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Dialogue

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**Faculty Associate Editors**  
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---

Cover by Andrew Brown
Dialogue sets foot on campus this year somewhat like a returning student, searching out its old friends and hoping to find new ones, slightly self-conscious, but determined to do something worthwhile with the available resources (and believing, furthermore, that the resources are abundant). The staff is new, and, as is already apparent in this issue, does not comprise a "common mind." Nor are our individual minds necessarily made up. Through Dialogue we join readers in exploring and evaluating those concerns germane to anyone involved with Calvin College, issues as broad as faith and service, as limited as academic policies or college activities. We share the fairly firm conviction that Dialogue, properly used, is valuable to the particular community for which it is published; our intention, in terms of desired response, is simply to stimulate reading, thinking, and communicating.

In past years Dialogue has been saddled with a number of often contradictory and generally pejorative labels such as "elitest," "negative," "esoteric," "overly-academic," "anti-administration," "pro-administration," et al. No doubt the epithets, whether or not justified, will stick. And Dialogue participates cannot realistically or in good conscience make pleasing the largest possible number of students and faculty members a priority. At the same time, it's important to remember that none of the alleged qualities is any more intrinsic to the nature of the journal than are the size of its pages. An appealing characteristic of a publication such as Dialogue is the fact that it is to a significant degree shaped by those who are willing to contribute to it. Our concern as a staff is that you as students and faculty members do contribute, and that your contributions manifest the very best of the creative impulses and efforts at work at our Christian college. Facing the perennial fear that Dialogue be reduced to a monologue, the staff asks for your assistance in making sure that the journal earn its right to be called "a vehicle for discussion." We are, certainly, most eager to put a bit of you into Dialogue, in the form of an essay, poem, photograph, cartoon, drawing, review, or what you will. In other words, we're willing if you're able. Dialogue is an element in a larger, continuous process of communication in which you are involved merely by virtue of your presence at Calvin. We invite you to use Dialogue to listen to that ongoing discussion and acknowledge your part in it.

Sher Jasperse
The magnificent debates have begun. Both Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter believe that their evasive rhetoric will clarify the issues. On the basis of these issues, they suggest, people will decide for whom to vote. Vice-presidential candidates Dole and Mondale criticize each other’s positions and claim that the issues prove one candidate superior to another. All the candidates, however, believe that the American people will be the sure winners because the election will be decided on the basis of the issues and not on the basis of the candidates’ personalities.

This belief that a candidate should be nominated solely on the basis of his stand on the issues is a fundamental fault in the American political system. The issues mean little after a candidate is elected because they can change so quickly, as they did during the Nixon administration. Never before had a situation like the energy crisis occurred. Never before had there been a situation like Watergate where a president had to deal with the exposure of corruption in the highest levels of the White House. There still has not been a situation where an eastern European country with nuclear capabilities openly attacked a western European country with similar capabilities or vice-versa.

The only way to anticipate a president’s reaction to one of the above situations is on the basis of his personality. A candidate’s personality can be discerned from the general way he solves problems and from his behavior in private as well as in public. Nixon showed his paranoia in 1962 when he told the press they wouldn’t have Richard Nixon to kick around any more. Nixon also showed that his concern for himself was greater than his concern for morality with his famous “pink lady” attack on Helen Gahagan Douglas in the 1950’s. A few years later he showed his concern for himself with his famous “checkers” speech, asking forgiveness for his slush fund. Many people viewed this as merely a political speech with no underlying moral conviction.

Despite these obvious indications of Nixon’s amorality and selfishness, people voted overwhelmingly to elect and reelect him on the basis of the issues. Accordingly they got exactly what they paid for: a president who was vindictive and more concerned about making history than he was concerned about what was right or wrong.

In choosing a candidate to support, then, a person should look at the nature of a man’s reactions to the issues and how they reflect his personality. The candidate in question should show that he is a man of compassion, understanding, and above all, a man who does things because he thinks they are right, not because he thinks they are politically expedient.

David Faber
So I'm twenty-one, never registered to vote, have no plan of doing so in the future. Gary Snyder said to trust Jerry Brown, and if Brown were running for President I might be tempted to campaign for him, but I doubt if I would register to vote. If I wasn't so lazy I'd check this for sure, but I believe that it was B.F. Skinner who told us in *Walden Two* that it was more likely that any given person would be killed on the way to the polls than that his or her vote would affect the outcome of an election. Very likely Dialogue would be unwilling to print the words I habitually use to describe B.F. Skinner, but on this point at least I take him seriously.

The purpose of this is not to flaunt my neglect of responsibility. In fact I feel unassailable on this point; the word "citizen" is a sequence of sounds empty of semantic content and certainly demands nothing from me. My real intention is to say something about the poems in this issue. "Landscape" is just exactly what it is. I call it an enlightenment poem, which is not to imply that I am in any way enlightened. But, obviously enough, the Ecstatic Mother is. "Chasing the Reaper" was written last spring under dubious circumstances and was rather coolly received by the people Bill read it to in the bar. Try reading it in the morning with and without a hangover. Perhaps "Last Weekend" can be criticised relative to the bald bluntness of section II. But given the present state of Western culture "overstuffed shorts" may well be a universal. Beth's short untitled poem is by far the best poem to be submitted to Dialogue since school started. Nothing really needs to be said about it except that it does precisely what a poem is supposed to do.

The point of it all is this: If you have no interest in politics, think again, but if you've never registered to vote, don't bother—read the poems.

David Westendorp
Landscape

The shudder of an oak tree
that girdles itself
The finely-veined suicide of leaves

Hissing like zoo snakes on glass
the cat defends her mouse

Or in the garden
the shaft of the hoe
leaning against my thigh
An afternoon that swims
like Black Goyas
in a dense silence

A golden buddha
and blackbirds that bolt from the bricks
of my bedroom wall
full grown and in flight

David Westendorp

Chasing The Reaper

"Don't sit in the bar long tonight," she said.
"The cards said—"
but he was listening to the click
in his head that came before alcohol.
The same, but louder than usual.
There was more money this month;
there would be longer periods
in which sounds and colors
would be united in a sensible flow
and the burn, burn between his eyes
and in his groin would be distant.

In the morning Jacob fried what was left
of the venison in wine,
added an egg.
Burn—
yes, there it was.
He wandered back
into his room for a smoke,
John Collier working in the garden
nurturing strange plants
with small amounts of his own blood.
Jacob knew he would have to leave
before harvest.
Voices from the cigarettes,
"WE WANT YOUR LUNGS—"

Jacob chopped bits of onion
into the pan, where they danced
like cannibals
around the meat.

Bill Sheldon
Last Weekend

I
Meat juices still on my lips
We watch sunsets and smoke
squatting in the jail–cold freight elevator
It runs past a blind man's room
where the Winston girl smiles in
all day and all night

II
"Please hurry," the clown says
"Quickly now before I go
a little white paint for my eyelids"
All the sun-bounced heads mill
and swell like waves
Overstuffed shorts pause
at the glossy movie star buttons
but are distracted when the popcorn comes

III
Singers at the edge of the grove
look out with bright shirts and flutes
Their songs come on pinpoints
but I hesitate
They harangue and make din

G.J. Van Spronsen
(Untitled)

Reflected light, 
raw squid, 
and blood. 
My blood slaps the wooden dock with muffled absorbancy. 
With only a little trouble you can lug me home, 
thumb and forefinger sunken with squeamish silence 
into my glassy eyes.

Beth Styles
In any institution or association certain expressions have a way of creeping up which, by their frequent usage, eventually lapse into cliché. Some currently popular at Calvin are: "integration of faith with learning," "The Spirit moves at Calvin College," and "Support Commuter Twirp Week." The last mentioned, though less overtly spiritual than the others, is equally prevalent. Over all of these and other catch-phrases one small term has become preeminent. This expression enjoys wide popularity in present-day scholarly lectures and informal debate. Some people cherish the time they spend, on a regular basis, talking, singing and sharing about this and related topics (e.g., interpersonal relationships, "body life," etc.). The mileage that chapel talks have gotten out of this topic is inestimable, and it has proved to be a staple of convocation address, honors assembly eulogy, and commencement panegyric. The topic is Christian community.

But why all the talk? Is the idea itself all that fascinating, or is it just something else to talk about after we've exhausted the weather? If mere volume of discussion were a reliable indicator of its existence, then the Board of Trustees could commission the service crew to erect pearly gates at the campus entrances and start ringing dem golden bells. Maybe, on the other hand, we're trying to convince ourselves or others that we are indeed a Christian academic community. Like so many people who talk at length on the subject, I don't have much to contribute by way of originality, and yet somehow I feel favorably disposed to Christian community. And I have no idea why. I don't even know what it is anymore. It seems to me that Calvin is Christian after a fashion, and a community of sorts.

Rather than heap more verbal grist on an already choked mill, I would like now to direct your attention to another subject which proves related to this business about Christian community.

There is an august body at Calvin which—to the amusement of the Classics Department—calls itself "Student Senate." I shouldn't poke too much fun at Senate because it does quite a bit to make our lives as students more happy and meaningful (booksales, commuter lockers). According to its revised Manual (Nov. 1975), Senate "provides one means through which students may improve Calvin College as an educational enterprise and as a Christian community," having as its immediate object the responsibility "to take action and state positions on behalf of the student body." This year's Student Handbook calls Senate "the student governmental body at Calvin." That doesn't say an awful lot. Do students need—or even want—some kind of group to speak or act for them? In short: Who cares? I think that not many do. This indifference toward Senate is attributable to several factors, a likely one being the perennial student apathy toward any type of constructive, organized activity. But that is hardly peculiar to college students. Another plausible reason is the nature of Senate itself. It is a thriving bureaucracy and a paradigm of bad communication. Most students would rather participate directly in the various "Senate-sponsored" activities and publications than waste their time at boring Senate meetings. This is quite right, as Senate's main task and raison d'être is the "allocation of resources" (dealing out the dough) to these activities. In terms of its primary objective, determining who gets what and how much, Senate differs little from most political bodies. When it comes right down to it, I doubt that Senate has any real governmental power at all, beyond spending our tuition for us, and if Senate didn't do that someone else would.

Politics are a necessary and very natural part of any community that wants to accomplish anything. All political systems should be efficient; at a Christian college one should be both that and inconspicuous. Student government is necessary in that it helps to keep the natives busy and content, while perhaps acquainting a few with the vagaries of the abstruse art of parliamentary procedure. More than that, the FOSCO report allows significant room for student voices and opinions on several important committees. But let's face it, any talk about the "political power" of Student Senate must be taken with a block of salt. Any power Student Senate has is purely a trust from somewhere higher up. By this I don't wish to denigrate what potential Senate does in fact have. It seems to me that Senate would best serve its mandate by acting with fairness and discrimination on the budget proposals and committee appointments in the spring and fall, and not take itself too seriously for the rest of the year. Cliquishness is an undesirable in this case as is rank egalitarianism, for, while the former tends to serve vested interests, the latter tends to get sloppy and inefficient. At best Senate can be a structural agent to coordinate and channel the energies and interests of its constituency: liberal arts students. At worst it is a waste of time and money, but a good opportunity for students to "get involved" without doing much.

Jonathan Rockey is a Student Senator whose home is near the Kennedy estate in Cape Code, Massachusetts.
Photographs on the following four pages are from the second annual Calvin College International Photography Competition sponsored by the Calvin Art Department. They were chosen from an exhibit of 103 prints by artists from fifteen countries whose works will be displayed October 14 through November 11 in the Center Art Gallery, located in the lower level of the College Center. Gallery hours are 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, Monday through Friday, and 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Saturday.

Gros Cube
Jean Melin, Le Havre, France
Ballgymnastik
Edmund Frings, Hamburg, West Germany
Naples 1969
Peter Carlberg, Grand Rapids, Michigan

The March
Dr. Leon K. K. Wong, Hong Kong
Without Comment
Ferenc Kalandy Pap, Hungary
The Liberating God
and the Demands

It must be stated at the outset that this essay is not dealing specifically with the Latin American phenomenon known as Liberation Theology. It should also be made clear that I am, on several points, in strong disagreement with many of the so-called Liberation theologians. This essay does not, however, permit room nor time to go into these points. Suffice it to say that I do feel that the Liberation theologians have undertaken a task long overdue in the church: that of re-examining the theme of liberation that is so prominent in scripture, and rethinking its implications for the obedient Christian life.

Liberation is a very powerful word. In essence, it means the freeing of that which was once captive. It is a very general term, and can refer to many different types of bondage. And this is good in that there exist many forms of bondage from which people need to be liberated.

The Bible speaks often of libera-
of the Kingdom

tion. In the Old Testament, Yahweh was a liberating God, leading His chosen people out of bondage in Egypt and calling them to be a special people, living in His POWER and under His Lordship. Subsequently, wishing to insure justice and liberty for all His chosen, Yahweh instituted the Year of Jubilee. It was a special time during which, among other things, all properties were returned to their original tribal owners and equally redistributed. All debtor slaves were freed, and special provision was made to insure the survival of the poor, sick, and needy. Yahweh had called out a people for Himself and treated them with love and mercy; He expected them to care for each other in the same way. The Old Testament, especially the prophetic literature, is litten with examples of how Israel attempted to escape these demands; God's judgment was almost constantly being levelled against a disobedient people.

With the coming of Christ and the New Covenant, the demand for jubilee justice was made permanent. Christ's death and resurrection provide the central point in God's plan of redemption in history. Christ's act expresses Yahweh's love and mercy in their fullness. Consequently, Christ expects His church, His called-out people, to live the jubilee in fulness, rejoicing in His love and responding with practical acts of love and mercy towards others. And the jubilee is now to be lived constantly, not just periodically as under the Old Covenant. This means that the church is to be proclaiming and living God's justice and mercy, preaching and demonstrating the forgiveness of sin and the POWER to overcome it in the many ways it has permeated life. The church is to be about the business of healing.

Unfortunately, however, Western theology has often failed to recognize this. In dealing with the theme of liberation as it is found in scripture, Western theologians have become fairly consistently reductionistic. They have systematically boxed in scripture in such a way as to make it applicable only to the spiritual side of man.

Ever since the Early Church came under the influence of Greek philosophy, theologians have viewed man as being divided into two basic areas: spiritual and material. Coinciding with this outlook, life in general has been likewise divided into two realms: the sacred— basically having to do with one's concept of God, afterlife rewards and/or punishments, spiritual fulfillment (sufficiently ambiguous as to be harmless), and, from time to time, personal ethics; and the secular—having to do with matters of the present life in this world, e.g., politics, economics, psychology, sociology, etc. God has been relegated to the spiritual realm, and as a result, scripture becomes applicable only to "matters of faith." When functioning in "worldly" matters, one is to be guided by whatever principles become evident through the use of pragmatics and reason. God, according to this way of thinking,
really has nothing to say (or at least nothing of relevance) to the matters of the secular realm.

Scripture, however, cannot be done justice by this scheme. Instead, it speaks of the whole man, in all of life, as having been created by the Living God to be wholly subject to Him. Any believer wishing to cultivate a radically obedient stance with regard to what the Bible teaches will have no choice but to reject these dichotomous presuppositions. Christians must, rather, begin with the ideas authoritatively revealed to them in scripture. That is to say, if the Word addresses the whole man, then what is said must in fact be applied to the whole man! Anything less is rebellion, and bondage to the powers of the Fall.

However, such passages as are overtly political, social, or economic in nature are usually spiritualized into oblivion and uselessness; or, in the case of the Old Testament, are often completely written off as being applicable only to the nation of Israel in its particular historical situation. This manner of dealing with the Law and the Prophets, though, is antithetical to the radically wholistic way in which Jesus Himself understood them. He quoted extensively from the Old Testament, applying passages to all areas of everyday life. The biblical message—the history of redemption past, present, and future—is a message of liberation in the fullest possible sense. It proclaims a redemption and liberation of the whole man in all his many aspects of life.

Another mistake regarding biblical commands, and one that goes hand in hand with spiritualizing, is the tendency to individualize. Granted, God deals with people on an individual level, and His Word does provide guidelines and commands with regard to individual conduct; but that is not all. Revelation was not handed down to a heterogeneous conglomeration of individuals. It was, instead, given to a particular covenant community; a group of individuals called and committed to being and becoming the people of God.

This concept too, the concept of peoplehood, has been greatly and sadly neglected in much of Western theology. The radical individualism with which our culture is shot through has also come to permeate our ideas about the Christian life and lifestyle. Despite the fact that much of what is called Christianity pays lip-service to the concept of being committed to Christ and other believers, modern Christians often begin to have second thoughts when it comes down to real demands actually being made on their lives. In a recent Sojourners article along this line, Clark Pinnock writes:

Most congregations today bear little resemblance to Paul’s strong metaphor of the church as a physical body. The church has become a voluntary society of autonomous individuals in which the really serious questions of Christian discipleship seldom even come up. Therefore little real guidance and help is given to believers seeking to walk by the way of the cross in the world. We need to become far more interdependent and deeply involved in each others lives than at present. Until we do, a great deal of what the Bible has to say about the church will remain quite theoretical.  

Theology must be more than merely theoretical work carried on in a vacuum. It must be a systematic exposition of biblical teachings in order to discern the whole truth, and an examination of how that truth practically applies to today’s world and today’s problems. This is not relativism. It is rather a part of what it means to be the church in and for the twentieth century.

This year’s lecture series at Calvin will feature speakers who have sensed this need and are attempting to do theology in such a way as to speak God’s liberating Word into contemporary situations. They are people who are themselves struggling with such issues as sexism, racism, and massive socio-economic oppression. Their contributions are sorely needed, and the ensuing dialogue will hopefully be of assistance in shaking the church of Christ out of her present state of lethargy.
In the final analysis, Western Christians are usually much more comfortable with the idea of personally maintaining control of their lives and dealings. They want to remain the determiners of what they do and do not do; or at least, they want to remain the determiners of how far obedience to God is carried. This fact has been a tremendous detriment to the witness of the church in the twentieth century.

Although God's Word does often speak to individual believers, it does so only in the context of the power and reinforcing of a covenant community. And, in other instances, the Word also directly addresses that community as a whole. But in either case, the point is that God calls His people, both individually and corporately, unto unquestioning obedience. This call to obedience makes demands on one's entire life, in every area, in attitude and in action.

Failure to take seriously God's call to peoplehood and radical obedience, to realize and apply the Gospel in the fulness of its implications, has led to some severely disconcerting results. One of the most evident and serious is the failure of the Church of Christ to fulfill her prophetic role in the world. In failing for so long to exercise this role, she has both lost her distinctiveness as a called-out people and forfeited even her ability to function prophetically.

We live in a culture saturated by the ideas of self-determination, the good (i.e., the comfortable) life, and success measured in terms of accumulated material wealth and ability to consume as much as one wants of whatever one desires. People caught up in such a situation become insulated against the stark realities of the squalor in which the majority of the world's population is forced to live.

With the world now linked by the medium of television, and the possibility of on-the-spot coverage of any event anywhere on earth, one would think that global awareness and concern would be growing. But in reality, it is the contrary that is true. People are bombarded nightly by network news reports of oppression, discrimination, starvation, revolt, and war; and the constant barrage has, more often than not, anaesthetized them to the effect that they should be feeling, the outrage with which they should be gripped.

People in the West are either ignorant of or apathetic toward the way in which their own high standard of living is affecting the majority of the global population. In the face of such prospects as world famine, American citizens still sit idly by as their government uses food distribution and foreign aid as diplomatic weapons. It is with great regret that it must be admitted that on none of these counts can the church, the body of Christ, be held blameless. When confronted with such issues as massive economic oppression of Latin America and Third World peoples, and systematic discrimination based on race, sex, or social class, she has remained deafeningly silent. Sadder yet, however, is the fact that it has been "necessary" for the church to take such a stance; for even now she and her people in the West are reaping the "benefits" of the system that perpetrates these injustices. And so long as Western Christianity continues to preach a watered down gospel of personal salvation without radically biblical discipleship and obedience, so long as it continues to warp submission to the government to mean support of an oppressive status quo, so long as it continues to fail to break with the established way and speak out prophetically against systematized social, political, and economic oppression, and fails to present a life that offers a radical biblical alternative and answer to present world situations so long also Western Christians will continue to reap those
“benefits” while their brothers and sisters in other parts of the world die of starvation or rot in prisons for trying to live their faith.

Lamenting the present state of the church in the West, Pinnock also writes

... As aliens and pilgrims, members of the new community are to be a countersign to the world’s values. The fellowship should energetically resist being conformed to this world and reject all alliances with its institutions which would muffle her prophetic voice of judgment and correction. The church has always had to face a pagan world. The tragedy is that so often there has only been a pagan church facing it.... Almost never will a social class act against its own interests.

The unfortunate truth of the matter is that Christians in the West are very hesitant to bite the hand by which they have so long been fed and fattened.

In addition to the prophetic role, the church is also called to be an expression of Christ’s servanthood. This is the positive side of judgment. As the biblical church speaks out in judgment against an oppressive order, it must also balance its attack by offering a radically biblical alternative to that order. And words are cheap. It is true discipleship that becomes costly.

Jesus was very adamant on this point: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save (or preserve) his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:24-25). And further, “... whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28). Some of the implications of biblical servanthood will be discussed in a further article. For now, let is just be said that it is to be one of the chief characteristics of the Church of Christ. To follow Christ means to bear the cross, to serve Him by serving others, and to be willing and ready to suffer. It means that Christians are to give up their “rights” to the self-determined life and live sacrificially, with a willingness to die to self-centeredness, and in some cases, to die quite literally. Even as Christ gave His own life up for the benefit of others, many of whom had not yet even been born, so Christians are to live in a way that will promote justice and healing, often at their own expense. To quote again from Pinnock,

The church is called to be an outcropping of the new order, the social manifestation of the ultimately triumphant work of God, an extension of God’s incarnate love in the world. As such the church exists not to serve itself but to bless the world by mediating Christ’s servanthood in the midst.... Therefore the church has an extraordinary calling to act against its own interests and to be a community of love, forgiveness, and service.

Such ideas as selflessness, giving, and suffering servanthood are all too often very foreign to the thinking of twentieth-century Christians under the influence of Western culture. Although they may not actually be caught up in the “what’s in it for me?” mindset, they are still very heavily bound to the thought of maintaining a “modestly comfortable” lifestyle for themselves and their families. They balk at the extremity of some of Jesus’ statements in the Sermon on the Mount, either calling them intentionally idealistic and therefore unachievable, or rationalizing them away with claims like: “Well, back then it was much easier to live that way. They didn’t have to cope with the kind of pressures and complexities that we have today.”

It is to some extent true that the situation in which Christ spoke was not the same as today. But although the historical circumstances may have been different, the principles still apply. The peculiar needs of today still demand the answers provided by a radically biblical Christianity. Christians in the twentieth century do not face a more or less difficult situation than the Christians of any other historical period. They face a different situation. The time is different, the context is different, but the problems are basically the same. If it is a more complex situation, then it demands sound Christian analysis. But it does not merit apathy. The need today is the same as it was in the first century: the need for Christians who are willing to make a stand. The church in the twentieth century must be a church that has eyes to see the truth, ears to hear the cries of those in need, and a heart that aches for those who know no
hope. Further, the church must be a body, a people both corporately and individually committed to fleshing out the life of Jesus Christ in a fallen world. It is to be a community of believers called out and set apart from the present established order, crying out for justice and healing, and at the same time reaching out in service, love, and mercy to both the oppressed and the oppressor. Christians must be willing to suffer for their stance. To speak and act in obedience at all costs. Finally, they must be willing to forgive even those who persecute them, and weep for those who refuse to hear. For this is the way of the cross, and in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Cost of Discipleship*, “It is by seeing the cross and the community beneath it that men come to know God.”

These remarks have been intended neither as a harangue against nor a rejection of the church, but rather as a serious and conscientious critique. The purpose has not been to enrage or offend. Instead, it has been to offer a delineation of some very obvious problems and a call to repentance and renewed positive action.

The church has been called out of the world to confront the world with the gospel; and that gospel, the “good news,” is much more than merely the proclamation of individual salvation by grace. The message preached by the apostles, by John the Baptist, and by Jesus Himself was: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

The church is in need of a renewed sense of the presence and nature of the Kingdom of God. A kingdom is a form of government where the king rules and the subjects obey! When the Kingdom of God is manifested in its fulness, Christ as King will openly reign; every knee will bow and every person will confess His absolute Lordship. Unquestioning obedience to His commands will be the norm; and according to the apostle Paul, life will be characterized by both peace and righteousness (Romans 14:17). It will be a place where justice and equity reign in conjunction with love.

Although the Kingdom of God is not yet present in its fulness, it is nonetheless present ... in the church. But the church cannot preach the good news of the Kingdom’s presence unless it is at least attempting to live it. After all, Christ called His disciples, above all else, to “seek ... first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). As a community of believers, the church *can* and *should* be a concrete example of what it means to live under the Lordship of Christ, obediently proclaiming and living Christ’s justice, equity, righteousness, peace, mercy, and love. If the church is not concretely demonstrating her significance for the twentieth century, then the people of the world have every right to conclude that Christianity has nothing to say to them. On the other hand, Christians have been provided with both the guidelines and the POWER to prove such a conclusion wrong ... if they will.

**FOOTNOTES**

4. Pinnock, p. 29.
Tradition, or perhaps the *laisser-aller* attitude of letting things develop until they become unbearable, has always been a weighty element in Canadian politics. Despite its apparent competence in shaping a well-balanced system, it is leading to a very undemocratic form of government.

When our Canadian forefathers accepted the *British North America Act* as our constitution in 1867, they accepted a document which dealt with the generalities of human rights and the specifics of building a railroad. Areas such as the mechanics of running government were left largely untouched and are what they are today only through the acceptance of much of England's parliamentary system and the gradual changes which have been incorporated legally after a lengthy existence.

In the 109 years of Canada's history its national government has gone through many stages. Originally the intention of electing members to the House of Commons was that they should represent the people who had elected them. The emphasis was on the *man*, and while this arrangement had its faults, parties had to stay on their toes to keep a majority of votes and put through the legislation they proposed. As the party system evolved to its more refined state, however, the excitement of the Independent disappeared. Now, if a party wins a clear majority in the House, it can enact any legislation it wishes. Disagreements may be aired in the closed party caucus, but once a decision has been reached there, that decision must be supported by every party member. That is not a law; yet it is a tradition unquestionably adhered to. Anyone who breaks party ranks to vote against accepted policies in Parliament usually does...

*Minnie Joldersma, a senior from Hamilton, Ontario, is a former University of Alberta student majoring in German; she also speaks Dutch and French.*
so at the expense of his seat in the next election.

With the emergence of the party system as we know it today came what can best be described as "cabinet government." The leader of the largest party is installed as Prime Minister, and from his party faithfuls he selects his cabinet members. Although the Prime Minister must pick his cabinet from among elected representatives, in all other ways he is bound by the same obligations to geography, race, religion, pressure groups, and other friends as is the President of the United States in his choice of cabinet. In the Canadian system, however, there is one vital difference in party solidarity: If a cabinet member proposes some legislation, his party has a clear majority, that proposed legislation must, by virtue of the system, always be passed. Non-cabinet members are reduced to "yes-men," and although the grievances of some of these backbenchers has resulted in their increased influence in committee work behind the scenes, no satisfactory answer to their position has yet been found.

In the 1940's and 1950's some critics of Canadian politics questioned the validity of the obvious and yet unofficial cabinet government. They suggested that a cabinet minister was merely a mouthpiece for a much more knowledgeable and experienced civil service. In the old days, when the Independents were still footloose and fancy-free, the civil service maintained essentially the same attitude. Whenever the government changed from Conservative to Liberal or vice versa, the entire civil service was dismissed and another hired largely on the basis of party loyalty. This practice was outlawed by establishing the supposed political neutrality of the civil service and by prohibiting any civil servant's membership in a political party. This practice was outlawed by establishing the supposed political neutrality of the civil service and by prohibiting any civil servant's membership in a political party. It stands to reason, then, that a senior civil servant with twenty years of experience will know more than the cabinet minister who was appointed as official head of a particular department last week. It is the former, not the latter, who will be able to suggest policies and to provide the details to justify them.

Through Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the civil service has been put to use to initiate still another stage in the evolution of Canadian government. In the years that he has been in office, Trudeau has doubled the number of staff members in the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council, thus creating, in effect, a civil service of his own. This has made him independent of his cabinet ministers and their branches of the civil service. At the same time he can verify the information from his own staff by using the already established civil service.

Under Trudeau Canada is entering the stage where its government is close to a Prime-Ministerial dictatorship. Many who are proud of Canada's history as a democracy may disagree. But, clearly, it would take a very dynamic Conservative leader, capable of obtaining the Quebec vote, or a major blunder on the part of the Liberals, to unseat Trudeau in the next election. Neither is very likely. In the meantime the Liberals rule the House with a comfortable majority, paying little attention to "Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition." Cabinet members owe their posts to the Prime Minister and are not likely to break ranks; backbenchers realize that the Liberals win elections because of Trudeau, not in spite of him.

It must be acknowledged that this is a fairly simplistic picture. Laisser-aller has played a role in the formation of government; on the other hand, it also plays a role in the Canadian people's attitude towards this government. They will passively take only so much Prime-Ministerial nonchalance. In the 1972 election they gave Trudeau a paternal slap as a result of the "fuddle-duddle" episode in Parliament, as well as his highhanded remark that the Canadian electorate plays an insignificant role in Canadian politics:
They failed to give him a clear majority in the House. But it was only a slap. In the following election Trudeau and the Liberals were returned to office with a larger majority than ever before.

Trudeau is an independent who only rarely reveals that fault. He is in power and he knows it, but to let the complacent Canadian people know it, as he did by the aforementioned unfortunate slip, would be a mistake. Still, Trudeau is not to be blamed for catching on to the farthest implications of laissez-aller in Canadian politics. He, more than anyone else, is trying to introduce written constitutional changes to stabilize the situation, although he consistently gets rapped on the knuckles for it. Furthermore, some of the changes he has carried through, such as limiting time in Parliament for debate on a particular bill, are advantageous to the party in power, not to the opposition party, which has to remedy the situation.

While I am proud of Canada's multi- (three?) party system, I am doubtful of its effectiveness in providing checks and balances. Even though a smaller party may hold the balance of power for a period of time, as the New Democrats did in 1972, it is usually loath to vote against the government and force another election by thus causing its downfall—for the party which does that is usually the one which loses most in the next election. Yet the fact that Canadian politics has room for more than two parties suggests a possible alternative to the state of affairs to which the laissez-aller attitude has brought Canada. While a multi-party system, like that of some continental European countries, supposedly means a less stable government, this instability might be preferred to even a mild dictatorship. How the Canadian government could implement such a change, or what its long-range effects would be, is difficult to determine. A change, however, is necessary, before such change is no longer possible.
James Penning


In The Final Days, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, best known for their Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage of Watergate in the Washington Post and the best-selling book, All The President's Men, focus on the internal dynamics of the White House during the 1972-74 collapse of the second Nixon administration. The book is, quite simply, fascinating.

The Final Days provides us with numerous intimate and heretofore unknown details about the thoughts and actions of Nixon and his supporters in their unsuccessful attempt to save the Nixon Presidency. We see the President's family and staff desperately clinging to a belief in Nixon's ignorance of the Watergate cover-up, despite growing evidence to the contrary. Nixon's lawyers are portrayed as mediocre men, foolishly ignoring the political dimensions of Watergate while concentrating on legal technicalities.

Woodward and Bernstein's description of the months immediately preceding Nixon's August, 1974 resignation is positively frightening. The authors paint a picture of chaos in the White House—low staff morale, a President unable and/or unwilling to govern, and a small number of key Presidential aides (e.g., Haig and Kissinger) struggling to maintain an appearance of normality while actually making most important decisions themselves. Indeed, for a time General Haig actually served as a surrogate President.

"Tragic" and "pathetic" are words which accurately describe the Richard Nixon of The Final Days. Even individuals who supported Nixon's ouster cannot help be moved by Woodward and Bernstein's description of Nixon, a man who related to memos better than to human beings, a man who desperately feared revealing his inner emotions.

James Penning, Phd., joined the Calvin College political science department in 1975.
even to this family and closest aides. Only in the solitude of his office, accompanied by a Dictabelt, could Nixon lower his defenses, speaking of his love for trees and flowers.

It is regrettable that the private, human side of Nixon revealed in the Dictabelts and, perhaps, in his farewell speech, rarely was permitted to influence his public decisions. Nixon insisted (and still insists) on maintaining a position of personal innocence, even when tape transcripts proved that he had publicly lied about his knowledge of the Watergate cover-up. Perhaps more than anything else this proud refusal to admit guilt led to Nixon’s downfall. In a telling statement spoken toward the end of the second Nixon administration, David Eisenhower suggested to Nixon speechwriter, Pat Buchanan, that “the reality of the transcripts’ undercut too much.” In Eisenhower’s opinion, “contrition, even at the eleventh hour, would carry Mr. Nixon a lot further than contention.”

Much criticism of The Final Days has revolved around questions of journalistic methodology. Woodward and evidence supports their claim. Numerous Watergate participants have admitted that the book is “basically accurate.” More difficult to answer are questions of journalistic taste. The Final Days provides intimate details about the lives of public figures which, in the opinion of some observers, are best left unpublicized. One particularly noteworthy instance is Woodward and Bernstein’s description of a meeting between Nixon and Kissinger, a man who had previously referred to Nixon as “our meatball President.” The authors describe a drinking, hysterical President wailing, “Henry, you are not a very orthodox Jew and I am not an orthodox Quaker, but we need to pray.” Nixon, sobbing “leaned over and struck his fist on the carpet, crying, ‘What have I done? What has happened?’ ” Woodward and Bernstein report that Kissinger touched the President, and then held him, tried to console him, to bring rest and peace to the man who was curled on the carpet like a child.” Later, the President begged Kissinger, “Henry, please don’t ever tell anyone that I cried and that I was not strong.”

Bernstein note that all interviews conducted in gathering information for the book “were conducted ‘on background’; that is, they were on the record—we could use the information—but only upon our assurance that the identity of the source would remain confidential.” In addition, the authors claim that all of the situations reconstructed in the book were verified by at least two individuals. The technique of writing recent political history “on background,” while perhaps necessary, is dissatisfying for it renders verification difficult. Moreover, the claim that all information used in the book was double-checked is utter nonsense in view of the fact that some of the material presented (e.g., the thoughts of Kissinger, Buzhardt, and Haig at specific points in time) could have been known only to the individuals themselves.

Woodward and Bernstein have responded to these arguments by contending that despite public concern about their reporting techniques and “journalistic license,” The Final Days contains no major distortations. Indeed, some another instance the authors describe Nixon wandering through the White House, talking to pictures on the walls. While the reporting of such intimate details may be of questionable taste, such writing does not violate any formal journalistic code of ethics. The boundaries of permissible reporting about public officials in the United States are, and doubtless should be, broad. Moreover, the reporting of Nixon’s apparent emotional instability underscores the need for reform in our procedures for removing high-level public officials. It is disturbing to note that toward the end of Nixon’s Presidency Henry Kissinger genuinely feared that some foreign nation might attempt to take military advantage of Nixon’s situation.

Despite its flaws, The Final Days is well worth reading. For many readers, reviewing the all-too-recent memories of Nixon’s gradual destruction may be a painful experience. Yet even Nixon’s most ardent supporters are likely to agree that The Final Days presents a fascinating and basically sympathetic picture of a curiously complex President.
This cover is a three-dimensional assemblage by Andrew Brown. Photography by Curt Door.