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The Canon, 1993-94

Dordt College

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### The Dordt College Canon

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**Volume 24**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regarding the Process of Becoming A Man</td>
<td>Brian Huseland</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Native Americans and A Man Who Looked Polish</td>
<td>Luke Schelhaas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dekalb</td>
<td>Sonya Jongsm</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet Paper Dispensers: the good, the bad, and the ugly</td>
<td>Sonja Brue</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is a round foot</td>
<td>Brian Huseland</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One A.M. Speedy Wash</td>
<td>Eric Epp</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Luke Schelhaas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Memory of Winter</td>
<td>Heather Hamilton</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Craving</td>
<td>Hannah Rainbow</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springs and Twisted Stuff</td>
<td>Dirk Zwart</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Ben Meyer</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paethon's Road</td>
<td>Brian Huseland</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chellie's Sister</td>
<td>Juanito Moore</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropicanna</td>
<td>Juanito Moore</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricky</td>
<td>Karen Martinus</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragility</td>
<td>Juanito Moore</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the mysteries of life and the questions within represented by a road sign leading to nowhere</td>
<td>Aaron Vander Hart</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelican</td>
<td>Jeremy Thompson</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Ben Meyer</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Melissa Howard</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space Trip</td>
<td>Aaron Vander Hart</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>Melissa Howard</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Face</td>
<td>Dawn Bakker</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>Juanito Moore</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restful Thought</td>
<td>Rachelle Martinus</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>Juanito Moore</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Karen Martinus</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovers</td>
<td>Aaron Vander Hart</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goin' to the Chapel</td>
<td>Melissa Howard</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Jeremy Thompson</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>Monica VanReenen</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thede</td>
<td>Dawn Bakker</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>Jeremy Thompson</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun-catcher</td>
<td>Brian Huseland</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>John Ploegstra</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs</td>
<td>Jacco de Vin</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stillborn</td>
<td>George Vander Beek</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Fire for Jesus</td>
<td>Tim Sheridan</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Professor of Building 50</td>
<td>Eric Epp</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Savior and the Saved</td>
<td>Luke Schelhaas</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup is Good Food</td>
<td>Dirk Zwart</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titled</td>
<td>Luke Schelhaas</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty in the Eyes of Faith</td>
<td>Ron Rynders</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>Unknown Author</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking in the Mirror to See the Present</td>
<td>Mike Vanden Bosch</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh</td>
<td>Brian Huseland</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Psalm</td>
<td>Lee De Haan</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Distributed April 1, 1994*
Regarding The Process Of Becoming a Man

Brian Huseland

What tells a boy in the youngtime
He must move on?
Who whispers in his simple soul
What and how it is to be A Man?

Pushed by expectations
And the paradox of Manhood,
A boy soon learns to cast aside his youth
And live a hypocrite of time:
Pure, yet wicked;
Ruthless, yet loveful;
Tamed by woman (sweetly subject)
Yet savage and always darkly wild;
But never, EVER

child
Three Native Americans and A Man Who Looked Polish

Luke Schelhaas

We watched the hookers move up and down the avenue. It was our first night on SERVE in Toronto, and it seemed like such an irony to me that those women chose to prowl along the curb in tight jeans or miniskirts directly across the street from us and the most conservative Baptist church in town. Six or seven young girls and women stood on the corner, some talking on the pay phones outside of Harold’s Restaurant, some loitering under the street light talking to the guys who walked by. There were two who drove up in their sleek new cars. “They have territories,” I thought to myself, “can you believe it? Territories.” Like specimens under close observation by a bunch of teenage boys, the hookers performed as hookers should, I suppose, as we watched them move about in the dark night. From the second floor of the seminary building where we were staying, I looked down and thought, “What a horrible, evil place this is. We don’t have whores in Sioux Center.” For me, Godless Babylon was right here in North America, Sodom and Gomorrah on the corner of Jarvis and Younge.

I saw in these few women the sum total of all the sin in that lost city. With a grimace (or was it a smile?), I thought of all the juicy wrongdoings I would be witness to that week, worthy of Oprah or Mory Povich. I thought of wickedness personified. Looking down into the decadence spawning below me, I decided that it was a lucky thing for the sinners in Toronto I had come. I was here to help them and boy did they need it. Instead of looking at SERVE as an opportunity to be a Christian servant to less fortunate individuals, I saw it as a chance to show off my goodness to individuals who were “less good.”

Eventually we’d had our fill and found our ways back to our sleeping bags, which smelled of attics in our friendly houses, in nicer towns. While we slept, the girls outside must have moved farther into the darkness of the night, away from the pale lights of Jarvis Street Baptist. The bums sleeping in the park next to us clutched tighter to their blankets, I suppose, and dreamed of sunshine while the dealers made their entrance into night.

The next day was one I will never forget. There was nothing of earth-shattering importance that happened that day; no gushy love moment that memories are made of. There was simply a football game like no other in history. It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon in early July, our first full day on SERVE. This particular day held no formal activities for us until evening, so our afternoon was up to us. Some guys and I decided to get a game of football going. We recruited four of our youth leaders to join us, and at 1:30 we hopped over the fence into the park which occupied the rest of the block on which the church was located. As we walked out to a spot suitable for a pick-up game of football, I couldn’t help but notice the number of street people, hopeless men and women, who stared at us as we walked by. But some didn’t stare. There was a man sleeping on a park bench. He was dirty and his clothes were torn. Flies swarmed him, occasionally landing in the corner of his eye or on his cheek, which twitched and sent them flying again. An old lady sat in the shade of a large tree, scratching her sad, wrinkled face and talking to herself in words I could not understand. A bearded man was passed out in a bus stop shelter, an empty bottle wrapped in a brown paper bag still gripped in his left hand.

It felt a little odd, playing football in our expensive shorts and name brand shoes in the midst of such poverty. It felt wrong to be in the presence of these poor people and to be dressed so well. But I wasn’t given much time to dwell on that thought. I wasn’t given the time, yet, to think about my role and my relationship to these lonely people. For I was soon swept into the excitement of an unusual game of touch football.

On my team were my uncle and cousin from Edgerton, Minnesota, and Steve Westra, a friend of mine from church. The other team consisted of three youth leaders, and two guys from Michigan. Things started out normal enough, but not five minutes into the game three Native Americans and a man with red hair who looked Polish approached us and asked if they could play. The red-haired fellow’s left arm was a stump at the elbow, and all four of them were stone drunk. There was a break in the action while new teams were made. Now my team had the added assistance of two wasted Indians, and the opposition had Red Hair and his drunk friend. From that point on the game declined in quality of play but increased in hilarity.

New game: Red Hair took the quarterback position for his team and called for the ball. “Now, on two,” he said. “Ready?... one... two...” he paused,
pondering what came next, then shouted, “Oh, hike! Hike! I said hike!” He got the ball, moved back to scan the field, and nearly tripped. The Indian on his team, a big, sloppy man, lumbered fatly toward the wrong end zone, calling for the ball. Red Hair was soon touched by my cousin and it was second down. The fat Indian lumbered slowly back, and Red Hair belched out, “What the heckh...?” sounding very confused.

On the next play Red Hair wasn’t sure, himself, which direction he was going, although the large Indian seemed pretty sure it was back. In fact, none of the four new players had much of an idea as to what was going on. They were playing defense on themselves, and were often going down for a pass when it wasn’t their ball.

During one play all havoc broke loose. There were Indians and Polish guys everywhere, running in circles, not sure where to go or how to get there. The ball was fumbled and recovered by my team. The group of four danced around like big, confused ballerinas, still looking for the ball. Two of our youth leaders tried to explain that the play was over, while the rest of us sat and laughed. Red Hair stopped and called time out, making the official sign for it with his stump. He stood amid the chaos shouting, “What the heckh...?”

It was now our ball, about a third of the way to our end zone. We huddled up to make a play. We had already discovered how drunk these guys were, and as the huddle formed, we found out how drunk they actually smelled. We joked later that one could have easily passed out from smelling them in a tightly formed circle like that, and that’s not too far from the truth. The play called for one of the Indians to go down for a short pass along the sideline. My uncle got the ball off the hike and turned to look for the Indian, who was skipping down the sideline oblivious to my uncle’s shouts of: “Hey! You!” Eventually he turned, caught a slow, floating pass, and ran into a park bench. To our bewilderment, he grabbed onto the back rest with one hand, did a complete flip over the bench, and landed on his butt, ball in hand, fairly stunned and exceedingly happy. Not only had he caught the pass, but he had gotten a first down, and it was still our ball.

We huddled again in a wider circle and held our breath as the other Indian said that he would like to be quarterback. My uncle was supposed to go deep for a pass that we figured would never get to him. The ball was hiked, then thrown. It didn’t look too beautiful, flopping through the air, but we couldn’t complain. It got to my uncle, who caught it, turned and ran. Then, from out of nowhere, Red Hair lunged and tackled him. They hit the ground together with a muffled crunch. My uncle disentangled himself, got up and ran for a touchdown. Red Hair later questioned him: “I tackled you,” he said, “... didn’t I tackle you...?” My uncle looked at this man with only one hand, laughed and said, “No. It’s two-hand touch.” Red Hair called time out on his stump and said, “What the heckh...?”

Eventually things, and people, slowed down. One of the Indians ran into a sapling and passed out, and there was a mutual, unspoken agreement to end the game. The Indians (those who weren’t too inebriated) and the Polish-looking gentleman thanked us for letting them play, and we thanked them for playing. They walked off together in the direction they had been heading when we’d first seen them. I watched them walk off across the park, stepping in and out of sunlight, in and out of shade...

Behind me a man was bathing in a fountain. He was unashamed. He washed himself clean and sat in the sun to dry. He turned and looked straight at me and smiled. I saw a speck in his eye. Did he see the block in mine?

I turned my face away, but he was unashamed...

Four figures moved slowly towards the other end of the park, unashamed...

* * *

But I, as I watched, was filled with a kind of shame so different from that which I had expected in them. I was ashamed of the way I had looked at them when I’d first seen them. I was ashamed of how I’d looked at the hookers and of what I’d thought of them. They weren’t evil, just unfortunate, and instead of having pity, I’d looked down on them. From the beginning I had labeled them, seen them as bigger sinners. But who is better, really? The hookers, the bums, the drunks—they are all the same as I am. We all sin. Jesus didn’t shed a larger portion of his blood for them than he did for me. His sacrifice is enough to save all sinners, and I am included in that as well as they are.

Those football players really changed my attitude. With no more than a bird’s-eye view of a few unfortunate women, I had judged the people of Toronto. I had jumped to conclusions about the people I would meet that week and the things I could teach them. But I was not the teacher that day. Those drunks, with nothing better to do on a Sunday afternoon, taught me a very important lesson without even trying. I’m sure: I’m a sinner, too. I, who am not nearly as sinless as I had once believed, had thrown too many stones. Now I had to pick them all up.
**Dekalb**

Sonya Jongsma

grab, pull-monotony
a world of green
stretching as far as the eye can see.
workers continue in a seemingly endless task
over and over
with no relief
until . . .
a lone tassel arcs gracefully through the air
spies its target
direct hit!
a flurry of tassels
fires above the tops of the plants,
answering the challenge
"THE FOREMAN!"—
all returns to normal
grab, pull-monotony
interrupted only by the sound of workers
(together, yet alone)
humming or singing to their music
they hurry through the row—some carefully, some carelessly.
Weary legs pick up their pace
the end is in sight
to collapse on the dirt at the end of the trek
all too short, the water break is over.
Workers are herded into rows
like cattle into chutes
some silent, some talking and laughing
thirty fingers hit play
oblivious to their surroundings
work is resumed
grab, pull-monotony
interrupted only by the flight of a lonely tassel
Toilet Paper Dispensers: the good, the bad, the ugly
Sonja Brue

I have often found myself contemplating the different aspects of toilet paper dispensers. My deep respect for these dispensers has developed through many years of experience with these important, but often overlooked, instruments. Every day people are faced with difficult situations involving toilet paper dispensers. We should take a closer look at the different characteristics of dispensers in order to cultivate our skills in dispenser interaction.

The first type of dispenser, the good, is my personal favorite. These are the dispensers which have an abundant supply of toilet paper. These dispensers have stable and efficient center axes which release the paper easily, quickly, and quietly. This type of dispenser is most beneficial to those persons who do not relish the thought of spending ten minutes or more in a bathroom stall or who are in a hurry. Quick, easy, and efficient describe a good dispenser.

The bad dispenser is one that increases a person's stay in a bathroom for more than three minutes over the normal time needed. The bad dispenser can be concealed within the body of a good dispenser capturing the unknowing victim in a no-win situation. These dispensers are greedy and obstinate—hardly allowing the person to obtain any paper from the roll. The person faced with a bad dispenser has to fight with the dispenser and slowly obtain the necessary paper. This is simply a no-win situation for those persons in a hurry.

The third type of dispenser is what I call the ugly. This is the dispenser which is older than the hills. It is rusty, omits loud, loathsome sounds, and has a hideous odor. The people who interact with these dispensers find the task of finding an end virtually impossible. This results in repeatedly rotating the roll in search of an end. This can produce embarrassing noises for the person dealing with this dispenser, unpleasant odors, and also wastes valuable time. The ugly dispenser is not as much of an obstacle as the bad dispenser, but it can cause embarrassment and frustration.

There are simply no easy answers for the dilemmas we face every day in the bathroom. However, understanding the different types of dispensers goes a long way in preventing the negative consequences which result from a bad dispenser choice. Recognizing a bad or ugly dispenser before it is too late can result in a sense of well-being and establish good dispenser discretion.
Time is a round fool
Brian Huseland

Twiceaday
it sits and stands,
Staggers up
To its predestined place;
Quickly it returns
down to its once previous position.
and waits:
(for a very shortwhile)
as it hums,
To scrambleback s l o w—

CLOCK(not very)WISE
One A.M. Speedy Wash

Eric Epp

I sit and stare
black lady with grey hair
resting in a paisley chair
laying with her laundry
like a lover.

Sounds of screeching
from fat flabby arms
folding pants.
"'been trying to get
these stains out
for years and
I don't know
what to do."

Looking to see
where she is
yelling. I see
the man staring
out the window.
His white
tattered tank-top
exposes his shoulders,
once broad and powerful,
now shrunk to his gut.
His chest-hairs are
soft, grey, malleable.

When she is done,
they boldly dash
out the door.
Whisking down the
road paying
no mind to the
tide of traffic.

Staring
at the woman I think
Rigamortes has set in
and my load is unbalanced.
sad

Luke Schelhaas

how terribly sad it must be
when your life is a lie
to go home all alone
to the truth
In Memory of Winter
Heather Hamilton

Snow falls and falls and falls and falls
Whispering, whistling, winter calls
Evergreen wrapped in woolen shawls
or sprinkled with confectionary.
The icy fog, so cold and grey
slinks away by light of day
and laces twigs to bridal spray
woven round the sanctuary.

Shifting dunes and jagged mountains
Carved in foam the little-girl dens
shelter them from fledgling demons
hurling pallid, lethal spheres.
Dazzling mirror on the ground
Whorling paths for “fox and hound”
And guardian angels hover round
singing hymns in snowmen’s ears.

Flitting fairies tease the sunlight
Streets and sidewalks shimmer moon-white
brushing bright the silent midnight
that splatters on my bedroom wall.
While silver blades glide and fly
And manna tumbles from the sky
I sit inside and wonder why
in growing big I’ve grown so small.
The Craving

Hannah Rainbow

Winding down around into the ground
The will to drive, to keep alive the strength
to hold
the clenched control
that roped around my heart my soul
all the scattered strands
once bound together so tight and so right
they wisp and fly
on waves of wind
bending, turning, dancing
curning
angry, angry embers burning
Help Me Now before I’m down
fists unclenching
waters drenching
soaked
I lie, letting go and so
so afraid that
oh! I’ve lost that grip
helpless in the wind
nothing to hold it’s all spinning around
inside my stomach
between my ribs and my throat
and somewhere up in my head
so weak and tottering
my center of gravity is somewhere up there
dancing around
so afraid I’ll trip and
fall . . . for you
are always there walking around
and breathing in my brain.
It was only wind in my hair
but it’s blowing me off my feet . . .
Springs and Twisted Stuff

Dirk Zwart

Up
Down
I spin around
The world is turning
Everything churning
Fields are burning
Why this yearning?
Someone could do something.
But they just stand there
I go head over heels
Again and again
It brings a pain,
When I hit the end,
Of my space on the bend
My head throbs, bottle is dry
I look up to the open sky
I come down, will you catch me?
Thrown me up again
The air in my hair
The wind from the North
Head over heels, heels over head
I fall like a bird, dead
A brick of lead
My fall is sped
Wind on my head
I am led
To my bed
A bump on my head
You dropped me.
Paethon's Road
by Brian Huseland
Chellie's Sister
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The Dordt Canon

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A mother hunches
stooped with grief
and cradles in her arms
her lifeless son

Anguish brims
her inflamed eyes
and christens with a splash of love
the unresponsive babe

The care, the time
gestation's sacrifice
hearts filled with hope
to hear his crooning voice

All silent now, all gone
devoured before their time
leaving alone in morbid wake
this bowed and sorrowed one

* * * * * * *

The father crouches
bent with grief
and cradles in his arms
his blind and crying sons

Grief lines his face
round love fills eyes
which gaze compassionately
upon an unresponsive world

The care, the time
the blessed sacrifice
redemption's heavy cost
to bring to Him his own

A silent orb, all dust
spins slowly in decay
while the Creator sighs
for those who see him not

Dedicated to Jonathan
my nephew, stillborn
January 15, 1992, and our
covenant Lord who often
teaches us through trials.
On Fire for Jesus

Tim Sheridan

I never knew what it meant to be on fire for Jesus until I worshipped at a Christian Reformed church in Sioux Center, Iowa. Before coming to Sioux Center, I worshipped at a charismatic fundamentalist church in southern California—a place where being on fire meant being excited for the Lord. Being excited for the Lord often meant clapping your hands, swaying your hips, bobbing your head, tapping your foot, and flinging your arms.

I thought to be on fire was to have zeal. To have zeal was to have fervor. To have fervor was to have enthusiasm. To have enthusiasm was to have energy. To have energy was to have a passionate eagerness to serve. To have a passionate eagerness to serve was to be on fire.

As a child, I was always told that Christians should be on fire for the Lord. Be on fire for the Lord? That's strange. I knew what it meant to be on fire—a log in our fireplace taught me. In a few hours the fire would always burn out.

While attending a Christian high school, I began to get a glimpse of what being on fire meant. My friends told me the student body president, Dave Boslough, was on fire. He talked about going to South America on a summer mission, he spoke during chapel about being a servant for Jesus, he would always lead the student body in prayer, and he would always energetically smile and say hello to me in the hallway and try to talk to me.

My youth pastor was on fire. With energy enough to conquer the world, he played the guitar and read Bible passages with pure passion. His face glowed; he loved the Lord and was excited to be our youth pastor. He always encouraged us to get on fire for Jesus. I became jealous—I wanted to be on fire too. "Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire," I would sing; but, somehow the match would never light the green wood of my heart.

I remember the first time I was on fire. It was during a spiritual leadership conference at Campus Crusade for Christ in Running Springs. Amidst hundreds of student council members from most of southern California, I started to feel a small fire light my heart. Excited about my faith, I began to sing with enthusiasm and to share my excitement with others. My eyes sparkled with radiance; a constant smile filled my face with joy. No longer feeling timid, I shared my testimony with other students. Others from my high school told me that I had a bounce in my step—as if I had received a new bolt of energy. I felt like I finally fit in... I was on fire too!

After the conference, our student council went back to campus, intent on setting the whole student body on fire. As the days passed by, I soon began to feel like my fire was running out of fuel, dying out. I still wanted to serve the Lord, and I still wanted to set the whole student body on fire. What was happening, I wondered. Was I just on an emotional high at the conference? Is that what "being on fire" is like?

My fire became extinguished.

After high school, I decided to follow my girlfriend to college, and that meant following her to Sioux Center. While attending a worship service the first weekend, I leaned over and whispered in her ear, "This church is dead!" There was no clapping, swaying, bobbing, tapping, or flinging; there seemed to be no enthusiasm, excitement, or fervor; there seemed to be no fire.

It took a while to learn when to sit down, stand up, sing a hymn, or respond to a litany. After the service was over, people didn't talk about how their "walk with the Lord" was, what they learned from the sermon, or about being on fire for Jesus. They stood around in big circles drinking juice and talking about the upcoming basketball season.

As I began to notice, though, these people were serious about their commitment to Jesus. They talked about Jesus being the Lord of the whole creation, and they strove to serve him in all that they did. I never heard anybody tell me to get on fire for Jesus. Rather, I heard several people tell me to glorify God in my studying, at my job, while I worship, and while I play.

As I watched my roommate and others in the community, I noticed they had a serious commitment, a non-verbal, earnest desire to serve the Lord. I could see it in their humility and in the reverence they had for God during worship. I could also see it in their
willingness to do volunteer work on the weekends or to spend school breaks on work projects in the inner city. It really struck me one day when I read a memo my roommate had received in the mailbox about the volunteer work he was doing on the weekends: he never talked about this.

I soon realized that most of the people in this "dead" church really did have excitement to serve the Lord; they just did not express it with the emotion and energy that others had. Maybe having a passionate eagerness to serve the Lord does not always involve enthusiasm, zeal, and fervor; or maybe . . . maybe it's time we stop talking about being "on fire for Jesus."

As I remembered that child sitting in front of the fireplace, I thought about what that log taught me about being on fire. As I watched it lie there engulfed in flames, I realized something about fire—after a few hours . . . the fire would always burn out.
The Professor of Building 50

Eric Epp

Steel Doors Slam,
Jangling of Keychains.
The Stale Stench
of urine and sweat
drifts down the hall
attempting to escape.

Bright eyed trembling men
search my features for familiarity;
one sees his son
another his brother
another God;
in my face.

Further down the corridor
a bouncy blonde
addresses shriveled children:
"The finger paints are on the table,
who wants to make a pretty picture?"

Finally I reach my destination
and enter the shower where
a professor discusses Aristotle
with the faucet.

Long beard and big words
give him distinction despite nakedness.
I ask his eminence for some wisdom
but the faucet
gets all his attention today.

My soft, youthful hand
grasps his bony fingers.

Guiding the soap over his body,
I teach my student.
The Savior and the Saved
Luke Schelhaas

I. In the cutting

What if the thorns had grown that way,
in a knotted ring:the semblance of a twisted crown?

Some things fit naturally.

Wouldn't it have been just half the sin
if men had found it fitting
and not had to form a crown?

The sin was in the cutting first.

There the idea became an option
became a choice became an action
became a game.

II. Iscariot, I

Purple-robed King, turned in circles,
Who hit you?
Who was it spit and called names?

Naked, sad Lord, hanged and broken,
Who betrayed you?
Who was it played games in your shadow?

Embalmed God, cold and quiet,
Who killed you?
Who was it stood guard at your graveside?

Bright Morning Star, raised, still rising,
Who waylaid you?
Who is it now jumps for your shirttails?

You let me hang on to you; you hang on.
You lift me, my bleeding King.

I rolled bones at the cross. I anteed
your seamless human robe and lost.

I'll dip my finger in the bowl, not like Pilate,
claiming innocence;
more like Judas:
III. Square

Your punctured hand on mine
(mine trembling),
leading me, pulling me toward—what?
   Not a decision but a fact.
Or mine pushing yours?
   Toward both a fact and a decision—
   and an acceptance; a resignation.
You resigning yourself, or me myself?
Which one?

Anyway, both of us in it together,
but for different reasons.
Both of our hands in the bowl together. Ten wet
   fingers: five for a scapeland,
   five which look similar. And it's not even
   a deal, but it's made: I'll take the blame,
   you say, you take the guilt—but not the
complex. Who is pointing wet fingers
at whom?

Forget fingers.
Thumb
a ride
to Heaven and we'll
call it square.
Soup is Good Food

Dirk Zwart

I sit in my room
A baby in its womb
I often wonder what is going on around
On with the tube, the six o’clock news
The world is burning, walls are falling down
Some man set his madness free
Twenty-five thousand feet above me

I wonder then
Is this world so bad
Or do all we hear is what went wrong
Radiation, space station, condemnation
Isolation, alienation, temptation
Is this all there is?

Mister please look at me
I’ve found love, I’ve found love
Peace and I’ve found Christ
I guess that’s no great thing
When you live your life with what the majority sings
Titled

Luke Schelhaas

I set my margin at 5 & 80
(the span of my life, likely 75 years) 1, 2, 3, 4, five . . .

I set my TAB at 10
so that when I need to indent for the
beginning of a new paragraph it skips
five spaces . . .

the TAB is so much like my life, my past:
when I look back on what I've passed over, there's nothing there.
I've all but forgotten the first five years of my life . . .

And what have I done in those years I've forgotten?
What have I committed in the years I only faintly remember? And in the years I remember well? What sins?

"... um, just put it on my tab anyway, God, and at the end we'll see what it amounts to.
What do I owe, God?"

(Suddenly it's a scene from some obscure movie: an outdoor cafe) "What do I owe?" (For surely it is more than this shady hero can afford. He's come to the counter with his pockets empty and his stomach full.) "What does it come to?"

$0.00
Nothing, it's been paid.
"By whom?"
That gentleman over there, on the hill, there.

(On my typewriter that's called TAB CLEAR) (RETURN)

I've returned, gone back to the beginning.(RETURN)
Nicodemus once asked Jesus something.(R)
Nicodemus wondered what he had to do.(R)
Jesus told him to return.(R)
go back,(R)
and start over. (RETURN)
SHIFT is a swiTCH, AN EXCHange of blaME—
SHIFT LOCK JUST KEEPS IT THAT WAY FOR EVER.
I remember she was shaking. Odd, I thought. What in here would bring a gal to shaking? “It’s not you,” she said, and a tear formed and looked for a place to slide.

She had “done” high school on inertia. Her mom was a teacher there, and most of the other teachers were friends of the family. There was little talk of what major she would take in college. There was little talk of whether she would go to college at all—it was assumed she’d go to Dordt because both her parents graduated from Dordt. Actually, there was little talk at all. Always games to go to, little siblings’ activities, parents always busy.

When she discovered she was in academic hot water the first semester, it was too late to do anything about it, and her shame and her ignorance kept her away from going to the profs for help. Several of the profs still remembered her folks, and since they had never admitted to having had trouble at Dordt, she thought she was strange—an aberration.

So where do we start? The poor GPA/probation? The inability to say no to all the activity in East Hall? The guilt, the shame, the fear? That distrust that has now built up, especially since the folks wonder what happened to the grade report that came mailed to her during Christmas? The bungled relationship with her boyfriend? Now there’s something that took a lot of first semester time!

She came again when she sat down with Mrs. Faber to write up her resume during the second semester of her junior year. Her face was clear, relaxed. She carried herself with authority and a sense of purpose. She was seeking a summer job in her area—her Business Administration degree could use some experience to make up for the low GPA.

“Just wanted to say thank you for not giving up on me when I bawled in your office January of my freshman year,” she said.

I read maturity in her eyes: she had been to the brink of academic disaster and had veered away towards success. I read contentment. She felt fulfilled, ready to be a good intern, ready to talk about the future with hope. She knew the courses that lay before her and why they were needed in her program.

I could only guess at the struggles she had dealt with. The nights typing a paper till her mind swam. The phone call about her grandfather and the cancer and then the funeral. When Bob dated her best friend and she wanted to die. And those were only the things that she shared with me in the office—what of all the other bridges and cliffs and ravines she had come to and navigated around? How do some find the grace to carry on, and how do others cave in and transfer or go to work? Where did the gal end up who told me her dream was to teach elementary school—why did she quit and go to work? How is it that some make the change and navigate the straits of college life and others don’t? What does it take to pull it all off? The questions nagged at my mind, and I felt small in comparison to the demands of a job designed to help students through the tough spots of life.

I looked up the verse again in Jeremiah: “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” I took strength again, trying to keep perspective: God directs, whereas man merely plans out the detail steps. Our God reigns!

She tucked her resume respectfully under her arm as she left my office. Was it the same lady who had visited me as a freshman? God had made her into a new creature.

Humbled, I thought of Moses—should I take off my shoes?
Death

Unknown Author

A slew of poets today
Concentrate solely on the sad,
Morbid and melancholy,
As if thinking about death is more
Important and interesting than
Surprise parties, piping hot chocolate,
Disney films, making a three-point shot,
And perfect roses (from perfect men).
Depressing stuff is a dime
A dozen—half the time it doesn’t even rhyme.
I feel genuine sorrow when
Someone misses a good joke or cannot
Play a riveting game of Rook. If this does not fit
“Good writing” standards, then I’m a fan
Of poor verse. If this is sillier than your over-dramatic, deep muses, my jolly
Folly and flippancy only make me glad—
I always thought brain surgery would be more fun anyway.

P.S. I am not being a hypocrite about the rhyming business; look closely. It
rhymes first line to last, etc.
How has Dordt College changed over the years? Different people would answer this question in different ways. Certainly students have changed. Though I have not surveyed students to gauge just how they have changed, it seems to me that more students are focused on a specific career goal than was the case twenty years ago. Perhaps college has become too expensive for students to spend four years at college just for the sake of a general education.

However, in their non-academic concerns, students often resemble earlier generations. They still discuss watching movies, but not in the same way as in the sixties. Then students still debated in the Diamond whether Christians ought to go to see movies. Today’s students are more likely to take for granted that the Reformed view of the world means that movies too must be analyzed in the light of Scripture. “Oh be careful little eyes what you see” no longer means to students that they should close their eyes to television and movies.

Another line in that childhood song takes on new meaning: “For the Father up above is looking down in love.” Reformed Christians sense that because God is looking, they must look through his eyes, impossible as that is. “Be careful” no longer means “don’t look,” but rather look carefully so that you can see what God sees. If sin is glorified in a film, feel God's anger. If in a film God’s good creation is spoiled with impurity, recall “God saw that it was good,” and express his outrage. If God’s good gift of sex is used to sell cars, liquor, books, or movies, see that too as God sees it. Students of an earlier generation felt guilty watching a movie. Students of today’s generation are more likely to feel hurt or anger than guilt when they see Hollywood’s distortions in a film.

Today’s students are not necessarily more eager to act on their convictions, but they do have more opportunities. In the sixties the Vietnam War was one of the more pressing issues for college students. Early in the war, Dordt students marched to show support for the war. But by the late sixties, across the nation college and university students were holding sit-ins to protest the war. This had its effect on Dordt students and they expressed their opinions on both sides of the issue in public discussions and in all-night bull sessions. For young men, this was no academic issue.

Some faced the draft upon graduation, and very few if any faced that moment without asking, “Is my country engaged in a moral war? Am I called to give my life, or at least part of it, for this war?” Or, as an increasingly vocal minority said, “Is this war an immoral intervention in the internal dispute between two factions whose fate is none of our concern?”

Today the concerns of students are more varied, but few concerns seem to demand a life-threatening decision tomorrow. Yet poverty, injustice, abortion, pollution, and a godless culture, to name a few concerns, all weigh on today’s student. Many students who do not feel called to spend a lifetime working in the ghetto or in a third world country do feel called to spend a few weeks or a summer in such a setting.

In this they are not so different from earlier generations. But today Dordt College promotes several programs for positive action, making it convenient, though never easy, for students to serve. Dordt Defenders of Life go to Des Moines to lobby with legislators against the bloody business of abortion. Those concerned with poverty and despair in ghettos devote vacation time to build houses or paint or repair them for poor people in Mississippi, in the Dominican Republic, and in many other places.

The effects of having these opportunities are many. The convictions formerly expressed in songs, such as “Red and yellow, black and white! All are precious in his sight” can now be expressed in actions instead of words. In the past some students felt Dordt College was too isolated from the great concerns of the contemporary world. In 1970 James C. Schaap characterized the everyday Dordt student as one who “walks through four years of school thinking Western Civ tests, English papers, and education classes are all there is to an education” (Diamond, 5-18-70). Today Dordt College is a launching pad for young Christians to all parts of the world. Students go to serve on projects or to study in the Netherlands, in Mexico, or in other parts of the world. Those opportunities were not available to students in the sixties and seventies. Some students created their own opportunities, but they were not organized and sponsored by the college as they are today. They were just beginning to surface in the late seventies, and began flourishing in the eighties.

In 1974 a Dordt student wrote in the Diamond,
“It’s one thing to sit and formulate all the implications of Christ’s redemptive work and another thing to work these out in practical life situations. Perhaps it’s time for us to move the blisters from our backsides to the palms of our hands and the soles of our feet where they belong.” During one spring break a few years ago nearly ten percent of Dordt’s students were doing just that by working on various projects.

Dordt’s student body is still largely Christian Reformed, but not as exclusively so. More frequently today our programs draw students from surrounding high schools and from other public high schools in the state. On the other hand, denominational loyalty to Dordt College among Christian Reformed young people can no longer be taken for granted. Although the percentage of alumni who send their children to Dordt College is one of the highest in the nation, more parents today are letting their teenagers decide where to go to college. And in some cases, the cost, not the perspective on learning, determines where a student will go to college.

Perhaps non-academic concerns of students are more often integrated into curricular concerns for today’s students. We have more senior seminars where students discuss issues in their major field of study. We have a course, General Education 300, specifically designed to discuss Christian responses to societal issues of all kinds. Such courses are designed to give not merely a philosophical understanding of issues facing Dordt’s graduates, but practical insights into issues in daily living that will stare them in the face in the first year after they graduate.

The most obvious difference in the faculty in 1994 is its age. Many of the professors of the sixties, seventies, and eighties are still teaching but won’t be for long. As a result teaching philosophies have not changed a great deal, though teaching styles have in some classes.

The number of faculty has not changed much since the late seventies. The enrollment dipped a few hundred in the eighties, when other Christian Reformed colleges opened in Canada and in Chicago, but has rebounded to where it is within a hundred of the enrollment in the peak years. Students of fifteen years ago would not see much change in numbers of either students or faculty.

One thing has not changed. Faculty and students still take seriously the call to make a difference in God’s world, wherever they are called to serve.
Fresh

Brian Huseland

A cataract:
Falling, falling,
Glinting stained-glass fresh.
Water tumbles, plashes
Thrashing down a ravine;
All aches released,
Joy unceased: sharp and free
From my fresh
Full-glinting face,
Scales falling from eyes
Like a cataract.
A Psalm

Lee De Haan

(a psalm of praise for quantum mechanics, in free verse)

the sun strikes a prism.
light is splintered like a glass dropped on concrete.
the colors are wide and varied
each in their place.

we place sodium in a fire
and in my spectroscope aha!
there is a yellow line
why...I ask why

while humans bumble about,
saying the energy of a photon is
E-high minus E-low
i see that only you know why

in the lab and with many equations
i begin to see order, even more,
Beauty

Yes, you took pleasure in your Work
creating its many mysteries for
us your servants to reveal.

but in our discovery we see not
the creation but You, the
Designer

some stay awake at night thinking, wondering
why it is that we can know the position or the
momentum but never both

i however sleep quite well
realizing that You know not only the where
and the when but the why.

so Lord i praise you for atoms,
for their mysteries that i seek to discover.
and most, for the way that photons
as puzzling as they are
are related to the structure of your atoms--
may i never forget whose they are.

Praise the Lord!
Let every atom, quanta,
and photon praise his name!
A Word From the Editors

We chose growth as the theme for this year's Canon growth. Growth is universal and inevitable. Everyone experiences it.

Sometimes growth is forged in the fire of struggle, pain, or abuse; and sometimes the changed are scarred for life. Such growth can enhance life's value, or it can lead to cancerous growth.

Sometimes change is simply a reflection of time moving on—of changing relationships, of growing families, of determining priorities—of life in flux.

We have grown a great deal in shaping this Canon, both vicariously—through the experiences of others—and through the mild struggles that are part and parcel of editing any publication.

We hope that to the extent these works mirror your own growth experiences, you may be encouraged in knowing that others share your struggles.