He was order. It was good. Like your Sherlock Holmes. It was he who pursued the wicked man for punishment and discovered all. But now people like the General make law and order. Electric shocks to the genitals. Aquino’s fingers. Keep the poor

and they do not have the energy to revolt. I prefer the detective. I prefer God.”

Rivas likes detective stories because they remind him of a God he can no longer believe in when he faces the horrors of life in South Africa. The justice achieved in every detective novel when the protagonist solves the mystery suggests the justice ultimately achieved by a sovereign God. The logical order, the way the pieces will add up with an ineluctable rationality, appeals to one enduring a seemingly senseless, fragmented, and absurd existence. But for Rivas, the comfort of a detective story is only a temporary fantast. He no longer believes in the detective.

William Spanos takes the analogy between the novel and genre a step further in his article, “The Detective and the Boundary: Some Notes on the Post-modern Literary Imagination.” He argues that all the well-made novels of the eighteenth century are in effect detective stories. Detailed descriptions, realistic characters, and linear plots based on cause and effect mirror the ordered logic of the God-controlled eighteenth century world. But as people have become increasingly uncertain about what they can know, a parallel development takes place in literary form. Spanos compares the typical modern novel as an “anti-detective story. . . , the formal purpose of which is to evoke the impulse to ‘detect’ . . . in order to ultimately frustrate it by refusing to solve the crime.” He cites works by Kafka, Beckett, Eco, and Robbe-Grillet as examples of his anti-detective story.”

Although Spanos is speaking about the tendency in modern literature to be fragmented, non-realistic, and inconclusive, we can also find examples of the anti-detective story. Donald Barthelme, a leading contemporary short story writer, uses such an approach in “Views of My Father Weeping.” The narrator of the story attempts to discover the truth about the death of his father, who has been mysteriously run down in a carriage. He searches for witnesses and suspects, but one by one they prove unreliable and inconclusive. Was his father really drunk? Was the coachman careless? At the close of the story the narrator finally appears close to a solution: he trusts the account of the coachman. Yet another version claims that the coachman is “an absolute and total liar.” Barthelme can only conclude the truth about the father and the story with the single inconclusive word “etc.” The detective/son will continue to follow the clues, but the mystery will never be solved.

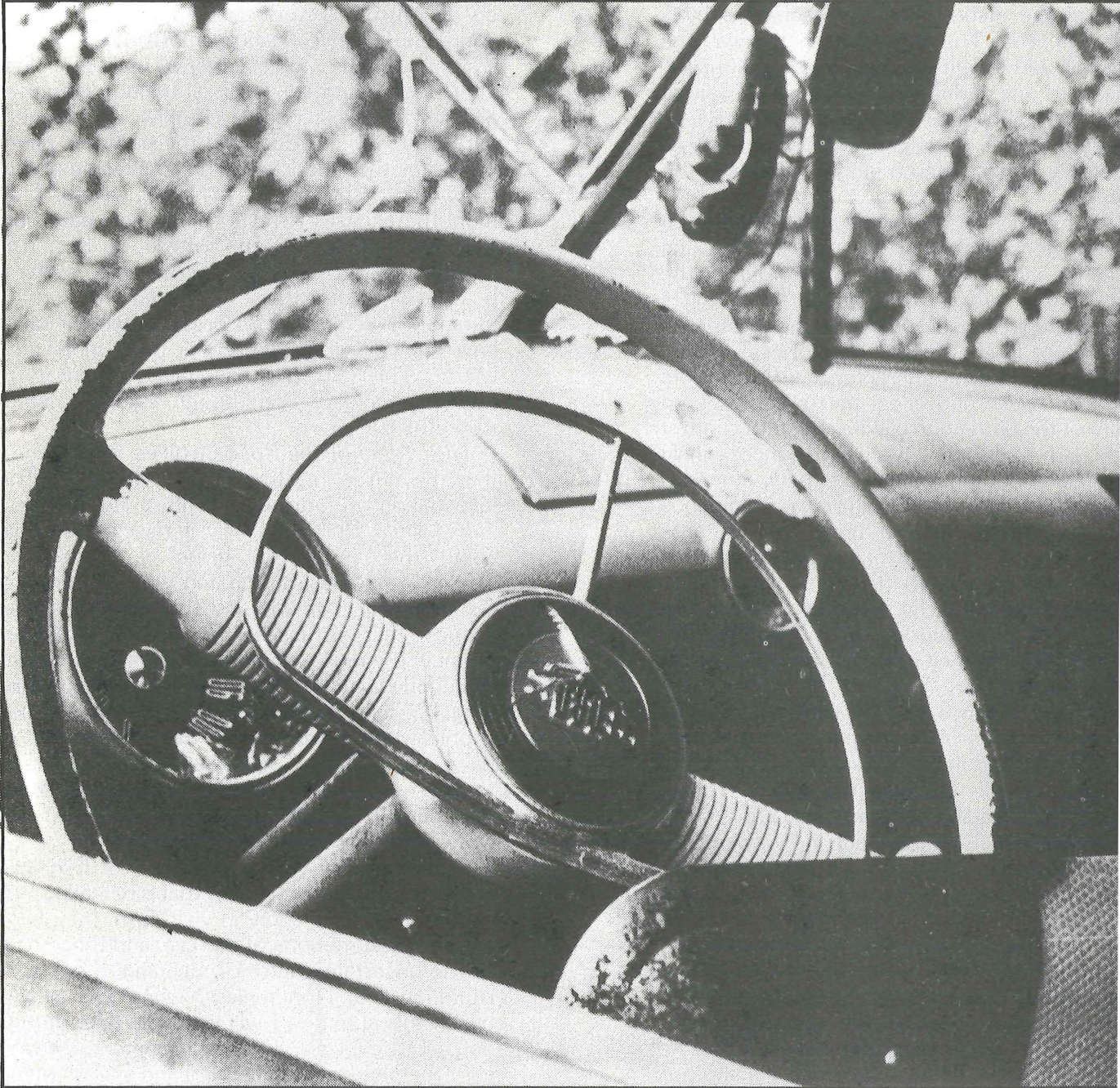
The critically acclaimed bestseller *The Name of the Rose*, by Umberto Eco, displays a very

clever combination of both detective and anti-detective elements. (The movie version of this novel starring Sean Connery has recently been released.) Brother William of Baskerville, a learned fourteenth-century Franciscan trained by Sir Roger Bacon is asked to investigate the mysterious death of a young monk in a great abbey. Murder is suspected. As Brother William conducts his investigation, more murders are committed. The monk/detective uncovers clue after clue and employs his stunning deductive abilities to reveal both a complex apocalyptic pattern to the murders and the perverse mind behind all the bloodshed. The conclusion of the story proves him to be right, yet wrong. The monk he accuses is responsible, but there has been no plan, no pattern followed, no plot, just chance events. Brother William laments, “Where is all my wisdom, then? I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe.” This detective has solved his mystery totally by accident, even though his logic pointed to the true killer.

The Name of the Rose involves much more than the murder mystery plot. The novel is full of information on fourteenth-century life, religion, and politics. Philosophically it raises questions about the nature and value of knowledge. Literary critics are fascinated with the novel’s comments on comedy and the study of signs. Larger themes insistently emerge. Consequently, the more scholarly reviews of the novel frequently view the detective story as just trapping, the entertaining facade of a deep philosophical book. Yet without the satisfaction we have in tracking down and piecing clues together, without our natural instinct for a sense of closure, *The Name of the Rose* could not have worked on any level.

Contemporary works like those of Eco and Barthelme have much to say that is revealing and challenging. They show in vivid form the philosophical assumptions of our era, and they point to the uncertain nature of meaning in our corrupted world. Nonetheless, when I’m at the beach this summer, I will probably take out by dog-eared copies of Dorothy Sayers and savor yet again the stimulating mind and speech of Sir Peter in action. As he skillfully follows the clues and wittily banters with his foes, I will be subtly reminded that despite the relativistic and fragmented nature of the world, the mystery ultimately will be solved.

—Susan VanZanten Gallagher
Dept. of English



Driven

—Mark Veldi

Tundra Games

Like a black arrow
with swelling shaft,
they travel. So boys gather rocks
from Lake Iliamna's shore
and stockpile them along the river bank.

Half-dead they crowd into northward-flowing water
determined to make it up river and beyond the falls
to waiting conception pools,
but rocks smash their moldy bodies
until more float than swim.

Just boys, having fun, they forget
mythic repetition
of once ruby and emerald ocean wanderers
whose only purpose
is to come back home.

—Danette Thomas

Wrench in the Works

nds against the glass, I
bit on the inside, looking down.

manufactured of cast-off pieces
worlds all around,
ill-oiled, the system works well
til some part fails to fit.

f-sync, thrown loose,
row sick as parts
llide and chain reactions
ar the system apart,
a roller-coaster fashion.

' hands feel for the seat belt,
the stop button,
ything to shut it down.
luck.
e roof caves in.

Bill Cornell

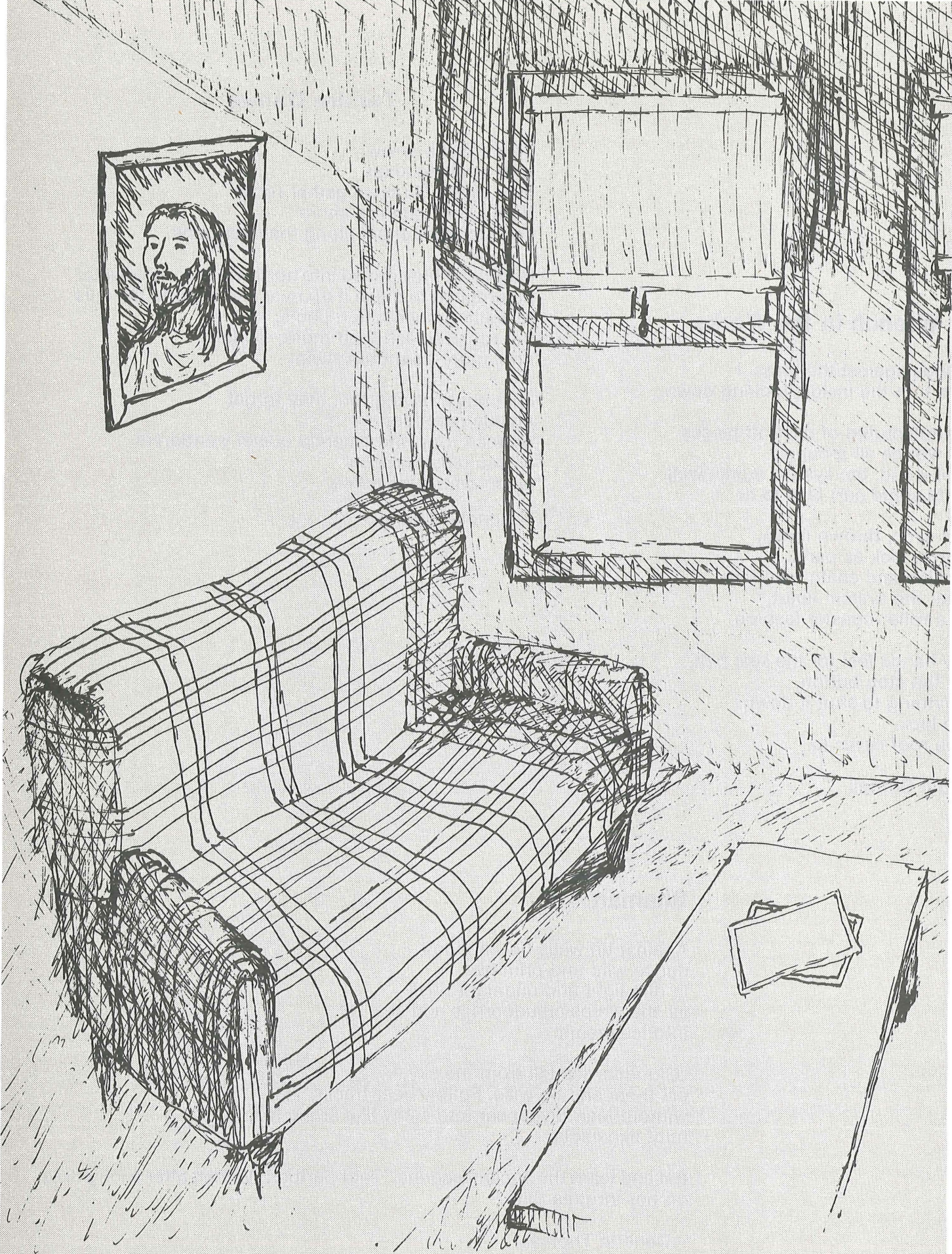
Shaman

Against tin walls her motions
dance wild and primitive
in dim light and midnight dusk
as she whips cloudberries and seal oil
into ice cream.

"Cloudberries fell from the sky,
eat them and be wise. Follow bear tracks
without fear, disappear into snow like arctic fox,
hunt like eagle.

Eat and learn the ancient secrets," said Caribou Woman after a long drag
on her Virginia Slim.

—Danette Thomas



Hey, Mr. Ice Cream Man!

Here, kitty-kitty-kitty. Here, kitty-kitty-kitty. Come on, putter. Come on, girl." He stopped his leg for a moment, stood up from his crouched position on the porch, and scanned the group of old elm trees and clumps of crabgrass in his backyard. His small, dark eyes searched anxiously. And then his lips broke into a crooked smile as he watched the gray and white cat bound jerkily if unevenly up the worn wooden staircase that connected his second-story apartment to the yard below.

"Well, Princess, where have you been?" he asked excitedly. "I was getting worried there for a minute. Well, c'mon now, let's go inside."

The cat paused at the doorway, hesitating; then, after a slight nudge from a shoe, walked inside. He followed in after her and stopped at the refrigerator in the small, hot kitchen.

"Would ya like somethin' to drink? Huh? Huh, Princess?" The cat looked up at him beseechingly and then purred with contentment as he set down a chipped pink pottery bowl full of milk.

"There you go, sweetie." He squatted down, smiling as he watched the cat daintily lap at the milk. After a few minutes, he stood up and walked into the living room.

It was a hot, stuffy little room. The blazing sun shined relentlessly through the open windows onto the faded beige carpet. A sagging, worn, brown upholstered couch was lined up against the wall and a wide but sturdy wooden coffee table stood before it. Against the opposite wall was a straight-backed kitchen chair, spray-painted bright green. The walls were bare except for a large framed cardboard picture of Jesus. It had been there for awhile, put up by tenants who had long since moved. And no one had taken it down. The current tenant enjoyed looking at it: the long brown hair curled slightly at the ends, the lips were painted with a rosy hue, and the clear deep blue eyes looked up earnestly toward heaven. He often studied it as he sat on the couch.

He liked his living room. He liked to sit in it at night and read one of his *National Geographic* magazines. The room could get hot in the summer but he endured the heat by making a paper fan that his mom had taught him to make long ago.

He glanced at the small alarm clock on the

coffee table and jumped up from the couch.

"Four o'clock already!" he exclaimed to himself. "I better get going." He quickly walked into the bathroom situated off of the kitchen and picked up his comb. He looked at it closely. It was a small red plastic one with white printing along the side that read JESUS SAVES. He had seen it lying in the street one day while he was on his route and decided to pick it up. He had cleaned it up well when he got home.

He started combing his thick, shaggy brown hair and then scrutinized his appearance in the mirror. His black-rimmed glasses needed cleaning and his sparse, scraggly-looking beard needed a little trimming, too, he thought. His green print knit T-shirt hung loosely on his frame. He looked disapprovingly at his thin, bony arms.

"No, my biceps sure aren't very developed. That's kinda 'a shame. I wouldn't be half bad if I just had some arm muscles on me. . . cause my legs sure are getting big."

He glanced down at his legs. They weren't very long and they looked somewhat awkward under his brown bermudas. But his thighs were deeply tanned and muscular.

"It's from all that bike riding I been doing, Princess," he remarked as he looked down lovingly at the cat standing in the doorway of the bathroom. "It's so that I can keep you eatin' your tender vittles," he said chuckling.

He put on his yellow hat with the sunvisor and in the mirror, read the white words printed on the yellow background. "MACK TRUCKS," he pronounced slowly. He then gazed at his image in the mirror and said, "Frank Morgan, Mack truck driver." He giggled softly after he said it and then grew more serious as he crouched down to scratch the cat. "Someday, Princess, someday." He stared thoughtfully for a moment at the movement of the cat's tail swishing back and forth and then stood up abruptly, looking at his watch.

"Four-twenty! Oh boy, I'm going to be late for work. I better get a move on it." He walked quickly to the door and inserted his key into the lock on the other side.

"See you later, Princess. Be a good putter while I'm gone. I'll be back later tonight like always."

He shut the door, locked it, and hurriedly

descended down the steps into his backyard. He rounded the corner into the driveway and then stepped out into the street.

It was a typical July day in the small town of Muncie. The sky was a hazy yellow with the sun's rays streaming through. The air was still, with no evidence of a breeze, and all of the noise the street contained seemed to intensify the blazing heat. The sidewalks were full of children: shooting marbles, tending lemonade stands that were getting meager business, spraying each other with garden hoses, and running through sprinklers. Teenage girls sat on stoops, drinking Cokes. And housewives lazily hung out the wash in their backyards, talking to their next-door neighbors over the fences.

He loved being outside on the summer afternoons. The heat never bothered him; he just enjoyed watching everyone in the neighborhood. That's why I like my job so much, he thought; I can be outside and watch everyone.

He broke away from his thoughts and grew alarmed by the green neon clock above the Walgreen's drugstore. Four-thirty! He was supposed to be at work right now! He broke into a run, his stubby legs clumsily carrying him down the city sidewalks. He bumped into an elderly man, doggedly pushing his grocery-laden cart away from the Food Club shopping mart. The collision upset a grocery bag that had been set precariously on top of all the others. It fell to the ground and out rolled four individually wrapped rolls of toilet paper, a plastic bottle of Metamucil, and six cans of Campbell's tomato soup.

The elderly man halted abruptly and his face became red with anger. "You clumsy oaf; just what is the meaning of running so wildly through the street?"

The accused approached meekly, his face wrought with regret. He bent down quickly as he approached the cart, and gathered the soup cans in his arms.

"I'm very sorry, sir. You see, I'm late for work and—"

"I don't give a rip what you were late for. There is no excuse for this kind of behavior, do you hear?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir. I am really sorry." He dumped the soup cans in the grocery cart and bent down once again to pick up the Metamucil bottle. There was a small crack in the side of the bottle and some of the brown grainy powder had spilled out on the cement. He picked it up quickly, trying to hide the opening, but the old man's eyes were too quick.



"Just forget it, now. Be gone, you ruffian."

Frank stared, dumbfounded and guilty for a moment, the Metamucil bottle still in his hand.

He quickly dropped the bottle into the cart, spilling more of the precious powder onto the ground, and then he took off down the street again. He turned around and shouted, "I really am sorry, sir." But the aged figure paid him no heed.

Frank kept running, this time more carefully. He went down one street, up another, around several corners—a route that he had memorized after many afternoon jaunts like this.

He finally came up to a small white brick building with UNCLE PETER'S ICE CREAM TREATS, INC. printed in red and blue across the front. Underneath the words TREATS were printed a blond-haired boy and girl eating popcorn and ice cream cones, happily oblivious to anything else aside from their joy of consuming ice cream.

le walked through a white door labelled EM-DYEES and proceeded down a narrow way, ignoring the bulletin boards overflowing with notices and memos to the 20 or 30 drivers who were employed by Uncle Peter's. At the end of the hallway, he came to the large packing room and cautiously hesitated before entering. He moved to the right of the room and saw the long, thin man sitting at a table, his head bent over as he scrutinized the financial reports of the month. Frank stood at the doorway for a moment and then, taking a deep breath, quickly strode through the room, hoping to pass by unnoticed to the opposite door.

"Frank, where the hell you been?" the man at the table angrily questioned. Grinding his cigarette into the ashtray before him, he pushed his chair away from the table and rose to his full height.

"Do you know what time it is?"

"Well, yes, Mr. Smeeley, I-I do. I know I'm a little late but—"

"It's 4:40. You shoulda been loading your cart ten minutes ago."

"I know that but—"

"I don't want to hear any of your half-assed excuses today and don't interrupt me when I'm talking to you. I'm fed up with your tardiness day in and day out and I'm not going to put up with it no more."

Frank stood attentively, with his cap in his hands, as Mr. Smeeley's tirade continued. He listened on the thin, grayish lips that moved in and out, occasionally exposing tobacco-stained teeth. He stood there mesmerized, no longer responding to the angry words that were directed toward him.

"Well, why the hell are you standing there, looking like that at me? Get your ass in gear! Load the ice cream in your cart and hit the streets!"

Frank jerked startingly, once again aware of where he was and what was happening. "Yes, Mr. Smeeley," he bellowed and quickly began to march out the packing room.

"One more thing, Frank!" Mr. Smeeley's voice made Frank halt abruptly. "You better count on being out until 10 tonight. From now on, if you're late in so much as one minute, you'll stay out a half hour later. Understand?"

"Yessir, Mr. Smeeley!" and with that, Frank walked out into the back parking lot where his truck, number 39, stood parked against the far wall. He quickly opened the latch on top of the truck and stocked it with the varieties of ice cream provided from the freezer built into the wall.

Within a few minutes, he was mounted on his bicycle seat and with his Mack truck cap firmly pulled on his head, he pedalled past the chain-link fence encircling Uncle Peter's Ice Cream Treats. Once out on the street, he pumped his legs smoothly and rhythmically, occasionally glancing down with pride at his bulging thighs and the hairs made golden by the summer sun. He rode faster and faster toward his district of appointed streets, feeling the cool air permeate through his T-shirt against his sweaty body. He grinned broadly as the air made into wind whirred about his ears and made his eyes water. He loved being out on the road like this. He felt free and wild, like he belonged to the summer and to the street life. Yes, he belonged. The kids were glad to see him when he rode down their streets and their parents would recognize him and wave. No one laughed at him or looked at him funny. He belonged and he felt accepted. And that's how it would be when he got his Mack truck. He would drive through the countryside, he and his Princess. And they would belong there, too. His grin faded as he thought this and he could feel his eyes burning, his heart pounding. Someday, Princess, someday, he thought to himself.

His pace slowed as he came to Lincoln Street and turned right. Now the fun part starts, he thought, as he turned on his bell and began to ring it methodically. He continued down the quiet suburban street, glancing about, trying to visually seek out his usual customers. He watched as fathers came home from work, playfully greeting their children in the yard, and stepping aside the doors, kissing their wives, who had been waiting for their arrivals.

He continued pedalling through the long, winding street, rhythmically tapping his bell. "I usually don't come down Lincoln this early," he muttered to himself. "That must be why I'm not gettin' any customers yet."

As he spoke, a group of small children stood on the corner, anxiously awaiting the arrival of his ice cream cart. His face brightened as he spotted them and he brought his cart to a halt. An adult standing with them stepped forward with a five-dollar bill grasped firmly in her hand.

"I would like five nutty-buddy bars," she said crisply.

"Good evening, ma'am. How are you?" he offered, his lips breaking into their crooked smile.

"Fine, thank you," she hurriedly replied. She peered anxiously at him and repeated, "Five nutty-buddy bars, please?" in a questioning tone.

The smile quickly disappeared from his face

and he looked at her with bewilderment. Not knowing quite what to do, he allowed his eyes a quick span of the woman, from her exposed feet wrapped in harache sandals to the top of her head, where her brown hair was tightly bound in a red bandanna. Her mouth was set firmly and her eyes took on a suspicious, hardened stare of him.

He started to feel the hot rush of blood to his face until he directed his attention to the five small children shyly standing behind the woman. Craning his neck to catch a better view of them, he brightened and enthusiastically asked, "How are you kids tonight? Gettin' your daily dose of ice cream, huh?"

"Waiting for their daily doses of ice cream," the woman sternly replied, looking at him angrily.

Her sharp reply stirred him into action and as he quickly opened the hatch on his cart, he hastily said, "Right! Five nutty buddies comin' right up!" He held out the bars to the children and as they eagerly grabbed them, the woman swiftly laid the five-dollar bill on the top of the cart and hurriedly led the children away.

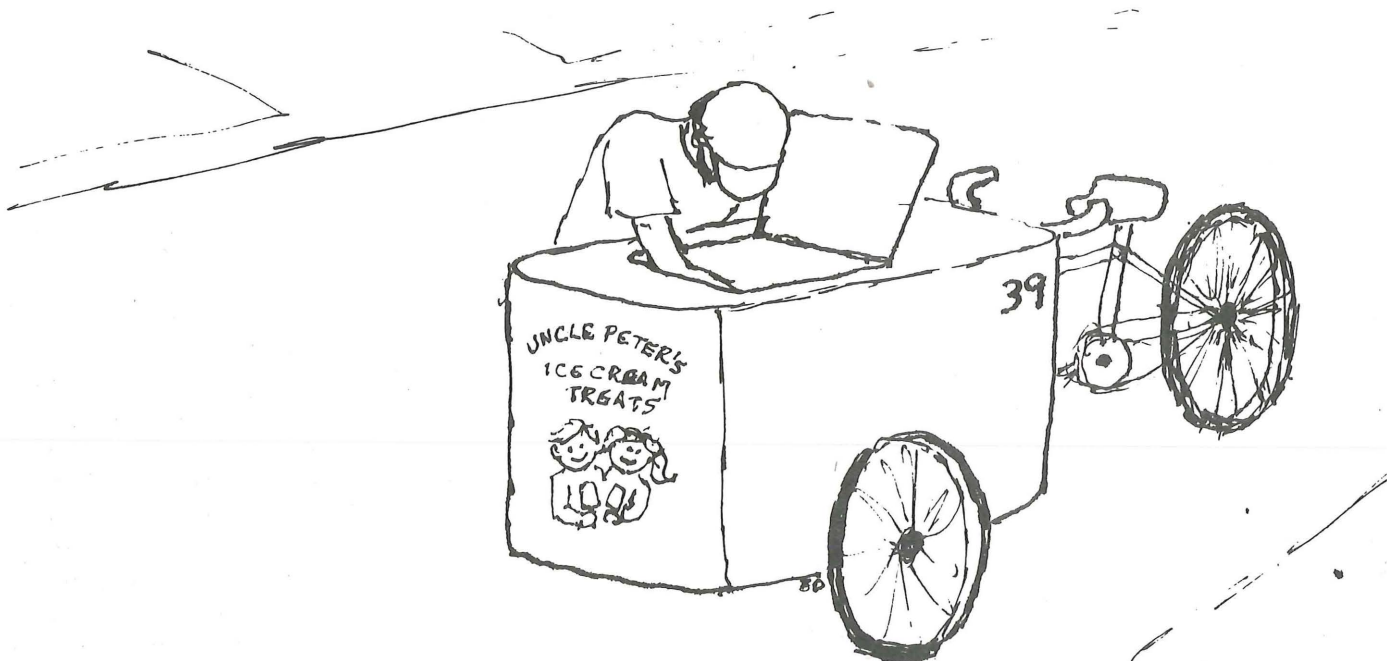
He hopped back on his cart and watched forlornly as the group made their way down the sidewalk. He slowly pedaled away, shrugged his shoulders, remarking to himself, "Well, those folks certainly weren't very friendly. Guess I'll head down another street for a while."

He turned another corner and gazed at the orange ball of sun as it slowly settled on the horizon. The glinting rays struck his face and he wiped off the droplets of sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. He continued

pedalling, weaving his way in and out of qulanes and cul-de-sacs, selling to an occasional customer here and there. But as the skies turned dusky, he decided that he would call it a night and head home. He steered his cart around and made his way toward Uncle Peter's Ice Cream Tree.

Within a matter of minutes, he arrived at destination breathing a sigh of relief and noticed that the windows of Mr. Smeeley's office were dark. "Good!" he remarked to himself. "Now I won't get in trouble for comin' in a half hour early." He went through his usual routine putting his cart and ice cream away, and after quickly skipping through the darkened halls, past the notice-laden bulletin board, he stepped out onto the city sidewalk in the direction toward home.

He walked at a leisurely pace, taking deep breaths, and sucking in the cool evening air. He glanced perceptively around him, slowing his pace as he passed the Kool Kone on his left. Groups of teenagers flocked around the ice cream stand, laughing and yelling. As he scanned the crowd, his eyes met upon two young boys and a girl. The girl stood licking an ice cream cone, her tongue darting rhythmically around the circumference, while the boys proudly blew smoke out of their mouths from their cigarettes. All of their eyes were drawn to the solitary figure of a man across the street. They traded comments and laughed contemptuously, while they continued to stare at him. He felt that penetrating gaze from across the street and after returning their stare in a puzzling manner, quickened his pace and started off for home once more.



As he approached his destination, he noticed a group of boys standing on the curb across from his apartment. They stood closely next to each other and appeared to be inspecting something that lay on the street.

He quickly crossed the street to be away from them and broke out into an even jog until he reached his apartment. He bounded up the worn wooden staircase and stopped abruptly before the door. It stood partly open. He pushed the door back against the wall and walked inside.

"Princess? Princess, where are you, honey? Did you get that door open again?" He waited for the familiar tapping noise of her feet, but heard nothing. He walked further into the living room. "C'mon, Princess. I ain't goin' to yell at you. Come out now. Where are you, purty putter?" He knelt down and peered under the couch. He stood up again and his attention was drawn to the noises from the street. The boys' laughing and shouting was getting louder. He froze momentarily as he thought he heard his name called.

"Hey, Fraaank!"

"Hey, Mr. Ice Cream man!"

He felt his chest tighten and his pulse quicken. He took two long strides over to the window and looked down at the boys. They were looking upward him and when seeing his figure in the window, they pointed and their laughter grew hysterical and raucous.

"Hey, Fraaank?" The intonation of their voices rose as they called his name.

"Hey, Franky! Are you looking for your putter?"

He continued looking down at them and noticed a small, lighter shaded shape on the street before them. He felt a sense of alarm rise within his body and swallowed nervously. He quickly turned away from the window and bounded over to the door, down the steps outside.

Upon noticing his approach toward them, the boys laughed with delight and looked at him mockingly. The ringleader held a long tree branch in his hand and poked savagely at the shape in the street.

Frank crossed the street and as he realized what lay before the boys, he stopped abruptly with a cry. At this point, the boys quickly ran away, scattering themselves across the graveyard that stood behind them.

Once at a distance, the ringleader stopped and shouted, "Hey! We didn't do nothin'! The stupid animal stepped right in front of a car. Now you can go buy yourself somethin' smarter." With that, he started running again and disappeared

into the shadows.

Frank knelt down by the blood-stained mass of fur and gingerly picked up the lifeless body. He cradled it in his arms and attempted to support the head that flapped at a bizarre angle. He sat down on the curb, burying his face into the matted fur.

"Oh, Princess!" he crooned. "Oh my baby! Don't worry, honey, it's gonna be okay. Everything's goin' to work out just fine. You and me, Princess. That's how it's goin' to be. You and me drivin' in that truck, free to roam the country."

He stood up and walked slowly back toward home, tenderly stroking the bloody fur.



Roundtable: Just War and Pacifism

On a Thursday evening late in October, a group gathered to discuss a Christian attitude on war. The participants were George Harper, professor of English; Ken Konyndyk, professor of philosophy; Paul Stoub, a freelance artist who has withheld a portion of his taxes in protest of militarism; Bob Wiersma, a student and member of the Army; and Fred Mast, student and member of CAPA.

Dialogue: To start out I'd like to read two passages. The first is from Luke 6:27-31. "But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; from him who takes away your coat, do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods, do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." The other is from Romans 13:3 & 4. "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer."

Despite the fact that part of the Christian scripture is the apparently simple and direct statement, "Thou shalt not kill," Christians have had and still have widely different views on war; everything from absolutely refusing to participate to eagerly throwing themselves into the fighting. And despite the apparent peacefulness of the world as we see it from the American Midwest, war is a very real thing: at the last count, 43 nations were at war; presently, our own government spends vast amounts of money on materials of warfare, not only for the United States itself, but for dozens of countries around the world. So what is a responsible Christian attitude toward this pervasive and troublesome thing called war? Should it be rejected absolutely? Should it be accepted as a necessity in this world? Or is the truth somewhere in between?

Ken Konyndyk: You started with one extreme,

went to the middle part of the spectrum, and then asked if the truth is somewhere in between those two instead of going all the way to the opposite end which is holy war. Are you trying to confine us to that? Actually, I don't think there are too many crusaders around these days. What do you think?

Paul Stoub: It seems like the Reagan administration, when it invokes the deity, has an idea of the battle of good against evil, and goes in the direction of a crusade in which the forces of good, as interpreted by Reagan, namely the United States, are fighting against the forces of evil, namely Communism.

Fred Mast: Were the Crusades defensive or offensive? I've always thought of the Crusades as a group of people going out to conquer an area whereas a lot of times Reagan is proposing the sort of defensive type of approach. Taking Central America as an example, he says he is defending against Communism which is coming close and closer.

Stoub: If that's true, they are doing it by invading Nicaragua.

George Harper: The point is, I suppose, should anything be done at all, if the scriptures are to be followed? Can any kind of force be exerted, whether overtly or covertly? The question we are facing is, does one fight or not fight; does the Christian fight at all?

Stoub: I think my position of non-violence goes along with what was read, which was a statement of the Golden Rule. As a nation, then, we should ask what we would like Nicaragua to do to us?

Bob Wiersma: But can nations or collections of individuals be held to the same principles that an individual is? I've always considered that an individual answers to different callings and different bounds entirely than a nation.

Stoub: What makes you think that's so? Do you find any scriptural support for that?

Konyndyk: Sure. In the passage we just read individuals are not licensed to bear the sword but the State is. Individuals are not entrusted with enforcement of laws, but the State is. I can decide to make a law on my own and go out and enforce it, but the government can; they have powers that I don't have.

Stoub: They are still required to operate within the bounds of what is good. So that is an absolute standard.

Harper: For a government, though, there is every likelihood that there is no correspondence between their standard and the Scriptural standard. Governments grow naturally; they aren't set up, except in a rare instance, by Christian groups. And I think the New Testament is bringing that into account. The New Testament doesn't endorse government necessarily, but it does endorse the principle of government bearing the sword. I expect that would fit even something like a Moslem government.

Konyndyk: I don't think that implies a Christian endorsement of it; it is still the business of Christians to call the state to justice.

Harper: But if he is the minority or even a weak majority, he is still obliged to grant the state the power to wield the sword, to be the authority. He may not like the laws that the sword endorses, but I don't think the Christian should turn away from it because it is an agency set up by God to enforce justice. No, there may be injustices by it, but in the general way it strives to enforce justice.

Stoub: That is what it's for, but it doesn't always, even often, do that.

Harper: Perhaps not. The individual "I know" who stands up to the injustice he finds in his own government—he has to protest. But at the same time, I can't abandon the principle of obedience to the authorities, until such time as I find it impossible.

Stoub: We should all be subject to the authorities but obedient to God. That, of course, emphasizes the difference between the two obligations we have. Obedience to God is the primary goal of the State. Think of what the angels pronounced when Jesus was born—"peace on earth, good will toward men on whom he is well pleased." Well, who do you suppose the ones in whom God was well pleased were? They were the ones who were obedient. Now that's considerably different than the kind of idea we get about peace in our country: namely that peace comes as the result of strength. That's pursued by governments all over the world, throughout history. As Christians, I think we have to have reverence to that idea. And that's a pertinent consideration in the arms control issue too. I think the government is trying to do two contradictory things. You either say peace comes

through justice and obedience, or peace comes through dominance and strength. I think that the evidence of Scripture and the testimony of my own soul leads me to choose obedience and justice.

Harper: You would grant the need for a police force?

Stoub: Yes.

Harper: You would not, on the other hand, okay the money for a standing army?

Stoub: Not during peace time. The U.S. had no standing army during the times of peace after WWI; the army was decommissioned.

Harper: Well, there was continuity.

Stoub: But compared to the kind of build-up that we have had since WWII, the numbers were insignificant. And the surge of patriotism has pretty much followed that history too. I was thinking of Calvin College singing the national anthem before basketball games. Before the

I have an obligation to my family to defend them. . .

thirties say, no one would think of doing something like that. That sort of patriotism—worship of the flag—is just taken for granted nowadays.

Dialogue: Does the principle of obedience to authority have any bearing on international relationships? Does it justify a war?

Harper: In an abstract and ideal state, yes it does. In fact this situation cannot occur. You can proclaim that just war theory all you like, but whether you will be heard by rulers is another question. It seems more likely nowadays that a ruler in a Moslem country will listen to religious authority more than would a Western ruler.

Konyndyk: I think that if we grant that the state is a legitimate entity, that it really does have God-given authority, which I think it does, and if it does in some profound sense represent a people, then I think that government has the right and responsibility to protect the integrity of that country and to protect it from attacks from the outside. It would be remiss not to defend its people. And if that means going to war then I think going to war would be permissible. Paul [Stoub] may have a different view than I do, but I think I have an obligation to my family to defend them from attack. Likewise, the government has this same obligation. I think there's a sense in

which going to war could be not an immoral but a moral activity.

Stoub: As far as your claiming that I would probably disagree with protecting my family; well that is putting words into my mouth, Ken. I certainly would defend my family. And I would like to think that I would defend my community and my country too. But, you know, non-violence is often dismissed as a possibility for a defense, and I think that we should give at least some room to it.

Konyndyk: One of the criticisms of the just war theory I have noticed in defending it against people who are more specific than I am is that it hasn't succeeded in preventing war and that people use it as an excuse and pretext rather than a way of measuring actions. And there's a sense that that is a defect. Insofar as the defenders of the theory have let the theory be used in that way, I think that they have been taken in; they have done everything wrong by letting the theory be used that way. But of course when the theory is out there on the table, then anybody can pick it up and say, "I'm operating according to this theory." Our government more or less holds to a theory like that, and it thinks that a last resort means a couple of diplomatic contacts and if you don't get anywhere, well, that's it. Then what is just cause? Well, just cause is anything that can be construed as self-defense. One even heard those kinds of arguments about the war in Vietnam. The domino theory: first Southeast Asia, then the Philippines, then Hawaii, then the next thing you know, it's San Francisco. That's really a kind of extended self-defense. They use this because they know that's something that people accept.

Stoub: On the other hand, in a practical way, I like the picture of a good practical deterrent for the kind of violence we're right on the edge of. But still I don't hear the Gospel telling me that. From a practical point of view there's a lot of value to that position, but that is not how I read the Bible. I don't know quite what to do except to say I believe the Bible. When it really comes down to it, I have to make a choice about how I prefer to control my actions, and that's how I want to go—I want to follow Jesus. He invites me to take up my cross and follow Him and if it means death, if it means responding as He suggests in the face of an attack—a personal attack of an attack on my family—by giving up what I have and not resisting the attacker, then I take Him at His word.

Konyndyk: So your response a few minutes

ago, namely that you probably would defend your family, is a confession that you might lay at that point, something that you are not exactly consistent on.

Stoub: Well, I think that there is a place for non-violent defense, for taking blows or standing the way or trying to physically restrain somebody. And that's what I—in this rational calm conversation—would like to predict as how I would react. In fact, I don't keep a gun in the house not only because I'm a pacifist but also because I know how prone to violence I am, and that in such circumstances I may jump to use a gun because I'm like everybody else.

Harper: You're not talking passive resistance when you say pacifism; you do make a distinction.

Stoub: Well, passive is different than pacifism. I don't believe in being passive. I believe in taking action and doing what I can, standing up for what is right and trying to prevent harm and violence.

Harper: I'm not altogether happy with the manner of the brilliant example of passive resistance in Gandhi. It was all very easy for Gandhi because he had millions and millions of people who absorbed the blows. Also there was something a little bit manipulative about his policy. I'm not sure he was posing a Christian principle. I've heard Christians say that we should be like Gandhi. I'm so sure we would want to be.

Konyndyk: In Jacques Ellul's book on violence he says that in the case of Gandhi, the thing that makes non-violence work was the fact that it was up against the British conscience; if he had been up against the Nazi conscience or the Communist conscience, Gandhi would have disappeared in a few days, and that would have been the end of the movement. That is Ellul's answer to the people who say that non-violence works.

Harper: There's much truth to that because historically the British did have a very tender conscience in them. He observed that they were quite open to manipulation; they had a national conscience problem, and it became an albatross around their neck.

Konyndyk: Well, but you don't want to say that just because you can't guarantee that it's going to work every time that therefore we don't try it. If we had done as much thinking on developing non-violent ways of settling conflict as we have on developing weapons, we would be a lot closer to being able to settle conflicts nowadays than we are.

Harper: The status of Christ's words that

nt to obey to the letter, are those words in
nflict in the matter that we brought up earlier.
ie New Testament is in tension it seems. And
we have to take both of those poles in the
ision into account?

oub: The government needs to be guided by
justice, by what is good, and to that extent it
ould not, as the Apostle Paul says, be a terror
someone who's doing right.

rper: But it does have to be a terror to those
io do wrong. And that means arming the
vernment.

oub: But arming the government to prevent
rder is still far away from building an army and
nting a war. We're talking about internal order
d orderliness; that's the part the government
eds to attend to. Now how it does this is a
tter for which it is accountable, and if it spills
ocent blood then it will be judged for that.

rper: The government is also the agent for ex-
nal order.

oub: Where do you get that?

rper: In the nature of things, contiguous
ntries are bound to have tension at their
rders, trade difficulties, imbalance and so on.
vitably, the government also has to look at its
ernal relationships which might include
usting injustice across the border.

oub: But isn't that interfering with the God-
en responsibility of that other country?

rper: You would rule out the principle of the
-emptive strike if there was a perceived threat
your government via its neighbor? That has
ome a very popular doctrine.

oub: I think it is atrocious. I think it is far away
m anything that would even fit under a just war
ory.

rper: It might be atrocious only in its most
urd and extreme examples. A strike against
l. Ghadafi for example, strikes me as absurd.

ersma: But most people don't perceive that
a pre-emptive strike. They say we are retaliat-
for terrorist activities.

rper: But it is pre-emptive in a way though,
ause it is supposed to remind him that he
it get away with this for long.

ersma: It's an over-response to terrorism.

rper: There are some observers who think
t the strike against Col. Ghadafi, in fact, had
effect of slowing down the terrorism. Statis-
lly, there doesn't seem to be as much as
ore.

'ou do agree that, though this hasn't solved
problem, it may have deterred the reaction
porarily.

Konyndyk: When you start responding with
violence you encourage the other to respond to
you that way, and then you have to hit him back
harder.

Harper: There's a remarkable old Laurel and
Hardy movie in which they're in a line of auto-
mobiles leading to the beach and they are
stopped for some reason, and one of the auto-
mobiles lightly bumps the car ahead of them. The
driver of the bumped car gets out and goes to the
back and looks at the people in the car that

War's such a mindless thing.

bumped him, kicks on their headlights which
then falls off, and gets back in his car. The people
in that car come forward and they kick his front
wheel. He waits a minute to collect himself, goes
back and gives a tremendous kick to their car
and the tire falls off. Other people get into the act
because they can't go forward or backward. And
within five minutes, the entire line of cars is
bashed into each other. In five minutes you have
global conflict.

Konyndyk: I want to ask something of Paul. You
are a protester of sorts, withholding your tax
money that goes to the military; but as I hear, you
are not opposed to armaments altogether.

Stoub: If there was a move toward disarmament,
a more tangible move in that direction, then I
would end my protest.

Konyndyk: Maybe I need to hear the nature of
your protest. You think that this is a form of in-
justice you are protesting; I want to ask: if our
government does a lot of other unjust things, why
do you protest this one?

Stoub: A good question, a fair question. I've
been withholding a portion of my income tax
directly proportional to what goes to the military,
not because I think it is foolishly spent, or that
there is inordinate waste, but because I think it is
really idolatrous. Here we are as a nation, putting
all of our trust in the military, which is unmis-
takably militarism and idolatry. Militarism is
putting your trust in the military—not just having
the military as a backup for a healthy and
prosperous society, or having it in the wings to
defend the borders—but putting it right in the
forefront, economically and diplomatically, so
that everything that the U.S. does both internally
and internationally is coerced by the presence of
the overwhelmingly military. That's why I'm pro-



sting—because I consider it idolatrous to do it. For me, to contribute would be to participate. Now that's far different than wasting money on various programs which you may think are alternately foolish or selfish.

Konyndyk: So it's really a different argument about non-violence. That is to say, even though I don't espouse theological or philosophical non-violence, I might nevertheless withhold my tax money for the very same reasons. In fact, listening to you, I wondered whether I should.

Wiersma: That's right, and maybe that hints at the difference that I do make for the standard of conduct I apply to myself and how I spend my money, and the standards of conduct that government has. As I said, if the government turned away from this overweening dependence on the military, then I would resume paying my taxes, not because I think the military is an especially good thing, but because it would no longer be an idolatrous involvement.

Harper: Bob, you've been with the military for a while; what is the general attitude toward their function? How does the average young military officer look upon his calling, after you discount the fascination with the bells and whistles? Do they have a philosophical perspective on the matter?

Wiersma: I don't think there is one all-encompassing view that's held by all officers of the military. But I think that there is a kind of inter-sectional communist conspiracy theory. The viet Union in all military documents is always plied.

Harper: Is there an official attempt to inculcate a standard point of view, a government issue point of view on the soldiers?

Wiersma: The thing that stands clearest in my mind is when I was at basic training, six years ago as a private when I first joined. We had a course where we learned how to use a bayonet, and all the dummies on the course were Soviet soldiers, with Soviet helmets on and carrying Soviet rifles. And so I think that they are gearing us toward the area of conflict. I was always tempted and always being pulled into thinking of Soviet citizens as something less than human. But I read books like Sider's on nuclear war, and realize that a large percentage of the Soviet population is in fact Christian. Then I swing back to the question that was originally raised about Christian principle in international politics and wonder; God gave the sword to temporal authority, but does that mean that He gave it to Ronald Reagan

but didn't give it to Kime Sons, the North Korean leader, or even Hitler? Hitler came to power. He was in charge of Germany. Did not God also give him the sword to wield?

Harper: Well, the train rolls back.

Konyndyk: Do you feel like an odd person in the military sometimes, Bob? Do you feel that you are a lot more reflective about what you're doing than the other people there? That you're not quite so eager to run off and shoot somebody as maybe some of your colleagues are?

Wiersma: Well, of the soldiers that I know best, most are from Christian backgrounds; most of them are Protestants as a matter of fact. And with my closest friends, no, I don't feel that way. But in the sea of thousands, maybe I do feel like I'm kind of an oddity. But I'm not planning on going out and quitting as a result of it. The way I look at it is this: how horrible it would be if all Christians were to refuse to participate in the military and what a horrible institution it would become. I think it's a comfort both to me and to my parents that there are people who consider these things and who take part in them. Remember Lt. Kaly who massacred all those people in Vietnam? I think that those kinds of things would be a lot more common if there were fewer Christians in the military.

Harper: No, we had on campus two weeks ago a speaker; Col. Scott, who was a very good soldier. No matter how you slice it, he did his job well. But in a conversation with him I found out the guy is simply not a stereotypical gung-ho military person. He saw his calling as any army officer entailing doing a good job, doing what he's told within the limits of his conscience and being ready to defend his country. A lot of old-fashioned patriotic noises came up that night. I didn't hear any red-baiting business and he was remarkably right-minded, you might say, on the matter of arming the contras: that is, very much against it. He gave a number of arguments exposing the folly of that policy. It was his contention that a great many of his acquaintances at his level, Colonels, Brigadier Generals and so on, were simply not quite convinced by the administration's arguments about Central America. Now it is possible that a man like that might at some juncture have kept other unreflecting officers from doing what they should have done. I'm glad a man like that was in there, a Christian man. He didn't wait for us to pray over our supper, he started off himself. I'm glad that guy's in there. Maybe I can lament that we

have armies.

War's such a mindless thing, but if we have to have one, I'd prefer to have an army of Chuck Scott's, of Bob Wiersma's. But that doesn't solve the question: should we have an army at all?

Konyndyk: As I understand what Paul was arguing earlier, he didn't object to this country having an army but to its having the size of army and the armaments.

Stoub: That's right. That's the point at which my connection with it is intolerable to me. I would argue against having an army, but I would like to do that in the context of being able to convince people, not coerce them.

Wiersma: It's the gunboat diplomacy type of army that they have now. You asked me what I think are the opinions of my fellow soldiers. I think most of them would agree that if we lived in a peaceful world, the ideal situation would be that they wouldn't have a job.

Stoub: I want to distinguish a group, people who are Christians by profession and have devotions and treat the people around them in a humane way yet fail to apply the constraints of the Kingdom on their public action or even their official action for government. People can be misleading about that. They can be responding out of hatred for communism or Russians that clearly is far from what Christ is calling us to be. So this argument about being Christian and being in the military and that's a comfort, I don't buy at all. There were Christians who were dropping nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and it was a despicable un-Christian thing to do. We can't take comfort in that. We are judged for that kind of action as a nation regardless of whether we come home and pray over our supper. A lot of your arguments here about having a military and so on, seem to be based on pragmatic considerations. My favorite heroes in the Bible are the three friends of Daniel who stood up to King Nebuchadnezzar and said "We won't bow down to your idol. We won't commit idolatry, and the Lord our God is powerful to defend us. Even if he doesn't save us from death, we still will refuse to do it." I think that's more the direction we ought to be taking as citizens, as citizens of the United States, as citizens of God's Kingdom. That's the thing we ought to be encouraging each other toward rather than always coming down to what's pragmatic, what's practical, what works. We ought not defend non-violence on the basis that it worked in India. I think we ought to be non-violent because that's the example Jesus gave

us. Difficult though it may be, that's the direction in which we ought to be heading.

Harper: Once again, is that in tension with the New Testament's clear statement that there is no sword given to the government?

Stoub: Well, I think there is a conflict there for anyone who wants to become involved in the government. Serving in congress or in the military, you have to be clear about where your allegiances are. You have to say at some point, "I can go this far and no further." And to take an oath of office that may require you to do something that's against your principles or the principles given you by religion, I think is irresponsible. You have choices. You can say, "I won't do that."

Harper: What about the fact that there is nuclear potential? Are we not obliged to fight the threat? And what if the only means to fight it is to build up our country's nuclear capacity? Is the Christian responsible for the continuance of the world?

Stoub: The Christian is responsible to preserve and tend Creation. This whole nuclear question brings the issue sharply into focus. The question as I see it is this: Can we fight death with death? Can we fight threat with threat? Can we fight evil with evil?

Harper: I agree with you that we are obliged to tend creation. Things have come to the point where tending creation may very well mean creating a counter force which is inevitably itself destructive. We're stuck. I don't see what we can do about it.

Mast: I don't necessarily see developing another counter attack as the means of restoring the world. If they send their missiles over, will we send ours back as a kind of last goodbye? I don't see this whole build-up getting us anywhere.

Konyndyk: The present policy is such that we maintain the ability to blow the Russians up because they have the ability to blow us up, and because we counter-balance each other, we are each afraid to do that. I think that you are right saying that's a morally unacceptable position. Christian can't justify it on just war standards anything else.

Harper: But is the Christian obliged to say okay, here I am, go ahead, send the stuff over?

Konyndyk: But what should we do about it? Should we unilaterally disarm? Should we do what we've been trying to do, but try a bit harder? It looks like the President had a pretty good shot at it, and he passed it up.

Stoub: The proposal finally falls out on the table. He walks away from it.

Harper: That's, in fact, what happened.

Konyndyk: He refused to trade his bird in the hand for two in the hand.

Harper: If you had been in a position of power, a Christian would you have, in fact, said, "We are not going to counter you. We are obliged not to counter you. Our principles are such that we do not absorb anything you send us?"

Stoub: No retaliation; that's the clearest

Missiveness is different than Retaliation.

meaning of what Jesus says.

Harper: So Jesus is counseling us over 1900 years of distance.

Stoub: He says don't retaliate. In fact, I think you can even interpret His words as saying don't consider your attacker to be your enemy.

Konyndyk: It seems to me that Paul is right, that retaliation when you are threatened is a thoughtless and mindless retaliation. If the Soviets were to blow us all away it seems to be a gross mindlessness to say, "Well, I'm going to retaliate against you with me."

Stoub: And when you eliminate that use for nuclear weapons, the only use is for first strike, which you wouldn't permit either.

Harper: But does mutually assured destruction look like the only policy?

Konyndyk: You have these weapons and there are only two things to do with them, but you can't do either because both options are immoral. It looks like the position we are in.

Stoub: This is why SDI is so popular among a lot of Christian organizations; because you are not going down, you are not attacking, but what is posed is that the missiles will be shot down out of range of this world, and it's going to stay out of range from this world. That's why it is so popular.

The fact remains that the nuclear means of destroying the world are here, and we have to decide what we are going to do. We can't turn our backs on it, but we also can't keep building them. The time has come for bilateral talks.

Harper: If we can't use them then why do we have them?

Harper: That's the whole paradox right there.

Konyndyk: The thing is that people are casting about the justification for that policy because, rightly or wrongly, they perceive this mutual ability to destroy each other as what has kept the balance; the balance of terror has been, in fact, what has kept peace between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. But is that what has done it, or not? It's pretty hard to say.

Konyndyk: We want to decide. But as moral Christian human beings, is this a policy that we can ascribe to or not? The only case in its favor is the pragmatic one—that it seems to have worked.

Stoub: What do you think would happen if we began to dispose of nuclear weapons?

Harper: Unilaterally?

Stoub: Yes, let's say that the U.S. would begin.

Harper: There would be economic chaos, tremendous realignment of power. And perhaps we would even experience a realignment in values. You might even find people sitting down to read. But that isn't a very real possibility.

Stoub: But Japan has been practically disarmed, and they have experienced tremendous

All the dummies on the course were Soviet soldiers.

economic growth as a result.

Harper: But they have also experienced an erosion in traditional values. I don't want to make the case that military alertness is somehow good for a nation, but Japan is morally a mess. The fall-out of their industrial policy is horrifying, what it has done to people, to society. It's true they haven't put much of their gross national product into armaments, but they didn't have to flex their military muscles to take over Southeast Asia. I guess there is just no answer to all of this. Not in the worldly sense. Your answer [to Stoub] is the right one, but my view is that you better start training people to handle the problems that come up in the world. You are not going to get them all converted to Christ's view.

Konyndyk: There are people studying non-violent resistance of various sorts, trying to distill out various effective types of non-violence. Certainly there should be peace studies of this sort,

but there is also a lot to be done on a personal level, such as developing in ourselves and in our community non-confrontational ways of conflict resolution. But look at the reluctance of people to go to a reconciliation service instead of going to court and battling it out. There is a combative spirit that we all have that is really basic. A lot of this is created by feeling that if you and I disagree, well, let's just step outside into the alley way and get it settled. A lot of us, and myself included, are feisty characters.

Harper: Historically there have been attempts to do that on an international scale, the League of Nations, for example, which was in effect an international conflict resolution center. Incipient conflicts would first be referred to it so that they would not go to war. The United Nations was supposed to be the avatar of that failed experiment.

Konyndyk: The United Nations certainly hasn't solved everything, but I think the U.N. has served to reduce the number of armed conflicts, and shortened conflicts that have erupted. There is a group, an international body that will say, "Okay you guys, call it off, and we will keep the peace here."

Harper: It didn't work very well in the proxy conflict that took place between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in Korea.

Konyndyk: I think that for nations other than big nations such as the U.S. and Russia, it has helped resolve their problems.

I think that one of the ways too that we can push harder is within the churches. In studying the just war theory it has struck me that although our church and other things that you haul out after your country is at war to justify what it is doing, instead of something that is laid in the people's hands with, "this is the way war should be evaluated." We should teach it more to young people, to the college-age people.

Mast: As far as the responsibility of the church, people in the church must write to their representatives on different issues, telling them, "Listen, we believe this is the right way this should be done." Maybe this is another way we can avoid military conflict.

Konyndyk: From what I know of the history of the denomination we have apparently experienced a bit of a shift in that regard since the First World War.

Harper: Oh, yes, the most influential newspaper in Northwest Iowa was run by a pacifist.

Konyndyk: CRC people, I think, wanted to stay

out of the world, but since then they have become patriots.

Harper: Historically, though, we have never been a peace church.

Konyndyk: The first time we ever made a statement on the issue was in 1939, and that was actually in response to Diedrich Kromminga who wanted the church to take a pacifist position, and that is why the document consists basically of arguments against pacifism. If you look for a kind of a just war theory, you really won't find a whole lot.

Stoub: A lot of these arguments come through the 1977 documents as well.

Konyndyk: Is that right? I thought they had gotten a lot of that out of it. Well, the theme is there.

Stoub: Yes, they still give reasons why pacifism is not an acceptable alternative. One time I was teaching an interim course and I had someone back and research old *Banner* editorials prior to World War I. The prevailing idea was that the U.S. shouldn't have anything to do with it. They would not deal with it until 1941.

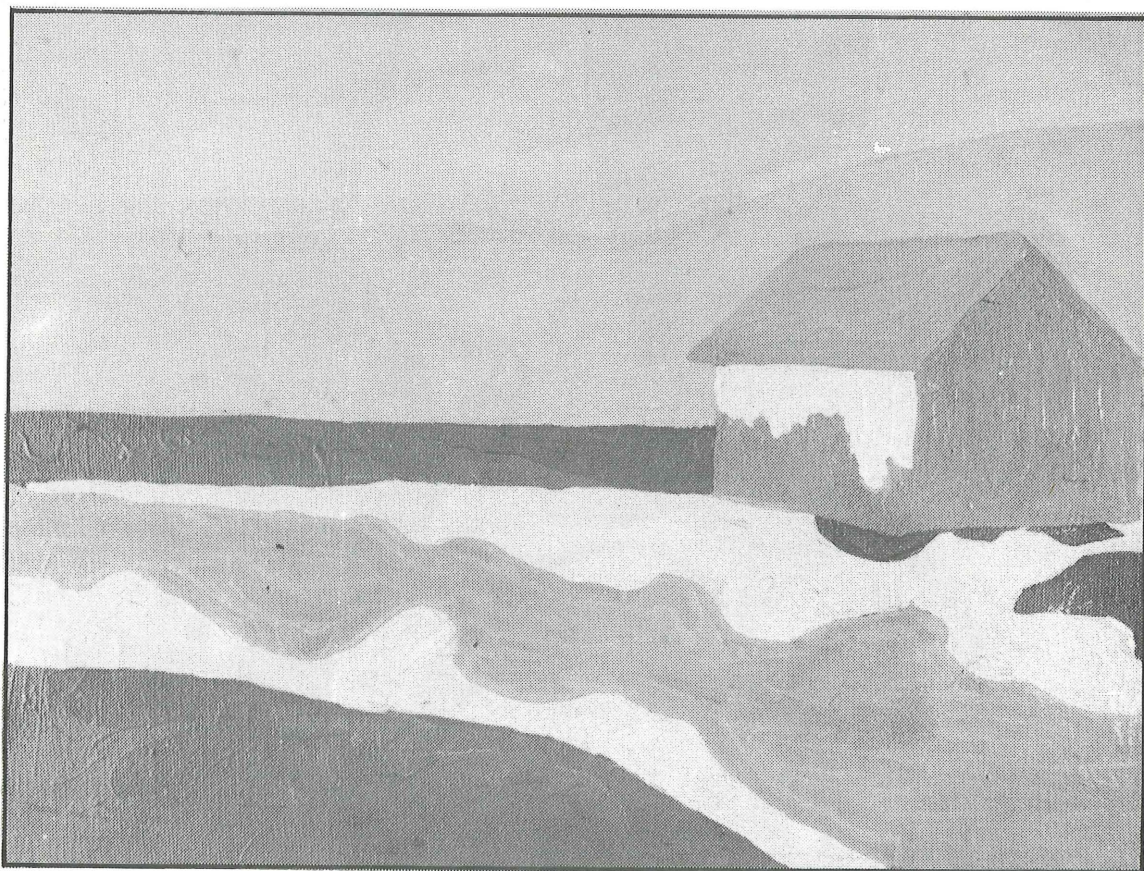
Harper: Of course, this was isolationist territory.

Konyndyk: Yes, I suppose it was isolationist spirit as much as anything. We haven't changed all that much. We follow too much the current around us in deciding what we think about war instead of having an independent Christian position.



Portfolío

Sharon Hill









A Housecall

Time took a bite of me today.
(He makes his housecalls daily.)
I watched him chew and savor it
With surgical precision
And neatly lick my body wound.
(I offered him a candy mint
But he protested with a steady hand.)
"Until tomorrow, then?" I said
And paid the minimal fee.
(My insurance didn't cover it.)
He smiled through a bone-stretched face
And nodded kindly, "Yes,
Until I've sucked the final morsel from your bones."
(Chronos has been known to eat his children.)
He tipped his stylish hat
And marched on to the house next door.

—A. Deliyannides

A Lullaby of the Moon

Slipping through the window
(I thought I had shut it)
Is a lullaby.
Barefoot
I stand by the blue window.
The crescent moon looks
As if it were breaking.

Who's singing out there?
Who's crying in the dark?

The day you say to somebody
"I'm all right."
You are left alone.

Smiling
The pale crescent is just about to break.
Just about to break.

Who's singing out there?
Who's crying in the dark?

The day he blames the world
"I hate to grow up!"
A child learns a trick of the grown-up's.

How old are you going to be?
How old are you going to be tomorrow?

The day you can start saying
(yes, saying)
"I'm scared of nothing,"
They will call you a grown-up.

Innocently
A child degenerates into the grown-up.

Who's singing out there?
Who's crying in the dark?

Comes the night
The moon becomes a baby again
Crying, crying,
Scared of being alone.

—M. Inoue

Meditation

The cold, leafless trees beat their dark branches together in the chill, any wind. Perhaps there will be snow by morning. The holiday will bring respite from the onslaught of new work, though some seem to believe that assigning more work or break will encourage prudent use of time, and so most of us leave our sheltered community, venture forth to enlighten our parents with our new knowledge. Thanksgiving means going home, home-cooking, activities, a fire in the fireplace. This is all a good thing, having a dear place in our memories and future ones. But sometimes all this seems to be such an empty thing. Do we ever really take it seriously, rattling in our prayers strings of thank-yous: "Thank you, Lord, for our parents, for a place where we can learn, for our professors, friends, and food. . . ." It is a list we can do in memory without thinking too much. At the end of dark, cold, grey November comes this celebration of thanks, connoting home and full bellies, hunger more than sated, and eyes dimmed with nostalgia. And we see the whole idea of thanks for granted, ourselves being well-filled. We deserve none of it. It is almost funny that we should celebrate thanks by feasting ourselves on good food, napping afterwards, and eating cold turkey much later. We do not even deserve the very life that flows in our bodies and spirits, the goodness of each breath of air we are given. Yet they are given freely. All that has life and breath is a free gift, so free that we do not stop to think about it, and yet we do not think about it. . . nothing would be. What

is that thing that keeps us going, that keeps our heart beating, lungs breathing, makes life seem so precious and permanent and hardy to us? How quickly the light can be snuffed. There is terror in that thought, a terror that makes me wish I had not taken so much for granted and that I would cease to take things for granted. Family is always there, unless. . . . There is always a warm place to come home to at night, a bed for someone to spend whatever precious hours of sleep we may have. The very life that flows in us, through us is a precious electricity that we mispend or over- conserve too well. But guilt is also a waste. Thanksgiving.

Giving thanks, an easy phrase to say but the implications are staggering. The minister always tells us in the Thanksgiving Day service to make a list of things we are thankful for and then to pray a short silent thanks—giving a space less than five minutes as the congregation sits in silence with rumbling stomachs more concerned with dinner that will be served shortly. Brightly colored thoughts click through people's heads, a day of particular beauty, back in October the trees were on fire and the sky was not translucent, but a bold blue with high, waving clouds, mother's auburn head bent over her Bible early mornings in a quiet house, the test that towered so large and finally was over. . . . It is the good that we remember. Paul, however, reminds us that we are to give thanks in all things, so that even the grieving parents who lost their seventeen-year-old son in the late summer, and

the lonely widower, the old woman racked with pain from a debilitating bone disease, those who are near death and those who are alone and bitter have thanks to give. Thanks for the gift of life and thanks even in the unexpected—and expected sorrows and pains. Thanks for the suffering that builds character, thanks for the "dark nights of the soul," where thanksgiving seemed impossible and yet was just as appropriate, if not more so.

All this somehow comes to bear on what was initiated as a feast of thanks and celebration for a good harvest and survival—and the assurance that because of good harvest, continued survival would be possible, not easy perhaps, but possible. So for a day we set aside time to remember and be thankful, not meaning that we should always be smiley and merry about telling how thankful we are for everything, never having days where getting out of bed is almost impossible and the brain doesn't want to function at eight o'clock with anything more than a headache, days when absolutely everything that possibly can go wrong does—the long, busy ones that we so often encounter. Rather while we especially remember the good in this Thanksgiving day, we can the rest of the time perhaps remember the awesome gift we are given with each new morning we see without fail, Life.

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." —I Cor. 15:57

—Rose Cunningham

