12-1-1973

Dialogue

Staff and writers of Dialogue

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/dialogue

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.calvin.edu/dialogue/29

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Calvin Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dialogue by an authorized administrator of Calvin Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dbm9@calvin.edu.
THE RAT COMES INTO HIS OWN / POETRY POETRY/
THE WORDS WERE DIRTY BUT I COULDN'T HELP IT
MAMA THEY FOLLOWED ME HOME / FEMALE EX-
PERIENCE POETRY / AND A NUMBER ON EVERY
PAGE
Let Moses Come Down from the Mountain

John Gardner, the President of Common Cause, has termed the Watergate crisis "a domestic Vietnam." The description is apt. On its profoundest level the national anxiety over the war in Vietnam shook a generation's complacency about the American shibboleths. Patriotism, nationalism, foreign policy, and military preparedness could no longer be accepted so easily nor interpreted in the traditional manner. More even than policies or positions, the reaction to the war shook our implicit faith in positions and policies themselves.

The Vietnam War and the protest against it is past, but in many ways Watergate appears to have the same potential to shake our confidence in accepted beliefs. Our entire society has, we realize, built up an acceptance of Presidential power that could only astonish our forefathers. While the framers of the Constitution had no great faith in the people, they were at least as skeptical of faith in an executive. As the initial shock of the Watergate scandals passes, we must as a nation realize that we have become fixated with power, with trust in those who wield power, at the expense of our lip-served ideals of respect for law, the rights of the individual and minorities, and legislative government. Nixon's bungling neo-fascists nearly got away with their final gutting of the Constitution because far too many Americans had grown so inured to power they were blind to the prospect of its abuse.

There are obvious countermeasures that must be taken in the wake of Watergate and Nixon's actions of the last few months. Besides the restoration of a balance between governmental branches, campaign reform legislation, and vigorous judicial action, it may yet be necessary to impeach Nixon if it is clear that he obstructed justice. Yet, on the profounder level of what we as Christian citizens can do besides immediate political actions, there are lessons we can distill from the "domestic Vietnam." And, I would argue, the re-education may prove more significant than institutional changes.

It is perhaps a cliche that Christians are citizens of two nations. We belong to the society around us and to the kingdom of God. But in the aftermath of Watergate our easy belief that we understand that cliche and recognize its limits has been shown to be deficient. We have failed to see that the two calls are no more equal than they are mutually exclusive. Life in Christ comes before life in the world, though that is where we live out our lives in Christ. Indeed, the very division between the two nations is artificial, a result of our sin-weakened natures and world. In Christ, there is truly only one world, the creation and all things subjected to him. As Christians we must again see that our commission from Christ to witness and serve society means we cannot risk subjugating our tie to Christ to any other power under heaven. All our political support is contingent, even to fellow Christians in politics. The greatest blasphemy, as George Reedy said, is the deification of mere mortals. We violate that stricture whenever our commitments in society endanger our Christian freedom of moral action. Christians do not give blank checks of support to any candidate, party, or ideology.

Let us admit, then, that one of the revelations of Watergate and Vietnam is that many Christians failed their calling. Our complacency, the implicit faith in the good intentions of politicians, the toleration of government "business as usual," has come back to haunt us. We caused Watergate by our acceptance of "politics and religion don't mix," "winning is everything," and "being real-
istic." The Christian ideals of service, of being "little Christs," of witnessing to a higher truth, were considered embarrassingly inapplicable; now with the sickness in Washington revealed, we must make these beliefs our touchstone to begin to restore our sense of direction.

The mission ahead for us is to rededicate ourselves to the inviolability of our commitment to Christ. That commitment must be expressed, but never diluted, in our political behavior. Far too many of our national sacred cows have been idolatrous golden calves between us and the true worship of God. We must put our faith in that which deserves faith; our beliefs must be based on that which can truly support belief.

I would suspect that just as this society as a whole is not yet through its time of shock, we Christians, too, will be forced to re-examine our commitments still more in the coming months. Perhaps with humility and prayer it can be a time of forgiveness for past sins and a cleansing for work in the future.

If Thine Audience Offend Thee . . .

On stage, right now, at Calvin College, one actor could murder another but couldn't call him a bastard. Does that square with your values? Mine either. But that is the fix we are in at Calvin right now because we have not fully come to grips with the how's and why's of censorship. Who are we censoring for, anyway? Why censor at all?

Too easily we condemn the Speech Department for conspiring against the hapless playwright or the educated audience when it sponsors a candy-cane version of a play such as Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, produced by the Thespians last month. It takes a great deal more care to understand the persons who tampered with the Salesman script as a group with, if anything, too much conscience, against censorship to some extent but caught between opposing, even threatening, forces in the community and responding without sufficient courage.

The progress that the Speech Department had already made away from censorship is proof of some good intentions. The very fact that Salesman was produced and that an actress appeared in it clad only in a slip(!) is an evidence, which many people do not fully appreciate, of some slow progress toward greater objectivity. In the past the Thespians have killed a few other chimeras concerning certain political ideas and onstage killing. What remains today is the problem of language, a last vestige of the censorship problem and, perhaps not surprisingly, the most stubborn. In time, no doubt, that sanction, too, will fall but probably only with the slow motion of a hour hand, if the past is any lesson.

But granted some good intentions by the Speech Department to eliminate undue censorship, the department still has to answer to the opinions of a relatively uneducated—but influential—audience with every major production. In addition, it must answer to the opinions of a few more or less censorious colleagues in the faculty and administration of the college. Possibly, by censoring a play like Death of a Salesman, the department is playing to the purses of the wealthy parents and friends in the audience. To the extent that it does, it is allowing itself to be an economic rather than educational tool in the hands of the college—in short, a whore. But a more likely and valid reason for the censorship might be that the freedom—even the existence—of the drama program depends for the moment upon respectful treatment of those whose displeasure might be damaging to it. Such compromise is not pretty and can be dishonest, but in a given context it may be excusable. If the drama people sincerely believe that naughty words are an aesthetic problem and not a theological one—and there is much question whether they actually do—their first task will be to educate their audience on how to view a play.

My displeasure is aroused, however, when I see that what might be an attempt of the Speech Department to educate involves more capitulation than risk. For instance, I can appreciate the removal of some blasphemy from a play such as Death of a Salesman, but when mere unpleasantries such as bastard are yanked out, too, I feel that the Speech Department is smiling at the patrons while socking me and the playwright in the mouth with a gloved hand.

I would like to hear much more discussion about the special requirements of drama at a Christian college, about the nature of stage illusion, about the job of the actor, and about aesthetic versus theological reasons for censorship.

But meanwhile, the "influential" element may be doing more harm than good to the privately expressed concerns of the Speech Department and to the sensitivities of the educational community at Calvin. Perhaps it would be best not to invite them, not to send out bulletin announcements to all the churches, not to line up patrons in all the best seats. The Speech Department would survive.
SYMPOSIUM
The Christian Conscience and Political Evil........................................... 6
George N Monsma, Jr
Richard Mouw
Sheryl Essenburg
Gordon Spykman
Stephen Monsma
Douglas Brouwer
Benjamin VanderKooi

FICTION
in the year of the rat
David den Boer

Our short story of the month seems to have become a regular feature, almost.
This month our fiction section carries something different than ever before.

REVIEWS
Lighter than a Hammer, Softer than a Shout
Out of the Cruel Shall Come Honey
Barbara Reinsma

Poetry by women, only reviewable by the only woman (except Joni) on our staff. Reinsma (Ottenshoff's wife) sees something new in two new editions of Female Literature.

David and Barbara at the Theater:
Phooey on the Torpedoes
David den Boer and Barbara Reinsma

Crossing out dirty words in plays is analogous to going to the bathroom with your eyes closed. Two authors in this case seem disturbed by, if resigned to, censorship at Calvin. What does it do to a work of art?
THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE VS. Political Evil

Because we as Christians believe government is ordained by God as an instrument to
The Watergate scandal and the constitutional crisis surrounding its investigation has shocked Americans’ faith in the stability of American political institutions—the Presidency, democratic parties, political campaigning, and free elections. We have been struck by the fragility of those institutions and the apparent ease with which misguided or evil men can turn them to wrong ends. Even more deeply, many of us have come to question the nature of the American political system itself and the role we as Christians should fill in it. Does Watergate reveal something fundamentally wrong at the basis of American politics? How do we as Christians explain or understand the evils that Watergate has demonstrated? To what extent are the corrupt campaigning and governmental subversion of the last two years connected with other political events that have been protested against—the Cambodian bombing, the Presidential impoundment of funds, the criticism of the media?

Watergate and the above questions about it have been hotly debated at Calvin. Chimes editorials and forums, Lecture Council speakers, and class discussions—not to mention countless coffeeshop and dorm conversations—have been devoted to the subject. Last month a small group of students and faculty drew up a “Proclamation of Conscience” and called a mass meeting at which several of them spoke on the Christian response to Watergate (text begins on page six).

Because of the debate and interest on campus as well as the continuing need for Christians to examine their place in society, Dialogue has brought together this symposium. The question on which Dialogue asked the writers to focus their remarks was this: “What should individual believers do or understand because of Watergate?” At the same time, Dialogue asked the writers to concentrate on some particular aspect of the issue. The phrase “individual believer” was meant not to exclude discussion of communal responsibility but to keep the impact of the symposium close to home, directed at all of us as people, not as members of institutions alone.

George N. Monsma Jr.

Watergate is the result of the absolutizing of a false moral principle, selfish individualism, in place of the true Christian principle of love of God above all and one’s neighbor as oneself. Of course, Richard Nixon is not the first person to act on this false principle in the political arena, nor will he be the last. Americans have often perverted the Biblical doctrine that a person is responsible for his own deeds into a belief that a person is not responsible for his neighbor’s well-being. We have remembered Paul’s injunction to work hard, but have forgotten the reason: so that we can have “something to share with the needy” (Eph. 4:28). If Watergate forces us to recognize this injunction, to repent, and to work to change the situation, it will be a blessing to us. If not, I am afraid it is part of the judgment of God on our unjust nation.

This sinful self-centeredness is something we all must contend with in our daily lives. All must confess failings here. It has long been a part of our economic system as well, and many have even promoted it on the false assumption that in a capitalistic system a person acting in his own self-interest is also acting in the public interest. Thus it should come as no surprise to us that many politicians act out of the same motives, rather than out of Christian love of God and neighbor. But this should not blind us to the fact that our current promote justice, we collectively express our sorrow over the abuse of power and disregard of morality
President has let this selfish principle guide his Administration to an extent seldom seen in this country, nor should it hinder us from working for changes which will bring our governmental policies more closely in line with Christian norms.

The actions of the Nixon administration have been dedicated from the beginning to the reelection of Richard Nixon, regardless of the means necessary to achieve it. This was the reason for the attacks on the press. This was the reason for the solicitations of illegal corporate campaign contributions, solicitations which have been described as extortionate by several corporate executives and which have resulted in the indictment of two cabinet members. This was the reason for repeated violations of the constitutionally guaranteed civil rights of anti-Nixon demonstrators. And this was the reason for the break-ins and wiretaps of the Democratic National Committee.

Nixon’s economic policies also illustrate the fact that he is following the individualistic, success-oriented American creed. For example, he has fought against meaningful tax reform by supporting the continuation of loopholes which allow the rich to escape much taxation. Upon taking office he instituted a policy which raised the unemployment rate from 3.5 per cent to over 6 per cent, a rise which hurt the poor more than the rich. He proposed tax cuts in 1971 which would have reduced taxes on the rich more than those on the poor. He has attempted to drastically reduce Federal spending on OEO programs and other programs to help the poor. And although he did propose a change in the form of welfare payments that would have been desirable (the Family Assistance Plan), he set the proposed payment levels far too low and ensured the defeat of the plan by refusing to compromise with Senators who wanted slightly higher levels of payments.

What should our response as Christians be to this? We must repent of the selfish actions and inaction in our private lives and of our acquiescence in many such individualistic governmental policies. We must remember also that true repentance involves a commitment to change our behavior. In the political sphere this must involve working together with other Christians to develop a Christian witness, a witness concerning both the political and economic structures themselves and the policy options that arise within those structures. This must go on at Christian colleges such as Calvin and also in groups like the National Association for Christian Political Action and the Christian Government Movement.

In addition, Christians who are already involved in politics (as individuals) must continue to work there, and others must join them. A great deal could be done to promote Biblical standards of justice and mercy within the present system (for example, working for jobs for all who desire them, for adequate access to education and medical care for all, for more equal access to justice in the courts, for a more equitable income distribution, and for more adequate safeguards against abuses in campaign financing and influence peddling). Working within the system is also necessary if one seeks to change the basic structures because it is necessary to gain some power in the present system before one can change the structures.

If Watergate causes us to accept this task which the Lord lays before us, the nation can ultimately benefit from it. If not, we are in danger of a result like that which befell the Egyptians when they ignored the warnings which God gave to them in the plagues.

Richard Mouw

As concerned Christians, Christians who genuinely feel the burdens of a suffering nation, we must admit that we feel anger, betrayal, perhaps even despair, over recent events. But we are concerned Christians, and Christian concerns can never be far removed from the cross of Jesus Christ. We would do well, then, to keep an eye, not only on Watergate and all that has come to be associated with it, but also on that cross.

To see the cross of Jesus Christ is to refuse to be shocked by the limits to which the powers of darkness will drive men. It is to expect that our institutions—whether political or religious—will be prone to self-deception and desperate wickedness. But because we can see the cross, we also have reason to celebrate. Jesus Christ died for the political sins that have been committed in our nation. Whatever else we may legitimately say or do or think, let us not forget this fact: the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Our confession that the lamb who was slain was a worthy sacrifice is also a political confession. The
ultimate word on Watergate will not be spoken by Richard Nixon or John Dean, by Judge Sirica or Eric Severied, by Fred Graham or Billy Graham—the ultimate word will be spoken on that day when all of these will join the throng who will bow in humble silence before the King of kings and Lord of lords.

But the cross, and the victory that we see assured there, does not eliminate the need for us to suffer in these difficult days. Rather, it gives us a perspective on our suffering: as one who have been to the cross and who have pledged to follow the one who was lifted up there, we must suffer in hope. We are not entitled to the smugness that feeds on a cheap optimism, nor may we wallow in premature despair. We must suffer in hope.

And our suffering must be an active suffering. When Jeremiah wept over the corruption of Judah and foresaw the coming destruction of Jerusalem, he was also able to cry out in hope: “I know O Lord that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,” thus expressing his confidence, in spite of the apparent counter evidence, that God’s promises were sure and trustworthy. But he immediately followed his confession with this prayer: “Lord, correct me lest I be reduced to nothing.”

As Christians who are willing to view Watergate in the light of the cross, we must also ask for correction, lest we be reduced to nothing. This means that we must ask some hard questions: How can we, in these difficult days, demonstrate the political worthiness of the Lordship of Jesus Christ? As we lay our heavy political burdens down before his cross, what does he call us to rise up and do as those who are freed for political discipleship? How do we obediently exercise this discipleship in a pluralistic society?

In the last few months the American public has voiced a great deal of anger over the Watergate situation. I can’t help but wonder what we are really so shocked and angry about. Amid all the verbal battles over who approved what, we seem to have forgotten that we approved the widespread corruption. We chose immorality at a free election. It is true, of course, that we knew much less then about the unprecedented extent of the corruption. Some of the Nixon administration scandals, such as the Agnew case, have been made public only recently. But well before the election we knew plenty. We knew that somebody in the Nixon ranks had approved the Watergate break-in—and that very little was being done about it. We also knew that there was something very odd about that ITT contribution, that the wheat deal had been very profitable for someone, and that there was something suspicious about the timing of those milk price increases.

But apparently we didn’t care. Accusations raised by McGovern and the press were ignored, questions went unanswered, and the public went on by. When George McGovern raised the issue of corruption he was accused of trying to “inject” morality into politics. If the matter of morality affected voting at all it was against McGovern. He was “too decent” to be President.

America got corruption because it chose corruption. By reelecting an administration which was unable or unwilling to explain worsening accusations, we gave Nixon a mandate. We told him we weren’t interested in knowing about scandals as long as they didn’t interfere with his governing. We encouraged a coverup.

The Watergate Scandal will undoubtedly have an effect on elections to come. For a time, at least, there will be what Agnew called the “post-Watergate morality.” But unless there is a major adjustment of political thinking it will be only a Christians to criticize and protest this situation and to work for truth and justice in government. We call a part of the scenario that the Apostle John envisioned on Patmos, when he wrote: “And they shall make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, and those who are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

Sheryl Esenburg
temporary phenomenon. Unless we can begin to recognize that good government requires moral government there will be no long-range improvement.

Christians should be taking the lead in demanding political morality, but we have been the worst offenders. In trying to separate church from state we have mistakenly separated politics from religion. Even with our Calvinistic heritage, which regards government as one of the highest callings, we pass off immorality in government with remarks about how a man has to be just a little crooked to succeed in politics. We disguise our copping out as cynicism.

Even as an active McGovernite I recognize that if America had known the extent of the corruption she might still have elected Nixon for other overwhelming reasons. She might have reluctantly elected him, clearly expressing outrage and expectations of reform. That, I think, would have been unfortunate, but it would have been an improvement. For by electing probable corruption unquestioned and then allowing it to continue in office unchallenged, even when proven, we have indeed given Nixon and all others a mandate. Corruption, we have said, is acceptable, but only if accompanied by an effective coverup.

Gordon Spykman

These haunting lines keep crossing my mind:

Ill fares that land,
To hastening ills the prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

This indictment is but the echo of another line, a line taken from the Word of God as it speaks to our political life:

Righteousness exalts a nation,
But iniquity is a reproach to any people.

It ought to make us tremble to think that the Lord of lords and King of kings, the Judge of rulers and nations, is a God of justice and equity.

The heavy weight of judgment now resting upon our land is no happenstance. No people can deliberately and systematically exclude the liberating and healing power of the Gospel from public life with impunity. God is not mocked. Whatever men sow, that shall they also reap. For decades on end we have been sowing the seeds of secular education, secular economics, secular politics. Now we are in the process of reaping the evil harvest.

Under the guise of neutrality we have been chanting in unison the civic creed of the Democratic Way of Life: “Religion and politics don’t mix.” God, of course, must be allowed “a place” in the American civic religion, in the inner chambers of our personal and private lives, for insecure people who can’t make it on their own. After all, we are tolerant. Moreover, it’s nice to know “He’s always there” as an escape hatch when the system breaks down—when, for example, Apollo flights go wrong, call in the chaplain! On the double! But for the rest, “God’s in his heaven and all’s well in Washington.”

Little wonder that a nation firmly committed to government “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” to popular sovereignty (shades of the French Revolution falling across the American Dream), that a people thus dedicated resorts to public referendums to decide issues of life and death (abortion) and basic human rights (freedom in education) by counting ballots. After all, the constituency is the final court of appeal. Thus, the vox populi has become the vox Dei.

The surprising thing about Watergate, therefore, is not that it happened, but that it didn’t happen sooner and more often. Politics of deceit have been with us a long time. Watergate is only the tip of the iceberg. With God’s Word ruled out of court, with “winner take all” as dogma number one in our electioneering, with “win at all costs” as the first rule of politics (“the art of the possible”), with campaigns geared to pragmatism and opportunism, with the absence of honest pluralism in society, with the adversary spirit of the two-party system regarded as American as apple pie—Watergate et al is simply, yet profoundly, God’s way of giving us what we have been asking for.

Now every evening millions turn to the seven o’clock news oracles—the Cronkites, Reasoners, Brinkleys—and ask, “Watchman, what of the night?” All we hear is words, words, words, and more words. Where amid that veritable avalanche of words is there ever even a low whisper of the Word of the Lord? Where is the Christian voice on our national scene?

Or don’t we have anything distinctively Biblical

upon our society to recognize that Watergate exemplifies the sins of a system which fosters political
to say to a world in deep trouble? We have learned fairly well to raise confessional banners. But we haven't had much coaching in how to translate our confession into meaningful Christian political dialogue.

Two words almost completely absent from our political vocabulary are "judgment" and "repentance." We speak of "crises," but never "judgment." We mouth "regrets," but never "repentance." One leader trying to turn the tide is Senator Mark Hatfield. In a recent Vanguard article he says,

"If we turn to Biblical faith we discover that all our action, and all our lives stand under God's judgment and mercy. We are accountable to Him—accountable for the motives of our hearts, and accountable for the conditions in our land. So our prayers must begin with repentance."

What we need is political discipleship. Following Him who claims "all authority in heaven and on earth" in self-denying obedience calls for more than one-shot rallies. Nothing less than a Christian task-force with a sustained, long-range Kingdom vision can begin to form a new Christian political mind with real Biblically directed alternatives to our current dead-end secular impasse. Politics is more than individual witness. It is teamwork. The challenge of our times requires a movement of committed people, a Christian communal witness taking shape in a program of Christian political action.

Stephen Monsma

It is easy to assume that a self-evident lesson to be drawn from Watergate is the need for men and women of principle in government. If only—this line of reasoning goes—we could devise means to eliminate the compromising politician from high office and replace him with principled statesmen there would be no more Watergates.

I reject this line of thinking. In fact, if only we had had fewer men of principle and more compromising politicians in office Watergate would not have occurred. The Christian virtue most conspicuously missing from the Magruders, Stans, Erlichmans, and Mitchells is not commitment to principles and ideals but humility. Not amorality, but moral arrogance is the basic problem. Our politics has become infected with a self-righteous commitment to principle that makes one long for the return of the compromising politician who has no ideals of his own but acts simply as a shrewd broker among contending points of view.

The danger posed by principles without humility, ideals without doubts, is that the person firmly convinced of the accuracy of his own vision and the misguidedness of his opponents' can easily justify almost any means to secure his victory and his opponents' defeat. And this is what lies at the heart of Watergate. To committed conservatives such as Erlichman or Mitchell, convinced of the perfect righteousness of the Nixon administration and the perfect evil of a McGovern administration, soliciting illegal campaign contributions and obstructing justice become unfortunate but necessary means to highly moral ends.

What is needed is the pursuit of principles tempered by humility, the pursuit of ideals tempered by doubts. Surely Christianity speaks to the political-social realm. Our Lord has not been silent. Christian conceptions of man, society, and justice form a basis for principles to guide our political responses. But Christianity also teaches us of man's fallibility and limited vision. And our own minds testify to our incomplete knowledge and often distorted perceptions. A person whose painful awareness of his own limitations balances his commitment to ideals and the pursuit of justice will be less likely to approve illegality, lies, and half-truths than the morally arrogant person convinced of his own righteousness and perfect vision.

If I had to choose between the morally arrogant man of principle and the amoral politician, I would pick the amoral politician. The shrewd politician at least does not try to force his vision onto the rest of us but is content simply to pursue electoral victory. This means he will try to find a middle ground among the contending points of view and interests in society. His fear of exposure gives him a caution which usually keeps him within the law—and that caution remains unclouded by exaggerated fears of the catastrophe that will descend on the nation if his opponent wins and exaggerated visions of perfection that will reign if only he wins.

The professional politician acts as a neutral broker, pulling different groups together in a make-shift coalition he hopes will constitute a majority. The extent to which that majority supports a more just political order depends on whether or not those in society desiring justice are actively pressing their point of view. As they do so they will have to be taken into account by the neutral, broker politician. The professional politi-
cian is not an independent force pursuing justice—
but then neither is he an independent force
pursuing his private brand of justice at all costs and
by all means.

If we cannot have politicians with a balance
between principle and humility, I would choose
the neutral broker over the self-righteous benefac-
tor of society. The former I can hope to influence,
the latter is sorely tempted to put himself above
the reach of law. Without humility, commitment
to principle degenerates into moral arrogance. And
that is the most dangerous of all. Watergate is a
monument to that fact.

Douglas Brouwer

While the "Proclamation of Conscience," printed in the November 2 issue of Chimes, was
certainly a laudable statement of Christian con-
science, several other statements, manifestoes, and
editorials have appeared this fall expressing similar
sentiments. Among them, a manifesto signed by
several leftist intellectuals was printed in the
October 18 issue of the New York Review of
Books. I mention this particular manifesto, which I
did not sign, only because of its skeptical view,
which I share, of the capacity of social and
political institutions to affect social change.

Based on historical evidence that we live "in a
world of fear and terror," the authors of the
manifesto contend, "No country, no regime, no
social group is the depository of absolute truth and
justice, and doubtless none will ever be." Then,
paradoxically, the authors call for individuals to
affect social change, to work for truth, mercy, and
justice in society. The "Proclamation of Con-
science," which I did sign, correctly places the
moral responsibility for the "abuse of power and
disregard of morality" in the individual. In fact, I
submit, the real moral crisis which prompted these
various statements of conscience is not in Washing-
ton; the real moral crisis is in each one of us.

I do not argue for absolute moral autonomy for
the individual; the state has the legitimate function
of coordinating and regulating human activity.
However, there is a difference between blind
patriotism and the moral obligation to recognize
the legitimacy of political institutions. That moral

obligation includes retaining a critical stance
toward political and social institutions and, in
America, rejecting the unqualified defense and
support of "the American Way." No political
institution deserves our unqualified support, and
doubtless none ever will.

Something too must be said about the nature of
social action for the Christian individual who gives
no unqualified allegiance to existing political insti-
tutions. One way to illustrate the nature of this
social action is to show what it is not.

I diligently read the film or book review sections
of Christian publications. The reviewers, whether
writing in Chimes, the Banner, or the Reformed
Journal, frequently attach innocuous paragraphs at
the end of the review, with the first sentence
beginning variously, "Therefore, it is our responsi-
bility as Christians to . . ." I contend that effective
social action on the part of the Christian individual
can never be a disjointed and moralistic after-
thought, as these reviewers seem to imply. Rather,
effective social action takes place in a society
which is radically decentralized, where individuals
do not align themselves with existing human
institutions and where individuals recognize that
the Kingdom of God has transcended the failures
of these institutions.

The manifesto from which I earlier quoted ends,
"The ideally just society is not a society that is
devoid of conflict . . . [it is] a society in which
criticism is free and sovereign . . ." Thus, as the
Proclamation of Conscience states, we must affirm
this obligation to criticize the kingdoms of this
world, to commit ourselves to the Kingdom of God
in which the hope of truth, mercy, and justice does
in fact lie.

Benjamin VanderKooi

Watergate. The word has symbolized for most
Americans a sordid sell-out to values that are as
politically pragmatic as they are morally reprehen-
sible. Unfortunately, much as television coverage
of Vietnam horrors served first to activate a
concerned American populace and then to sicken
into it a hardened cynicism about the Pentagon
and the civilian government, continuing media
coverage of the White House horrors has tried the

sins of inaction and conformity to this political idolatry, and call upon our nation to repent and to work
short attention span of many Americans and left them with a repulsion for anything presidential, and more generally, anything political.

At the risk, first, of eliminating some of the few that are left in a Watergate-conscious audience and, second, of being outclassed by more prestigious journalists and scholars, I wish to address myself to some implications of the Watergate affair.

Specifically, what draws my attention is the quiet, tired response given by Gordon Strachan near the end of his testimony before the Ervin Committee on campaign practices last summer. In response to a request for the advice he (Strachan) would give to other young people who might want to come to Washington to work for the government, Strachan replied, “My advice would be to stay away.” As one of the young, bright members of the Nixon administration on HR Haldeman’s staff, the political future of Gordon Strachan had looked very promising indeed. A member of a popularly mandated presidential entourage, Strachan could look forward to a successful political career in the new, emerging Republican majority. But then the bombshells of Watergate shattered his political aspirations and destroyed his confidence in the political system.

From Strachan’s shell-shocked pessimism we should be able to draw a significant lesson. I suspect that the underlying reason why Watergate left Strachan so disenchanted with politics is that he failed to consider at the outset of his career the ethical and moral dimensions of decisions he might make in his chosen field. Like many contemporary adherents to Nixonian pragmatic politics, Strachan viewed morality as but one of the variables to be plugged into the political equation.

Examples of this type of mentality proliferate in the 20th century. I think back a few weeks to James Oates, Chairman of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and the comments he made at Calvin in a seminar on “Ethics and Business.” American investors, according to Oates, have become interested in the human side of their investments. Added to the traditional two-dimensional investment criteria of security and amount of financial return is a third, “ethical” dimension: to what extent the investment promotes human welfare. As Oates explained this new investment criterion in terms of business investments to improve deteriorating inner city areas, it became clear that such investments were meant to prevent riots and mass destruction of other, nearby business interests of investing firms. Thus, the “ethical” dimension of financial investment is easily submerged under the first criterion, that of insuring a secure investment. Jacob Bronowski, in an article contained in the December, 1973, Atlantic, discusses the “Irreversibility” which finally ended World War II at Nagasaki, Japan. The dilemma of politicians who were handed the power to kill hundreds of thousands of human beings with a single atomic bomb is similar in kind to that of the equalational morality found in the White House horrors. Pleas by some of the scientists involved in the Manhattan Project to set up a demonstration test on an obscure island in the Pacific which Japanese officials could safely observe were ignored. Faced with the prospect of achieving a quick end to the war at the expense of a few thousand lives of Japanese civilians, Americans ordered the bomb dropped on Hiroshima and, three days later, on Nagasaki. In light of the goal of victory, morality was factored out of the equation, leaving over 100,000 people dead and as many more seriously injured.

Strachan, Oates, and Truman may seem far removed from the context of Calvin College. If they and their equalational morality seem too far distant, perhaps we should briefly look at ourselves. As future, if not present, participants in society we must decide to what extent our Christian mandate to love others as Christ first loved us figures in our choice of occupation, or if you will, life-style. Future politicians must consider the Christian ethical imperative in the realm of campaign finance, pursuit of justice, and in the possession of nuclear power which is not “merely another weapon in our arsenal”; future businessmen must consider it in the face of rising interest rates and investment possibilities; future doctors must face it in the question of the termination of life through abortion or euthanasia, and future scientists in the possible application of their theoretical speculations or new discoveries.

Most important, however, in any reflection on the relationship between ethics and politics or ethics and any of a host of occupational possibilities is that the notion of equalational morality must be discarded. A failure, first, to consider the complex issues to be faced in a future career and, second, to relegate those considerations to one variable in an equation will lead to the kind of disillusionment experienced by Gordon Strachan. As long as equalational morality leaves room for the possible factoring out of ethical variables, the deeper causes of Strachan’s kind of disillusionment will also remain; Nagasaki, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and Watergate will continue to plague us.

for a government and political system dedicated to the Biblical commands of truth, mercy, and justice.”
least known
zero perhaps
or unclear colors
woven in
man.
together seen by
master and
slave
its tongue tickles
mind patterns or
derides
as relations spin science
songs of
awe-full
power.

encounter
extend your symbol self to
caves where
walls translate the
true equality:

\[
\frac{(x + 55)}{(x - 42)} = \frac{x}{5}
\]

lost or
light

the power sensed
is

X
in the year of the rat things died and people changed. dust covered everything. there was heat and disease.

i was sitting with matthew and jane in the first month of the year of the rat talking about light and stars. how the stars had given way to blood. we watched the stars night after night descend and shatter. the stars watched us.

the stars are watching us said jane. matthew agreed. so did i for i had told them long ago that this was going to happen to them someday. but i had mistaken the year of the rat for the year of the trembling horse. the year the wild horses would tremble at the wind. when the horses would be sand sliding down the hillsides to the sea.

we should sing i said. perhaps the year will end sooner if we sing. jane agreed and sang as she always had with a certain mystical quality to her voice. almost an archaic voice. the voice of something long dead that had been resurrected within her. i loved to hear her voice. so did matthew. she sang of children, light, dogs, forests, hillsides, friendship, and love. the year did not end.

we moved then into the fourth month of the year of the rat when all the stars had finally gone under the cloak of pain and there was no light in the sky except for the moon which had grown to twice its size. the month of the expanding moon said matthew. i agreed as did jane. there was no choice in the matter as we could all see the moon so large. the month of the expanding moon contained other signs and omens, none of them good, all of them magical. the bark fell from every tree in the land in a single night. spiders were seen in the highest parts of the city spinning gigantic webs. and this also was the month that the people began to change. only slightly at first. grey hair grew in small tufts from the backs of the women and the teeth of everyone grew smaller, sharper, quick-
er to cut and to tear. they are starting to look like rats said jane. matthew and i agreed. we had no choice in the matter. we saw it happen.

in the sixth month of the year of the rat all the animals had died. at least no one saw any animals except for a few dead cats discovered in the basements of abandoned houses. but it was rumored that the dogs (as smart as they are) had escaped the year of the rat and were heading north in packs. north toward canada. north toward scotland. north toward siberia. it was further rumored that the dogs were being led by wolves for wolves are the strongest and the smartest of all the dogs... the magic dogs. but no one knew for sure if the rumors were true. everyone was either too busy or too afraid to go north to find out about the dogs and the wolves. no one wanted to know the truth. it was better with the rumors for then we had something to talk about.

i just love dogs said jane but i am afraid of wolves. it is easy to make love to a dog. difficult to love a wolf. the wolves have hate in their eyes.

it is because the wolves know the truth i said. there is truth in hate. we all should have known that. the year of the rat would not be upon us if we would have understood that. dogs and wolves are truthful.

matthew had no opinions on these matters not being acquainted with them. jane said again that she just loved dogs. i wish they were here now she said. yes i said. and the wolves.

in the seventh month of the year of the rat everything exploded into change. people grew shiny grey fur which covered them up to their necks. men grew tails. women were fast and prowled the streets as before looking for food for heat for blood. men took to the piles of refuse and garbage that had accumulated since the beginning of the year of the rat. matthew and i had dark grey fur which jane touched and hated. jane had light grey fur which we did not mind. her teeth were sharper than ours which we did mind thinking she would eventually be driven to use them on us. jane tried to sing but only tears came from her mouth. the songs died in her eyes.

i'm leaving i said. i'm going north to get away and to find the dogs. what else is there for us to do i asked. matthew agreed and jane cried a bit softer. we did not move.

in the eighth month of the year of the rat i again told jane and matthew that i was leaving. don't go they said, we love you. i love you too i said. even your shiny fur i love, but i'm leaving. wait i'll sing for you said jane and then you will stay. and she did sing without tears but about tears. she sang of many broken lovers. this was the last song that i heard her sing. when she had finished i shook the hand of matthew and kissed the cheek of jane. it was furry and soft.

matthew and jane watched for a few minutes as i sunk into the late afternoon dust. then matthew scurried off for the piles of garbage behind the houses and jane went quickly into the streets where she felt more like a woman. i moved swiftly away from them on my new rat legs so nimble thin.

during the next two months i ran toward the north countries. i ran toward the snow that covers the dead. white over white. i ran through heat past fields dark and grey. past houses with the finger of the moon in each window. past the stillness of the closed
eye of rain in the night. i ran with rat desperation past the lost age. i saw nothing except the visions that ran with me.

the visions of the rodent mind. visions of something gone away forever, something gone out of the memory and beyond. visions of trees with blood for sap. visions of faces suspended between cliff and sky, their faces grinning. visions of myself as a skull.

i ran while days piled upon days. i ran north toward snow and cold.

i found the first dogs in the eleventh month of the year of the rat. they were standing around a small fire the wolves had made. there were about twenty of the dogs and three wolves. they sniffed at me. i at them. i sat down near the edge of the fire to watch the flames. i watched them in silence for a very long time.

you are rodent said one of the wolves. you do not belong. i said. i belong.

but you will change us said the wolf. we are the last of the animals. you will change us. i ran as the wolf and dog run i said. i ran toward the north and the snow just as you have run.

we ran so that we would not change said one of the other wolves. i ran because i had changed i said. i came here not to change you. i came to satisfy myself that you are alive and have not changed.

we are alive said a dog. and we have changed some said the first wolf. we are all a bit sadder now. we did not really mind men. but they are rodents now. we had to leave. the snow does our covering for us. covers our tracks, our scents, our memories. it will cover the death of the last dog.

then it will also cover the death of the last man i said. the last rodent if you will. i am tired as the sun must be tired. as you dogs and wolves must be tired. tired of running. perhaps it is time we stayed.

or perhaps it is the time that we set about to die said a wolf. we are nearly that tired. but you are hungry he said. eat some of our food. even a rat must eat. a man i corrected.

we ate and slept. the dogs and i. we did not speak for weeks although the dogs and wolves whispered in the dark to each other. in the dark i would hear the words rat and man mentioned again and again in the low growl of wolf.

all through the weeks of snow i ran with the dogs and the wolves. i was slower but just as cunning. cunning enough to sniff out a frozen carcass now and then which we would warm over a fire and eat. i was cunning enough to survive among the dogs. i began to forget my shiny fur, my small teeth, red eyes. i began to change again.

my face grew thicker with fur. the fur changed to a lighter shade of grey. my teeth became sharper than before and thicker. my legs changed to cords of muscle covered with fur. i no longer felt the cold. i could run as fast as the dogs as we entered the twelfth month of the year of the rat.

we moved further north until we came to the great sea where the first ships had sunk years and years before our time. here we stayed and made our home with cold. time disappeared. the earth began to twist. there were a few stars like chips of ice in the sky.

in the last day of the twelfth month of the year of the rat i changed into a wolf. i ran the beaches near the frozen sea. i sang that night to my mother the moon. she answered and lifted me into the belly of the last bright star that shattered over the year of the rat. my wolf eyes shine. the smoke of the dead star cleared. i was born.

John Bron
Two Men

A flat fenced roof
crouching on gravel
alone
the fading warmth
startling the finger
the eye questioning
as pale lavender
drabs to gray pebble
and black
tars the feathers.

A green hill
mounting the red tricycle
alone
and rolling down
bouncing
off hard gray rocks
down faster than scream
and over the edge.

A boat at night
falling through the locks
and out to the lake
peace
lapping liquidly
our shy approach
the red fuzzy coruscations
of the buoy in the
cool darkness
of this peculiar space
and time
where two planets orbit
a private star
beyond the myriad galaxy
of Chicago.

Three Places

Dan Koerner

David Aupperlee
Lighter than a hammer, softer than a shout


Women have been waiting for the last ten years for the book that would say it all. The book that would say what Millet was trying to say in Sexual Politics, the book that would combine and synthesize the plethora of feminist literature into one poetic statement, the book that would tell the world what woman is, the book that would dispel the literary myths of Miller, Mailer and Lawrence and leave future writers no room to toy with woman's soul. The author of such a book would not be prone to heavy-handed literary outrage, she would not participate in shout-downs on late night TV, she would not have to march around the White House or attend political conventions, she would not have to write malicious, nasty letters to Time or Newsweek. Her book would be her weapon. The only weapon she would need because that book would be heavier than a sledge hammer and louder than a shout. The book would be a book of poetry—that poetry would bare woman's soul with power and grace. That poetry would leave no room for debate or bad jokes. That poetry would say it all and say it in a way that it never has to be said again. That book would bring about a short, clean, and very sweet revolution.

The time seemed to be at hand with the publication of Margaret Atwood's latest book of poetry, Power Politics. Margaret Atwood with four books of poetry and two novels already published, with experience, self-confidence, and public acknowledgement behind her, seemed the best candidate for staging this revolution. The title, the cover drawing, the publicity raves, and the opening poem,

you fit into me
like a hook into an eye
a fish hook
an open eye
all promise such a literary event.

Unfortunately she hesitates and loses her grasp on the power she promises. The majority of the poems are more like small skirmishes or street fights than any major battles. She avoids the sharp jangles and keeps her poetry on safe, comfortable ground. She seems unwilling to push her poetry far enough to the edge to find where the real battles are. The following poem is typical of the hesitation and compromise she delivers with the majority of the book.

SMALL TACTICS
These days my fingers bleed even before I bite them
Can't play it safe, can't play at all any more
Let's go back please to the games, they were
more fun and less painful

Her poetry becomes an easy metaphor for the games she is speaking of in this poem. Having stepped out she runs a risk of not liking what is there, so she goes back to the games. Her "game" poetry maybe comes easier but it is certainly devoid of any of the power she promises and is capable of writing. As long as she keeps her poetry on the safe side, she will never find the jangles to deliver them.

Two or three of the poems seem to be truer to Atwood's potential and insight. In these poems, she takes that step out and delivers true power, sheer grace and sharp jangles.

yes at first you
go down smooth as pills, all of me
breathes you in and there it's
a kick in the head, orange
and brutal, sharp jewels
hit and my
hair splinters

What do you expect after this? Applause? Your name on stone?
You will have nothing but me and in a worse way than before,
my face packed in cotton in a white gift box, the features
dissolving and re-forming so quickly I seem only to flicker.

Holding evidence that Atwood can confront anger, fear, hatred and communicate these feelings to her reader, one becomes all the more disgusted that she allows herself to write the easier "game" poems. She lets herself be taken in by nice sounding statements that lead her poetry into easier ground. Many of the poems in Power Politics begin with clear statements of powerful emotions. The last couple lines of these poems destroy the entire effect. She writes a nice, easy ending to a poem instead of drawing the poem out to its true conclusion. These few endings are symptomatic of her self-imposed butchery.

Returning from the dead used to be something I did well
I began asking why
I began forgetting how

THERE ARE BETTER WAYS OF DOING THIS
It would be so good if you'd only stay up there
where I put you, I could believe, you'd solve
most of my religious problems
you have to admit it's easier when you're somewhere else

but today it's this deserted mattress, music overheard through the end wall, you giving me a hard time again for the fun of it or just for

the publicity, when we leave each other it will be so we can say we did.

The reader becomes unsure of what Atwood is supposed to convey because Atwood seems unsure of what she wants her poetry to be. Being hesitant, she stays on the safe side and makes few attempts to write the powerful poetry she promises. The evidence that she can write power politics is there, the potential is there, the desire to do it is even there. Maybe next time she can make good her and the readers' hopes.

I'll be the only whore within fifty miles who can claim she did something with her hands that didn't get a man hard.

The feelings of the child beater for her daughter are much the same as the sometime feeling of any mother for her child. The child beater acts out her more-frequent loathing of her child but the loathing is there in all.

CHILD BEATER
Outside, the rain, pinafore of gray water, dresses the town and I stroke the leather belt, as she sits in the rocking chair, holding a crunched paper cup to her lips. I yell at her, but she keeps rocking; back, her eyes open, forward, they close. Her body, somehow fat, though I feed her only once a day, reminds me of my own just after she was born. It's been seven years, but I still can't forget how I felt. How heavy it feels to look at her.

Ai's poetry is always forceful often brutal. She never pulls a punch, she never fails to push her image as far as it can go, she never wastes a word. She doesn't leave room for the reader to back away from her poetry. The reader either enters this world of everyman or puts the book down and leaves. Ai may be brutal in her poetry but she isn't seeking to destroy her reader. She uses cruelty, physical brutality as a jumping-off point in her search for man. What is it about man that he beats himself and the ones he loves to the ground? And again not all men may be guilty of physical cruelty but all men are guilty of the mind that makes it. The reader plays his part in the same crime as the man in the following poem not only because of Ai's craft in involving the reader but because of all man's common share in cruelty:

RECAPTURE
As always, I find you, beat you. The corner of your mouth bleeds and your tongue slips out, slips in. You don't fight me, you never do. Going back, you stumble against me and I grab your wrist, pulling you down.

Out of the cruel shall come honey


Cruelty by Ai is a unique book of poems for the 20th century, probably unique for the last several centuries. Unlike most poets who search introspectively for tidbits of truth, Ai searches outside of herself for the universal in all men. In Cruelty Ai (pronounced I) becomes I. She becomes the everyman—the base, the essence of all men. She strips off the pretensions and outward trappings of the reader and forces him to recognize his center in the tenant farmer, the old woman, the Cuban peasant, the country midwife, the whore. The outward circumstances of the suburban house owner may be different from the whore in the following poem but the pride of ownership is the same:

TIRED OLD WHORE
This is my property, I laid for it, paid for it, you know, and I just want to build a cement walkway right up to my front door.

Ai's poetry is always forceful often brutal. She never pulls a punch, she never fails to push her image as far as it can go, she never wastes a word. She doesn't leave room for the reader to back away from her poetry. The reader either enters this world of everyman or puts the book down and leaves. Ai may be brutal in her poetry but she isn't seeking to destroy her reader. She uses cruelty, physical brutality as a jumping-off point in her search for man. What is it about man that he beats himself and the ones he loves to the ground? And again not all men may be guilty of physical cruelty but all men are guilty of the mind that makes it. The reader plays his part in the same crime as the man in the following poem not only because of Ai's craft in involving the reader but because of all man's common share in cruelty.
Come on, bitch of my love, while it
is still easy.

Page by page, the poems begin to taste
bittersweet, the physical blows be­

come easier. Ai is not being cruel in
dealing the punches because she also
gives the reader the mind behind the
physical cruelty. By pushing into and
through the physical brute force she
pushes the reader to an almost melan­
choly, sweet beyond. The two follow­
excerpts provide a good taste of it.

THE ANNIVERSARY
I’m not afraid of the blade
you’ve just pointed at my head.
If I were dead, you could take the
boy,
hunt, kiss gnats, instead of my
moist lips.

Take it easy, squabs are roasting,
corn, still in husks, crackles,
as the boy dances around the table:
old, guest at a wedding party for
two sad-faced clowns,
who together, never won a round of
anything but hard times.

Come in, sheets are clean,
fall down on me for one more year
and we can blast another hole in
ourselves without a sound.

CUBA, 1962
Juanita, dead in the morning like
this.
I raise the machete—
what I take from the earth, I give
back—
and cut off her feet.
I lift the body and carry it to the
wagon,
where I load the cane to sell in the
village.

Whoever tastes my woman in his
harry, his cake,
tastes something sweeter than this
sugar cane;
it is grief.
If you eat too much of it, you want
more,
you can never get enough.

Ai is most likely the first to use
completely physical experiences to
summon an image of the spirit. Her
device may be followed up in time—
maybe it is being followed up now—by
poets not yet published or so well
publicized.

Ai should be paid attention to now,
not twenty years or a century later
like so many other great poets. Cruelty
is a book of rare beauty, the herald of
a new experience in poetry.

—Barbara Reinsma

David and Barbara
at the Theater:
Phooey on the
Torpedoes, but
Pass the Salt

Dear Barbara:

This is what I have so far

It was Saturday night in the Calvin
College FAC, and it seemed we Chris­
tians had finally exacted our long­
sought revenge upon Nero and his
sinister Roman citizens. The FAC it­
self reminds one a bit of the Colosse­
um. On this particular Saturday night
the Romans had been replaced in the
stands by the stout bodies of the
Christian Reformed. In the arena prop­
er appeared the helpless pagan victim,
Arthur Miller’s play Death of a Sales­
man.

Once in the ring the victim was
attacked repeatedly by the lions of
Christian Reformed censorship, those
sleek and well-fed felines that con­
tantly prowl about the Calvin campus
in search of appropriate prey. With
their teeth and claws sharpened by
years of mauling, they pounced upon
Miller’s excellent play and tore out
anything that they construed to be
foul, worldly, sinful, or obscene. Thus,
Miller’s moving play underwent during
the course of the evening a good deal
of chewing, hacking, tearing, and gen­
eral destruction of lines that the keep­
ers of the lions considered to be sinful
elements that would most certainly
corrupt every reformed viewer of the
play.

Bastards, hells, and Jesus were
somewhat sloppily chopped off, and
what remained was an amputated and
sluggish Salesman heaving and grunting
across the stage seemingly in the
throes of death at this Christian Re­
formed brand of literary surgery.

The Christians, however, remember­
ning somewhere in their consciousness
the call of Christ to love our enemies,
seemed to repent a bit and try to
patch up the wounded play with the
bandages of the not quite obscene,
worldly, sinful, or foul. Thus, where a
bastard had been torn from the flesh
of the play there was inserted the neat
white gauze of a louse or a geez,
the latter being such a grossly inept
attempt at healing as to make the
victim sicker yet, ultimately sending it
to its death. Added to this was a
snortag and a Judas instead of the
original Jesus, which had seemed
rather appropriate to provide a neat
metaphor, demonstrating once again
the almost uncanny ability of Re­
formed people to be traitor to some­
thing which in its original form would
have done a great deal of good for the
church.

In the end this limping victim of
Calvin’s butchery in the name of cen­
sorship, woefully patched up as to
appear presentable to the alumni and
the students, was dragged bleeding
across the FAC stage as a handsome
example of a Christian reinterpretation
of Miller’s play. So much for drama at
Calvin College.

Thus, there were times while watch­
ing the Thespian performance that I
was tempted to turn and weep on the
shoulder of my fellow reviewer. I was
restrained by the fact that Barbara is a
married woman and her husband sat in
the next seat brooding icily, appar­
tently ready to lash out a well-placed
fist to my jaw if I had done what my
emotions seemed to be directing me to
do. Added to this the fact that Barbara
herself looked quite distraught, I
opted instead to slink farther down
into my seat and watch the rest of the
play in silence. This was no help at all.
Dear David:

About your short jots on the play—they're brilliant and they're true—I couldn't agree with you more. But I don't think they should be part of the review. We'll let your piece be the whole review—I'm sure our readers will be no more hurt about the rather slap-dash manner we present this thing last couple of years that if a reviewer criticizes a Thespian performance he's put down as a know-nothing. If he gives it a good review he receives genial smiles and a little pat on the back. I can't say I'm really prepared for either. And as far as our readers go, the ones who have seen the play they're all the better for it and we shouldn't tempt them with a rehash.

The one thing that must be discussed is the rather liberal editing of this great play. Pretending to make a Christian presentation of an Arthur Miller play is like staging nuclear war in the name of Gandhi. The real blasphemy of it all is that Arthur Miller is but 100 miles away—just about within hearing distance. I wonder what he would have said had he been there. Probably couldn't print it anyway.

Which brings me to the next subject on my mind. How are we going to inform the reader of the liberties that were taken with this play without getting all copies of Dialogue put under lock and key? I think it may be time to pass out optional coded sheets with the dirty words. Perhaps that's what the Thespians should have done on the back page of the program in place of the psalm-quoting director's comment or better yet in place of the words to the Calvin Alma Mater. Can you see it? Print it in three dimensional type and pass out special glasses for those who want them. Kind of a Berlitz Guide to Thespian performances.

It's probably a little too late to consider what they could have done. They did it, unfortunately, and now it's all over. Our task—turning the fact of censorship at Calvin to more of a question—you've already made a brilliant beginning on that.

Oh! one more thing—about John. He wasn't brooding icily because of you but because he never fails to be disappointed by Thespian productions. And if you had started to cry on my shoulder he probably would have started on the other shoulder. A very peculiar position for me—not only fidgety and bored but also uncomfortably wet.

I'd like to see if we could talk to Arthur Miller—do a two-line interview.

Dialogue: Mr. Miller, do you think snobrag is an effective substitute for bastard?

Miller: !

Barb

dear barbara/john mostly barbara

all right let's get this all out front and done with before my mind takes an inordinate twist toward the waste-lands of insanity from all my worries, doubts, etc., about this whole play business.

Peter Dykstra says that my opening statements are too subjective, too much of an emotional attack that will be laughed at by those reading the review or be construed as my doing in some way what the censors did to the play.... well I don't know .... like I trust Pete's judgment especially about writing but I am prepared to leave the opening comment in this review and feel it needs to be there .... and I guess I am prepared to take what excrement may be tossed my way when the old shit hits the fan .... I guess I am finally to the point of being either very very tired or very very frustrated or both at all this censorship nonsense, this pandering of the college to its well-off constituency, this disregard for what is actually said by the playwright under the rationale that it will be horribly bad for my christian mentality to absorb these worldly views .... uggggg .... and again I say uggggg ....

true, I have seen this type of activity during my three years at Calvin in various forms and have managed to somehow ignore them or at least make it enough fun as to render it harmless to my literary sensibilities .... but Salesman was the last straw as they say .... and for these reasons ....

I think the whole affair was all the more tragic because it must have placed a herculean burden upon the actors.... for instance or simply because an integral part of willy's character (his manner of expressing himself) was neatly removed from the play .... part of his personality was missing .... the same thing applies to biff and to a lesser extent to happy .... it also is tragic because amidst all this butchery crap there was some very good-to-excellent acting .... bruce
think as biff was excellent under the circumstances, somehow being able to sustain a forceful presentation throughout the play and literally saving a number of scenes from extinction.... ben also was very good because it takes a tremendous effort to fill the role of willy and a tremendous consistency to fill that role convincingly throughout the night. ... tim as happy was a perfect bit of casting (credit to korf for that) and carried the part admirably....

but the gut of this whole thing remains stuck somewhere down around my tonsils causing among other things a strange urge to reach for a bottle of pepto-bismol.... the whole ancient and absurd idea that simply by lopping off the profanity in a work that work immediately becomes EUREKA ... tadaum ... "CHRISTIAN" (cheers and shouts of bravo from the gallery of alumni, the trustees, and no doubt the christian reformed laymen's league or whatever that bunch of naive jackals calls themselves) ... the idea that by somehow blindfolding a christian to the realities of a work of art he will somehow be able to see more clearly what is christian about the work.... the sheer stupidity of such reasoning is beyond me.... i would like to ask jesus about the whole matter but i suspect if we were able to jet back through time we would find him amidst a gathering of thieves and prostitutes all clamoring in such language and we would have our answer.... well really now barb ... what are we to do? ???? .... and so it goes at calvin ... disrespect for an author's work in the name of civic ethics ... blatant unthinking censorship for the very same reason.... and i already see some other devastating side effects.... like artistic paranoia as a result of censorship.... and the lack of some astoundingly well-written and important plays being produced at calvin like the works of antonin artaud, oscar wilde, or robert handke.... well enough i guess .... i hope this all helps somewhat at least maybe opening up a few eyes to the repression (and that my friend is exactly what it is) of the artist here on the green knoll .... oh for the bananer days again john....

... the sheer stupidity of such reasoning is beyond me.... i would like to ask jesus about the whole matter but i suspect if we were able to jet back through time we would find him amidst a gathering of thieves and prostitutes all clamoring in such language and we would have our answer.... well really now barb ... what are we to do? ???? .... and so it goes at calvin ... disrespect for an author's work in the name of civic ethics ... blatant unthinking censorship for the very same reason.... and i already see some other devastating side effects.... like artistic paranoia as a result of censorship.... and the lack of some astoundingly well-written and important plays being produced at calvin like the works of antonin artaud, oscar wilde, or robert handke.... well enough i guess .... i hope this all helps somewhat at least maybe opening up a few eyes to the repression (and that my friend is exactly what it is) of the artist here on the green knoll .... oh for the bananer days again john....

... the gut of this whole thing remains stuck somewhere down around my tonsils causing among other things a strange urge to reach for a bottle of pepto-bismol.... the whole ancient and absurd idea that simply by lopping off the profanity in a work that work immediately becomes EUREKA ... tadaum ... "CHRISTIAN" (cheers and shouts of bravo from the gallery of alumni, the trustees, and no doubt the christian reformed laymen's league or whatever that bunch of naive jackals calls themselves) ... the idea that by somehow blindfolding a christian to the realities of a work of art he will somehow be able to see more clearly what is christian about the work.... the sheer stupidity of such reasoning is beyond me.... i would like to ask jesus about the whole matter but i suspect if we were able to jet back through time we would find him amidst a gathering of thieves and prostitutes all clamoring in such language and we would have our answer.... well really now barb ... what are we to do? ???? .... and so it goes at calvin ... disrespect for an author's work in the name of civic ethics ... blatant unthinking censorship for the very same reason.... and i already see some other devastating side effects.... like artistic paranoia as a result of censorship.... and the lack of some astoundingly well-written and important plays being produced at calvin like the works of antonin artaud, oscar wilde, or robert handke.... well enough i guess .... i hope this all helps somewhat at least maybe opening up a few eyes to the repression (and that my friend is exactly what it is) of the artist here on the green knoll .... oh for the bananer days again john....

... the gut of this whole thing remains stuck somewhere down around my tonsils causing among other things a strange urge to reach for a bottle of pepto-bismol.... the whole ancient and absurd idea that simply by lopping off the profanity in a work that work immediately becomes EUREKA ... tadaum ... "CHRISTIAN" (cheers and shouts of bravo from the gallery of alumni, the trustees, and no doubt the christian reformed laymen's league or whatever that bunch of naive jackals calls themselves) ... the idea that by somehow blindfolding a christian to the realities of a work of art he will somehow be able to see more clearly what is christian about the work.... the sheer stupidity of such reasoning is beyond me.... i would like to ask jesus about the whole matter but i suspect if we were able to jet back through time we would find him amidst a gathering of thieves and prostitutes all clamoring in such language and we would have our answer.... well really now barb ... what are we to do? ???? .... and so it goes at calvin ... disrespect for an author's work in the name of civic ethics ... blatant unthinking censorship for the very same reason.... and i already see some other devastating side effects.... like artistic paranoia as a result of censorship.... and the lack of some astoundingly well-written and important plays being produced at calvin like the works of antonin artaud, oscar wilde, or robert handke.... well enough i guess .... i hope this all helps somewhat at least maybe opening up a few eyes to the repression (and that my friend is exactly what it is) of the artist here on the green knoll .... oh for the bananer days again john....

... the gut of this whole thing remains stuck somewhere down around my tonsils causing among other things a strange urge to reach for a bottle of pepto-bismol.... the whole ancient and absurd idea that simply by lopping off the profanity in a work that work immediately becomes EUREKA ... tadaum ... "CHRISTIAN" (cheers and shouts of bravo from the gallery of alumni, the trustees, and no doubt the christian reformed laymen's league or whatever that bunch of naive jackals calls themselves) ... the idea that by somehow blindfolding a christian to the realities of a work of art he will somehow be able to see more clearly what is christian about the work.... the sheer stupidity of such reasoning is beyond me.... i would like to ask jesus about the whole matter but i suspect if we were able to jet back through time we would find him amidst a gathering of thieves and prostitutes all clamoring in such language and we would have our answer.... well really now barb ... what are we to do? ???? .... and so it goes at calvin ... disrespect for an author's work in the name of civic ethics ... blatant unthinking censorship for the very same reason.... and i already see some other devastating side effects.... like artistic paranoia as a result of censorship.... and the lack of some astoundingly well-written and important plays being produced at calvin like the works of antonin artaud, oscar wilde, or robert handke.... well enough i guess .... i hope this all helps somewhat at least maybe opening up a few eyes to the repression (and that my friend is exactly what it is) of the artist here on the green knoll .... oh for the bananer days again john....

... the gut of this whole thing remains stuck somewhere down around my tonsils causing among other things a strange urge to reach for a bottle of pepto-bismol.... the whole ancient and absurd idea that simply by lopping off the profanity in a work that work immediately becomes EUREKA ... tadaum ... "CHRISTIAN" (cheers and shouts of bravo from the gallery of alumni, the trustees, and no doubt the christian reformed laymen's league or whatever that bunch of naive jackals calls themselves) ... the idea that by somehow blindfolding a christian to the realities of a work of art he will somehow be able to see more clearly what is christian about the work.... the sheer stupidity of such reasoning is beyond me.... i would like to ask jesus about the whole matter but i suspect if we were able to jet back through time we would find him amidst a gathering of thieves and prostitutes all clamoring in such language and we would have our answer.... well really now barb ... what are we to do? ???? .... and so it goes at calvin ... disrespect for an author's work in the name of civic ethics ... blatant unthinking censorship for the very same reason.... and i already see some other devastating side effects.... like artistic paranoia as a result of censorship.... and the lack of some astoundingly well-written and important plays being produced at calvin like the works of antonin artaud, oscar wilde, or robert handke.... well enough i guess .... i hope this all helps somewhat at least maybe opening up a few eyes to the repression (and that my friend is exactly what it is) of the artist here on the green knoll .... oh for the bananer days again john....
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us... Full of grace and truth.