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Dialogue

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A single atom, invisible to the naked eye, bonds to a second and a third atom, which together continue to bond till they build a mass the size of the sun. An instant of time, so tiny as to be almost gone before it arrives, stands next to another instant of time; these stand next to a third and a fourth, and together they build an eternity. One step so simple as to be understood by a child preceeds a second and a third step, which together build a complex technical procedure that puts a man on the moon. The solitary contribution of an artist, a teacher, a philosopher, and a scientist along with a history of other contributions build a web of communication that enables man to understand himself and those around him. Dialogue is in the business of communication. And like communication's web it's composed of tiny particles.

Communication, the driving force behind the magazine, involves individuals who may have little in common and who may even disagree on what the word means. However, differences create a tension which can work as a healthy catalyst. Our job as staff is not to cater to all the differences. That would be a disservice as well as an impossibility. Our task, instead, is to encourage the members of the Calvin community to reach, to explore new ideas and forms, to familiarize themselves with tradition's standards, and to understand a sense of quality. Our task is to encourage creativity and to channel it towards excellence.

We can offer only the framework, a standard, and a certain amount of hope. You must offer the particles. Like the sun and eternity, Dialogue's strength depends upon the tiniest part which add together to compose it. Well aware that alternative frameworks may exist, we offer our own and ask you to help us explore its possibilities. Your fiction, poetry, photography, reviews, art and essays are welcome.

This first issue gives us a brief pause to look at ourselves before moving on to other and perhaps more complex issues.

Deb Ellen
Student Concerns

Rolf Bouma

Each year as a new freshman class enters Calvin, the campus is entreated to view its Christianity responsibly. The students are asked to get involved, to make a mark on the world through community involvement, campus organizations, and other activities. A new person at Calvin receives the impression of a campus alive, dynamic, and moving toward a greater realization of God's will. Calvin presents opportunities for one to become involved—to show God's love to others. Within a few months, inevitably, these optimistic sentiments are replaced by pessimism—a change from "Let's get involved" to "Why is everyone so apathetic?" Unfortunately, we must bear this masochistic introspection for the rest of the school year, since we never seem to be sufficiently involved to fulfill one another's expectations.

After having experienced this cycle for three years, and begin-

One Decade Later

Marianne Scholte

It should be obvious to everyone that colleges and universities across the country, including Calvin, have undergone a tremendous change in the last ten years. We have experienced a pervasive lull in student protest in the post-war era. However, more important than the absence of overt controversy is the pronounced shift in underlying student attitudes.

One of Calvin's German professors has found a unique gauge of the shifting attitudes. Every year he assigns the same Hermann Hesse novella. It's about a vagabond—a free soul who travels from place to place, singing, whistling, dancing, making friends, enjoying the favors of women, and then moving on, leaving behind any responsibilities he may have incurred. Ten years ago every student in the professor's course championed the vagabond. Today not one student has a kind word for him.
ich haunts this campus. That this campus is lethargic is likely one out of ten students participate) or at student government and publications (in which competition for positions is rarely non-existent) to realize this fact. The frustration which companies looking at what Calvin is and what it could be is overwhelming. But is there any point anymore in asking people get involved?

We seem to have equated getting involved with being a Christian. In a way, this is true. If we are Christian, we will actively look for places where we can serve. But unfortunately the inverse of this is not true. Getting involved will in no way make Christians. This is where the problem lies. We don’t have a Christian campus.

It’s not our discussions, classes, or writings which are un-Christian. Everyone seems to know enough to be intelligently Christian when the deep discussions arise. But when one analyzes the informal discussions, conversations, and actions, he realizes just how secular we really are. In a way, it’s an even worse secularity than that which exists outside Calvin, for we exercise no sort of maturity in our actions. Our campus is an isolated community—its own microcosm—which gets obsessed and bored with its own intrigues to the point that it can only attain a stunted secularity. One has only to keep an ear open to be amazed by the amount of gossipping, back-biting, and general spite that goes on.

Is it of any use to ask a community which acts like this to get involved with the world in an attempt to show Christ’s love? Maybe it is, for that would at least mature our secularity to some extent. And (if I may suggest this with tongue in cheek) since it is far easier to love those who are underprivileged and those whom you see for only a few hours each week, maybe we can learn to start loving under those circumstances and then go on to love our fellow students. But no; we can only be a force in the world and in positions of responsibility when we have learned to love in our everyday activities.

So, please, let’s stop beating a dead horse by enjoining people to get involved. If we learn how to love, involvement will naturally follow. And, if I may use an idea from C. S. Lewis, we will then be able to take the parable of the sheep and the goats seriously. Read it and learn.

This example demonstrates the complete turnaround that student attitudes have made in ten years. Ten years ago students gued, they protested, they questioned—everything. Today most students are almost eager to do their work and to do it well. They’re willing to do as they’re told in order to obtain good grades and a job. The vagabond is out. Everybody’s toeing the line.

Apparently this change began in the early seventies. Universities all over the country saw a decline in active student political participation and protest. Students came to view violence as if-defeating and turned to “introspection, self-expression, and ivatism.” Calvin, which has always followed general university trends (though perhaps at a distance—the social, ethnic, and religious background of most Calvin students does not lend itself to vocal radicalism or violence), again finds itself reflecting prevailing attitudes.

These attitudes are in part a reaction to the sixties, but they aren’t merely that; the mark of a decade of protest has not been fully erased. For example, professors point to the skepticism which students continue to view any established situation—including their own cultural, religious, and family backgrounds. Students have not recovered the confidence, rich the sixties destroyed, in the prevailing order, even though they recognize the necessity of working within it. This skepticism carry-over from the protest era.

Another thing students learned during the protest years, a constructive balance to their skepticism toward institutions, is the confidence they now demonstrate in their own points of view and the skill they exhibit in defending them. Students are far more open; they express themselves freely, especially in matters concerning their faith and its relationship to their lives and studies. Professors and administrative personnel are often astonished at this openness, apparently because it is such a contrast to the sullenness and suspicion of the protest era.

Where does this leave us? Have students merely withdrawn from social activism to contemplate their navels and feather their own nests, or have they matured beyond social irresponsibility to assume more proper roles? We are far from a consensus on the issue.

Those who consider themselves the remnant of the radical fringe at Calvin (as well as many others who are politically concerned) consider the present-day student body to be unformed, complacent, and self-seeking. They point out the lack of critical and independent Christian thinking here.

On the other hand, many people are relieved to see peace restored. Unresolved controversy provides no answers, they point out. Living under the strain of sullenness, suspicion, and crises was neither easy nor productive. They note that most of the changes came later—after reflection.

It’s good to see students studying again, say professors; students need the self-discipline of a vigorous education. But the present situation also threatens a lack of both independent thinking and awareness of very real problems. The sixties have changed us all. We must make certain that they have changed us for the better.
When television was in its infancy, Bob Hope predicted that persistent viewing of TV by Americans would result in the evolution of a race with eyes the size of cantaloups and brains the size of peas. I have not yet heard if there is any evidence to substantiate his prediction of physiological changes. However, the College Entrance Board recently did lay part of the blame for the drop in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores on the fact that high school youths average 19½ hours weekly in front of the tube.

There is, however, another type of deformed generation that concerns me. It is the evolution of a people with swollen heads and shrivelled hearts. More specifically, I have in mind the growing divorce between learning and faith, with the great enthusiasm for the former and the casual dismissal of the latter. Christian scholars in higher education decry the estrangement of academic pursuits from Christian commitment as they see many colleagues judge the two to be irrelevant, if not antithetical, to one another.

Our college exists because of our shared conviction that a Community of Learning and a Community of Faith should completely overlap. I trust you attend chapel for the same reason.

This unity, however, is not found first of all in a chapel, but in the classroom. As Alexander Miller observed in his book Faith and Learning, religion is not a department of life but a dimension of life. Our faith must pervade all our activity. Merely to allot 20 minutes in chapel devotions would be to lose both the dimension and the dynamic of the Word of God. Is primarily the classroom, not the chapel, that determines the validity of our claim that we are Christian.

But if this is so, is there any need or place for chapel services at Calvin? Or is this a concession to an out-dated religious heritage? A sop given the sponsoring denomination concerned with spiritual verities no longer meaningful on campus? An outmoded symbol of faith once vibrant, now dead?

These are not merely rhetorical questions. In some colleges founded long ago on Christian principles, the answer to these questions would be in the affirmative.

Chapel services at Calvin are neither a remnant of an old religious tradition, nor a substitute for Christian teaching in the classroom. Rather, chapel provides the setting where for a few moments a Community of Learning and of Faith join in a fellow
ship of praise and worship, of reflecting on the ways of God with men and of men with God.

Dr. Henry Stob, discussing the role of chapel in an academic institution, observed that "religion is all-encompassing, but it has its characteristic rhythm. It is an ellipse with two foci... prayer and service... worship and work... which support and complement each other." It is to that one part of the rhythm of life—worship—that we give expression in chapel.

Chapel is not a "mini" church service; often liturgical elements necessary to any complete worship service are omitted here. Chapel services are unique to a college community. They are designed to give expression to some of the dimensions and demands of the Christian faith, through persons and media of the campus, in ways not particularly appropriate to a classroom setting. We have a rare opportunity to do this because of the variety of gifts and talents we enjoy here. So, in a diversified fashion we explore the many facets of life which are under the dominion of God and which are to be devoted to His praise.

At times the Word of God is the focal point of our worship. We live by and under the Word, and thus would come under its tutelage and power. We will be reminded of its bearing on our faith and life; we will be called to discipleship, to service, to personal renewal, to social action.

But both the expression of and appreciation for the Christian faith move beyond the spoken Word. God has given to us many gifts whereby we can praise Him with the celebration of His works. The opening chapel, "Awake! Awake!" is a tradition on campus. We employ voice, flute, piano, organ, drama, chorus, and the Word to provide a kaleidoscope of the means of praise and worship which will be explored further in our chapel series.

At times we will sing together, old psalms and anthems and contemporary songs, in expression of faith and joy and hope. At other times those with special gifts will sing, not in performance, but leading us in the worship of God. That, by the way, is why applause in chapel usually seems incongruous: it is not that others have performed for us, but that we have joined in worship with them—and we do not applaud ourselves. The use of visual arts is not intended to bring praise to the artist, but to help us join him in his unique praise of God. We'll worship through interpretative dance as we observe gesture, movement, and rhythm give expression to basic truths of lostness, salvation, life, and celebration.

What is all this but a response to the call of the Psalmist?

Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
Praise him with trumpet sound;
Praise him with lyre and harp!
Praise him with timbrel and dance;
Praise him with strings and pipe!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord! (Psalm 150)

And we do this together. All distinctions of role, class, and position break down here. We do not meet primarily as professor or student, senior or sophomore, president or freshman. We meet as children of God. The bond that unites us is our oneness in Christ, a people saved by grace to show forth His praise.

I urge you to join with others in that part of the rhythm of life expressed in chapel. We would do ourselves a favor, I think, if we recognized that this requires a willful decision. The attraction of the coffee shop or mere inertia can lead us to omit this part of campus life. Chapel is voluntary; we will attend only if we conscientiously decide to do so. I would hope that we decide to make it a part of the schedule of our week, for in giving expression to our faith and in rejoicing in God we can grow together.

We must also recognize that not every chapel holds equal attraction for each of us. We have our own preferences, and we should accept that fact. What is necessary, however, is some measure of openness to the variety of ways in which we seek to honor God there. I know I have found, as I hope you do, that sometimes chapels which did not initially appear "attractive" became sources of blessing to me.

We make no pretense that chapel services validate our claim that we are Christian. It is, however, an expression of our conviction that in the rhythm of life established by God there is place for work and worship, and in chapel we spend a brief time in the latter.
Living in Europe for six months is an experience no longer rare among academics. For the first-timer, nevertheless, living in England is as exhilarating as a Sheraton or Dunhill between the lips of a penurious puffer brought up on Dr. Grabow. The pleasure gained from his customary academic cut is increased five-fold, and, with the help of Raleigh and Prince Albert, his pipe burns with a steady, long-lasting, gem-like flame. Even the smoky miasma in that vaporous country enhances the aroma and the subtle flavor of the British blend.

It is age that does it. Who ever said that wine needs the aging-casks but tobacco calls for a vacuum-packed freshness? No pipe ever burns so well as in the age-old streets of Cambridge when one walks up King’s Parade, past Heffer’s Bookshop and Bowes & Bowes, down Senate House Passage to Clare College and the old bridge, and then through the daffodil-and-crocus-lined lanes of the “backs” over to the new University Library which sends its tower soaring in envious and futile imitation of the lofty spires of St. John’s Chapel and Old St. Mary’s Church. From the narrow streets and ancient market to the thirteenth-century hall of Peterhouse and the convent buildings of Jesus College, from the elegance of the Wren Library and the great court of Trinity to the quiet refuge of the Magdalene College gardens, from the imposing magnificence of the Fitzwilliam Museum to the echoing colonnade where Newton performed his experiments with sound and Tennyson heard the ringing of bells—from everywhere in city-center Cambridge one is bewitched by the monuments and symbols of historic England. Loveliest of all is King’s College Chapel, begun by Henry VI and
finished by Henry VIII, a building whose light illuminates both the dark and wondrously carved screen and the remote crannies of the intricate fan vaulting, whose brilliant, stained windows and exquisite Rubens altarpiece help make this one of the most notable buildings in all of England. Pipes dare not even flicker in this rich Cambridge atmosphere, and, should one inexplicably go out, it would splinter into fragments out of chagrin. Age is what a good pipe wants. No need for fancy filters and twisted stems and replaceable bowls and other new-fangled inventions.

It is age that makes it worthwhile, after all. For an American especially. One doesn’t realize how young America is until he lives for a time in the shadow of a twelfth-century church spire and takes daily walks past thatched houses dating from the sixteenth century, until he spends time near the place where Erasmus hitched his horses or where Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury under Queen Elizabeth, served his first parish church. The sense of the past, the consciousness of history, becomes an inextinguishable flame in the mind, a flame which one carries with him constantly to illuminate the present.

For what would the present be if it were sent off as an orphan, bereft and lonely, to be a panhandler in the streets of a city without traditions? If I learned anything during my sabbatical leave, it was that my sense of the importance of historical awareness in all dimensions of learning and education was not mistaken. In literary theory and criticism certainly, my immediate area of interest and study, the fundamental value of historical consciousness is being rediscovered and reasserted in many ways. This is a time of upheaval and exploration in literary studies and aesthetics, and though there are some new theories and critical methodologies which do not stress historical approaches, many of them directly or indirectly reveal the general interest in new interpretations of literary history. The aroma of history filters its way into the nostrils of anyone today who is trying to sniff out the tracks of contemporary thinkers. What, then, could be more pleasant—and profitable—than to be a pipe-smoker in Cambridge, mixing the aroma of medieval buildings and 18th-century libraries with the odors of a Sherman “second,” purchased of all places at Savory’s in Oxford, and seeing amidst the clouds of smoke the genie of history that is magically changing the colors and contours of the literary establishment? In such a world even a pipe-smoker is tempted to inhale.
Reconciled to a lifelong inability to purchase expensive baubles, I have therefore delighted in being a lifelong collector of precious junk.

For example, when the cherry tree in which I used to climb as a boy was chopped down I claimed a twisted chunk of the trunk for a coffee table, a piece probably not worth the ten coats of varnish needed to hide its fallen nature. Yet the trunk winds in my memory like the twining patterns of its grain, popping out here and there against the rough places, squeezing through tight little channels where the life constricts, narrows, and defines the direction of new growth.

Occasionally, when the hours are late, the children are bedded, and stillness at long last has a chance to linger in the house, the grain of the wood soliloquizes to a willing ear. The cracked throat etches whispers in the room. Whispers of lambent spring and hard winter, of proud youth and old age that twists the limbs and gnarls the knuckles, of wind-tossed times and gentle, soughing days. It remains a good companion.

A passing reflection on original sin will lead me once again to familiar footholds in summer branches, to limbs on which one could trust the full weight of a body prone to falling. One seldom needs to reflect on sloth anymore. The problem now seems to be how to relax, a fine art which often takes years in learning. I was nurtured in such lessons by the sequined arms of a summer day as I dangled between heaven and earth in the old tree, slick, shiny pits popping against limbs miles below as the leaves turned silver into the sun.

"Something there is," wrote Frost, "that doesn’t love a wall;" but something there is in me that loves fences, even rick-hung boughs of a cherry tree that fence in a patch of day for the human spirit to revel in. And I guess that is why I prize my precious junk; because I have made it mine and priceless by the very collecting. There I have fenced in a place, called it mine, and marked it as sacred.

My collecting has taken on deviant form, that is, with an eye toward gain. Such attempts have met with a providential dead end. In 1955 I was hitchhiking with a friend on Lake Shore Drive after a round of five-cent pinball games at a place called the Kitchen Kupboard. After a streak of thirty-three free games, not a difficult feat in those days when the shopkeeper still made profit on a candy bar and coke, our de-
liverance appeared in the form of a convertible of uncertain origin piloted at fairly consistent airborne speeds by a fellow whose origin was at least questionable. His arm muscles rippled from the chittering steering wheel up through several embarrassing (to us) tattoos to a T-Shirt sleeve neatly tucked around a package of Camel humped up on the bulge of his biceps. His hair glowed with the deep shine of Butch Wax, each black strand glued neatly in place as the wind tore past the windshield. The radio blatted out a song of which I caught snatches above the squeal of tires whining in falsetto terror. The song was called "Blue Moon of Kentucky," cut on the Sun Label by Elvis Presley.

A year later I had procured, by much scouting in now defunct establishments around Franklin and Division, the four records Elvis made on Sun Label before Colonel Parker steered him into the more lucrative RCA Label. But Sun Label was the Elvis of pink pants and white bucks, the fellow from greaseland before he could afford his twenty-three-room mansion Graceland. This was the guy who graduated from high school majoring in shop and, get this, English; and managed to render one of the most brutal massacres upon the latter in recorded history. I think it's true that few people, including sometimes the artists themselves and surely myself—given neither to pink pants nor Butch wax—understood what rock was in the fifties. Much of the attitude of the movement could be summarized by American Bandstand in which a panel of four nervous and giddy teenagers would evaluate a new song. The record was played, the audience danced, and a discussion of the song's merits followed, a discussion which seldom rose above the level of "You can, I don't know, really, like, dance to it. I'll give it an 85." And that's all that was really expected. After all, what meaning could there be in songs with titles like "Doncha Just Know," and "I Got a Girl Named Rama Lama Ding Dong," or "Be-bop-a-lula?"

I wrapped the four Sun Label records in a brown paper bag and hid them in the attic. I knew a musical voice when I heard it, even when the voice was only minimally musical. But that was a merit in the fifties. About fifteen years later I looked for the bag and discovered that its questionable character had led to a disposal during that high Dutch Festival known as Spring Cleaning. I read in the paper last Friday night that a woman in Texas sold her Sun Label copies for $7,500 apiece.

Well, I am, thereby, preserved from greed. I must confess I still love the stuff, money that is, but am protected from its evil by such devices as Christian education, church budget, medical bills, and other means which have protracted my lifelong quest for precious junk. I can't afford the other and have learned to love what I have. But the trade has been more than even. The minister of the church which receives my weekly check plays a top-flight game of racquetball in addition to delivering two sermons a week of exceptional quality. The singing in the church is perpetrated with a robust vigor in which I can, like Ebenezer Flood, lift my "cracked voice" and consider it sweet. As for Christian education, I will always want my children to learn more about adventures in the life of the spirit rather than how many cubic feet comprise the sterile rooms of modern technological life. If they learn the latter, fine. But God preserve them from living in those rooms.

Moreover, I have discovered myself in the company of a close and, well, rather unusual band of fellow devotees. Who
can plumb the depths of spiritual kinship in which I drift with a colleague who collects old tobacco cans and sets them on his garage roof to rust slightly and thus enhance their aesthetic, and possibly monetary, appeal? Who can plumb the depths of conversation evoked when I bring out my Collectors' Original Comics of Tarzan and Batman? Only the company of brave souls and kindred spirits can—plumb the depths that is.

Somehow I find it easier to love a man who sets tobacco cans on his garage roof than a man who has to decide which limousine to park in it. In a way, I'm glad those four Presley records wound up wherever they did, and have pity for whoever is walking to the bank with them right now. When he has paid his mortgage, I will still have my tree trunk, a few worn Tarzan comics, and those depths to plumb with a friend or two.

I must confess that I have never understood that phrase, but it seems to suggest something that shouldn’t be fully understood. Moreover, it has a biblical ring which I like; from the Psalms, I believe. T.S. Eliot, who had a way with tolling biblical echoes himself, wrote in the voice of Prufrock that “I am a pair of ragged claws scuttling the floors of silent seas.” Unlike Prufrock’s my search has not gone unrequited. There in the depths, which I take to be any level other than daily chit-chat and routine, a level we are not supposed to fully understand but where the spirit moves and warms the human soul, there in the depths one also plumbs the human spirit. Man has a way of marking places and events as sacred, and such places should not be bartered and sold but merely revered.

There in the depths unusual things happen to a person. Not earth-shaking things, but often things which at least send a shiver through the human spirit. While seated at that same cherry tree trunk one night, a friend and I indubitably proved that the Transcendental Ego of Kant’s Aesthetic Judgment could and must know the a priori, the ding an sich, which Kant claimed in Pure Reason must remain unknowable. I can’t for the life of me remember how we proved this, save for the fact that it took an excessive amount of pipe tobacco, but there is a distinct pleasure in remembering that we thought we were sure that we knew for certain. That is not an uncommon end to epistemological problems. If we know we know, we forget how. All of which, you see, is quite different from pocketing $7,500 per Elvis record.

Granted, this business of collecting precious junk can all get out of hand. I once knew a man who kept a pet mole and nearly went crazy trying to find white grubs for it. His yard was pocked with little holes marking the trail of his latest grub hunt. One might argue that the man had become mole himself, reversing roles in a sense. But as long as we can frame our precious junk with discussions of Immanuel Kant or Batman, we are fairly safe.

It’s all a little like man himself, this prizing of precious junk. For man himself is not a priceless treasure nor an expensive bauble. He has been lost and reclaimed—and in the reclaiming has been marked as sacred, even precious. The price for that has been the subject for more than one late-night conversation around the tree trunk. As long as the tobacco holds, and the quiet lingers, that is a topic of which I will enjoy plumbing the depths.
Night Trains

Enormous jointed arms
bouncing between the darkened squares
of sleeping towns,
they reach toward rest.
Panes shudder;
beneath the laundromat’s whirling fluorescence
my hands flatten warm towels
against the formica countertop,
smooth and fold,
smooth and fold them,
and I stretch away out of sight
wheeling beyond the day’s re-echoing voices
on shining threads
that cling to moist hillsides
like old determined streams
and twist and rush on
into gaping, steamy shelters
where long metallic screams
arching beyond the station roof
are really only sighs
from weary giants pausing.

Sher Jasperse

Prose Poem II

Consider the disciples. Consider them
fisherman out of water,
holding crazy nets of the Messiah’s design.
How these nets grew to ridiculous size
in the course of three years, and what purpose
the Christ could see
in dragging them over the dusty roads
of Judaea, through fields and over rocks,
consider also.

Finally, consider this:
that after Jesus tied the last knot, bit off
the string and sailed into the heavens,
they were left with nets that cast his image,
perfectly.

Dan Hawkins

Whitewash

I paint creation with a film of sense
Not indigenous. I overlay
Picassos deftly with small black and gray
Mondriaans in calculated defense
Of symmetry. I prize more innocence
Than virtue—prefer, though I never say
So, my canvas whitely primed, and kept away
From dangers of the pallet’s influence.
I clarify the pointillistic earth,
Convert haphazard hues to straitened tones,
Make clear and sharp the pure aesthetic worth
Of everything. I whiten in my mind my bones,
Render them fleshless, abstracted and clean.
I handle best the things I’ve never seen.

T.A. Straayer

Floodtide

Dead branches rear out of the water,
the spine of the broken-backed river,
which twists and bucks in agony
swelling at the touch of rain.

The flood is a disease; the drops that multiply
the river’s blind pain—a cancerous rain
leached from the worm-ridden earth
by the deadly sun.

Dan Hawkins
Dead Wood on a Sunny Afternoon

Robert DeJonge
One of the givens of extracurricular life in most American colleges is Student Government. Although there are those vile offenders who would dismiss this activity posthaste, lumping it together with intramural powder-puff football, residence hall TWIRP week, and other equally useless frivolities, it is nevertheless my contention that some significance can be assigned to it, and that time spent on it need not be a waste. The difficulty in defending Student Government lies in the fact that there are many conceptions of it, as diverse as they are numerous, and that while one defends his own peculiar notion, he may, in the minds of his auditors, be lending support to something quite different. To avoid this I wish to offer in what follows a brief evaluation of Student Government at Calvin, remarking on what it might best manifest itself at our dear Alma Mater. The underlying issues hope­fully to be reflected on include: the proper task and domain of Student Government, its relationships to the rest of the college, and the legitimacy of its offices.

Early in the fall of 1976 Student Senate approved then-President Bruce Van Dommelen's proposal for an ad hoc Senate Revision Committee. Van Dommelen submitted this proposal at the behest of a relatively small group of student senators who were concerned with the unduly large Senate and its tendency toward bureaucratic sprawl. During the course of the year this committee met often and by early spring of 1977 had a blueprint for a Senate streamlined and reduced in size. Two different minds were expressed on the committee, each of which attracted its share of the members. The one was typified by an expansionistic attitude, desirous of extended involvement with social activities and the centralization of Student Government (including the absorption of residence hall councils, the innocuous Commuter Committee, and other fringe groups). The alternate view saw Senate's effectiveness enhanced if limited strictly to financial accountability and the appoint­ment and coordination of students on faculty committees. The proponents of the latter view ultimately found themselves participants in something of a Pyrrhic victory, for although it was largely their line of thought after which the revision was modeled and eventually approved (by Senate, the faculty, and the student-body), none of them were then elected to Senate office for the year 1977-78 and the revised Senate came largely into the hands of the former group and its sym pathizers under the visionary Pluymer regime. Such is life.

But life is also such that it goes on, and it is now for us to articulate what may be expected of our Student Government in the coming year, apprising ourselves of what its general character has been in years past.

According to its constitutional preamble Senate's duty lies in stating positions and taking action on behalf of the student body. This is stock constitutional jargon sufficiently vague to allow a broad interpretive gamut; the tendency in recent years has been toward the liberal wing. We are confronted here with a dilemma which is the consequence of an historic process. Back in the good old days (which incidentally, lasted into the early sixties) most college-related extracurricular activity occurred under the sponsorship of clubs and associations. They were open to interested students and, since many of them were concerned with the fine arts and the humanities, they tended to supplement—on a more informal level—the classroom, and were supervised by faculty members. Since much activity...
sisted of presentation and discussion papers among the literary clubs, and eursal and performance among those re to the fine arts, expenses presumably nominal, or, if not, they are defrayed by membership dues or a portion of college funds designated for this purpose. In any case, relations between faculty and students then appear to have been more intimate; clubs served as an informal vehicle for creativity and an edifying, accessible social arena.

Eventually, with the proliferation of student publications, and the advent of the called Fine Arts Guild, the College-mandated Film Arts Council, and other organizations, the clubs died out and somewhere along the line Student Senate became the bursary-general.

Thane Macyn Bolt

It should be noted, however, that as early as 1962 lines editorially asked if Student Council was a $0,000 waste, indicating that already by then Student Government had received a significant responsibility: the Allocation of Funds. With the warming of time inflation, perhaps the question today is: "Is Student Senate a $100,000 waste?"

Further, Student Senate’s dispensary role in these matters is by now taken for granted. Yet there is something disturbing about our present arrangement. Frankly, I feel somewhat ill at ease knowing that my tuition money is being distributed to the various supplicant organizations by a group of students qualified only by their election to office by the student populace, barely 25% of which voted last spring. The problem of fiscal management in “Senate-sponsored” organizations is a real one; regulation of expenditures is haphazard, largely dependent on the capability and integrity of the students in charge. If Senate is to continue in its task of doling out money, some standards are needed to assure the intelligent execution of that task, preferably including closer supervision by more permanent members of the college.

By far the most significant document with regard to Student Government at Calvin is the FOSCO report, adopted by the faculty in March 1975. This report reflects the will of the faculty not only to secure its position as the proper governing force of the college, but also to allow room for student opinion and, in many areas, vote by creating student positions on most policy-making committees. It was left to Student Senate to fill these positions, and here lies its noblest field of endeavor.

During his campaign last spring student body president Pluymert promised to change Senate’s image from a “fuzzy, nondescript entity” to a real, active body which would reflect the needs and wants of its constituency. Now, the last thing anyone wants running around campus is a fuzzy, nondescript entity; plain old nondescript entities are fine if they stay on their half of the coffee shop, but fuzzy ones—never! At any rate, we would all be well served if Mr. Pluymert directed his energies and those of his Senate to these two priorities: (1) responsible allocation and proper supervision of the expenditures of college funds, and (2) the discerning appointment and coordination of students on college committees. After all, there’s more to college than bus trips to Florida over spring vacation.
Dorms vs. Apartments: Living Out the Options

Eric Wolterstorff

Living in an apartment can provide the demands that foster commitments of Christian communal living between friends. An apartment may certainly fill only the minimal functions of providing room and board, as can the dorms. Many students are in a rush to live off campus simply to escape dorm regulations they find restrictive. But apartment life has its own peculiar drawbacks and advantages. Saga meals are replaced by one’s own (probably an advantage, but it still takes work). Clothes washing may have to be done out on the town, outside the apartment. Cleaning and upkeep of the apartment are constant duties. And cars do fail to start on cold January mornings.

Apartment living, though, is most beneficial for encouraging growth in relationships that have originated in the dorms. A small nucleus of friends makes a commitment that its members will share all aspects of life together, including putting up with one another’s personal foibles about how to keep house. Apartment mates may also decide to share their social and spiritual lives to a greater extent than they were able to in the dorms.

Concerning the demands an apartment puts on the development of community: apartment dwellers soon find that efficiency alone calls for sharing chores, errands, and meals together. Meals, for example, are served only once, not over an hour and a half as at Saga, and those in the apartment must gather at that time or forage for themselves. So, simply by taking turns cooking, cleaning, and shopping for each other as an efficiency measure, a greater sense of community and close affinity is produced. The friendship itself becomes more binding than the lease agreement. It is the difference between living in a house and a home. The potential for such a situation is strong, but it must be pursued.

The apartment has an important function in the social lives of its inhabitants. It provides a home in which to entertain. I rarely complained about the size of my dorm room—it was more than adequate for my own needs at that time. But to entertain guests and to enjoy a meal and time of fellowship together in private requires more living space than can be called one’s own than a dorm resident has. A person suddenly has a greater ability to display hospitality.

Good friends living together in an apartment do crazy things together just as dorm residents do. I always felt out of place while participating in such activities when in the dorms. These were all I shared with the others on my floor, and they seemed to come in the way of, or replace, a fuller relationship. With the good friends that I live with now crazy incidents engaged in together are expressions of a deeper relationship known to exist and exhibited in the many other aspects of life held in common.

Relationships begun in the dorms, then, can be further developed while living together in an apartment. Students can move beyond the widespread superficiality of dorm life to a commitment that investigates the nature of life together as Christians in this world. Such an experience I find to be more intense and rigorous, more complete, and in the end more satisfying, even with its frustrations and drawbacks, than life in the dorms allows. But one way in which we as Christians can manifest the lordship of Christ in our lives is to begin to cultivate a Christian community in whatever living situation we currently may be.

What is the nature of a college dormitory? Is it merely an expected periphery to any sizable academic institution, meeting students’ needs of room and board? Or are additional functions regarding the social lives of the students? More specific, should a dorm on the campus of the college of the Christian Reformed Church involve itself in the spiritual lives of residents? I think this last question ought to be answered yes. There should be mutual concern among Calvin dorm residents for the cultivation and maturation of a living, Christian community in the dorms.

The topic of Christian community is slippery one, one that I cannot hope to pursue down without being verbose. Even if I should expand this discussion it is doubtful that I could arrive at any important resolution of the topic. Often the only thing that potluck roommates have in common that they both checked the non-smoker box on the housing application. (And the a roommate may only have checked it box so his parents would not know that I or she smoked.) They may have even less affinity with their wallmates who did not check that box at all. These facts result in weak volition toward developing community life. Moreover, I find that the Christlike community is not simply disregarded, but is actually seriously misunderstood. Even such mechanical things as respect for another’s need for silence or for another possessions are not regularly observed. Both are basic elements of Christlike communal living. Beyond this, a certain degree of spiritual camaraderie as a mutual support is necessary. In this context, I am interested in the strength of the commitment joining fellow dorm residents. Often such commitments are minimal, but they do tend to grow more finely as more years are spent together.

Living in the dorm allows, indeed demands, that a person meet a great variety of people. Most ways of meeting, how
are conducive only to a shallow
counter: the underground dances, floor
meetings, and so on. In nearly every case,
initial superficiality does not progress
closer friendship. For the next four
years, though, a person feels obligated to
remember the names of those he or she
met and to say hello to them. Dorm
members are probably most afflicted
with this difficulty. I cannot resolve the
problem, and continue to be frustrated by
It is certainly not proper to begin ignor­ing
all those with whom one has had only
one-time encounter. We must accept,
ough, that most relationships formed in
dorms will be only superficial. We
ust attempt to be friendly and respectful
all, including those we have never met,
realizing that we cannot be a friend
everyone.
A dorm resident will soon find a need to
develop a deeper relationship with some
those he or she has met. This is gener­
true, although I can recall a few fellow
idents who were content with minimal
ships only, and others satisfied
all. In most
ures, though, it appears that lasting rela­
ships are begun during a student’s
residency, rising above the sea of
perfection. I have found that the very
ature of dorm life does not allow these
ships to develop as fully as they
ught under other circumstances. Dorm
ing does not demand a complete com­
tment, and as a result many do not take
ore than a few steps in that direction.

The Virgin

She stands in the yard
with her palms and arms
raised to humanity.
Her creamy face
and sky blue robe
are protected from the elements
by an upright
bathtub.

I'd like to ask about the plumbing.
Not every girl can
or has to
stand in the yard
in a bathtub.

Grace Miedema
During the Interim and the spring semester of the '76-'77 academic year at Calvin I received my education in education. As I was exposed to the current trends in education I developed a growing uneasiness with the general direction which I perceived education to be taking. At that time I was unable to clearly define what it was that bothered me; since then I've managed to pin it down.

The central problem is that the politics of educationalism1 have caused modern trends in education to be increasingly uncritical of education's role in society as a whole. Educationalists seem to want to divorce education from society, transferring school leadership and responsibility from the community to the educational "experts" —causing the school to be apart from, rather than a part of, the society and culture which it serves. Leaders in education seem to have either largely forgotten or badly distorted the guiding principle that educational systems must both serve the needs of society as society perceives them and serve these needs in the manner which society thinks best.

Educators lose sight of this principle when they dismiss grass-roots movements such as the back-to-basics movement or layman opposition to open schooling on the grounds that they are only evidence of another need of society: the public's need to be educated about education. The ignorant public is expected to see that when it comes to teaching their children, the educationalist knows best. Henry Clay Lindgren in his textbook, Educational Psychology in the Classroom, writes: "Because laymen's thinking about educational processes is almost entirely pre-scientific, teachers who are overly responsive to laymen's opinions are likewise going to adopt pre-scientific ways of thinking about their work." And that, of course, would be bad, right?

Lindgren's assumption is that teachers must be scientific about their work. Perhaps I am overstating my case, but I feel that educationalists in general are overly enamored of the "science" of educational psychology and the air of unquestionable expertise which is purported to give them. No layman can question the expertise of the physicist in his field. Relatively few may not agree with common sense, but few would care to argue the point with mushroom cloud looming in the background. Even a cursory sampling from the vast amount of education research literature produced in the past few years will show education to be much less a science than physics; indeed, in some areas it is not much more a science than common sense. When and if unquestionable expertise is gained, the educational equivalent of mushroom clouds will blow away any public skepticism. True expertise need not proclaim itself; it is readily recognized by the effects it produces.

It has been noted that back-to-basis proponents often "revolt against the growth of super-professionalism in education, and the proliferation of the school services and activities." Why is this? Blame the politics (and the economics) of educationalism. For years, when educationalists have been asked how to improve education, the answer has always come back: "more!" More teachers, more, bigger, and better-equipped schools; more years of education; more specialized instruction; more innovative programs; more educational research; more money; more, more, more. With the baby-boom children of post-World War II now out of school and competing for jobs (many seeking careers in teaching or education-related fields), and with ever
ments declining, the educationalists crying "More" more than ever.

With the proliferation of school services and activities have come new jobs involving new fields of specialization for people education. These people, as well as the teaching researchers, and the growing field of super-professional educational intelligentsia, value their careers. They become convinced of the importance of their positions and the necessity of the programs and the services with which they are involved. They are also concerned that others consider the new services and activities undertaken by the school to be necessary and important. Therefore, such a thing as the back-to-basics movement—which calls for the ministration of frills and social services as well as an accompanying reduction in theumber of jobs and amount of money that feeds them—cannot be expected of the educationalists. Although it is probable that no person in education consciously and deliberately becomes convinced of the impor

Edmund Burke writes:

"It cannot escape observation, that when men are too much confined to professional and faculty habits, and as it were invertebrate in the recurrent employment of that narrow circle, they are rather disabled than qualified for whatever depends on the knowledge of mankind, on experience in mixed affairs, on a comprehensive, connected view of the various, complicated, external and internal interests, which go into the formation of that multifarious thing we call a state."

Burke's statement, I believe, retains much of its validity when applied to the formation of that multifarious thing we call an educational system.

Historically, the family and the community have borne the responsibility of educating its children. In fact, the family and the community throughout most of history have been virtually the exclusive educators of their children. In fact, the family recently as the early 1900's, children often went to school for only four or five years for their "book-lamin", learning how to read, write, and do arithmetic—skills which could not be effectively taught by the community. The school served the needs of society in a fashion which was acceptable to the culture of that day.

In the Bible, we again see that ultimately it is the parent who is responsible for the rearing of his child. The Christian grade-school and high-school teacher must recognize that in this sense he is always acting more or less in loco parentis. The teacher receives his authority from the parents of his students. If a parent is not convinced of the effectiveness of a new method of teaching and doesn't have an implicit faith that "the educationalist knows best" he cannot in good conscience allow his son or daughter to be taught in such a way without making a determined effort to change the method of teaching employed. Likewise, the Christian educator, if he believes non-traditional approaches are most effective, cannot teach, within the limits of his authority, in any other way than in the manner which he feels is best. Note the qualifying words "within the limits of his authority." It should be equally unconscionable for the Christian teacher to teach in a manner in which the parents of the children do not authorize him to teach. It is this latter point of moral sensitivity, this recognition of complete accountability (not accountability merely for the academic competency of students), which teachers and educational leaders in both public and Christian schools have largely lost.

One central idea in the Christian school movement is that the how of education is extremely important. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are taught quite adequately by the public schools. It is the insistence that subject matter be taught from a Christian perspective by Christian teachers in a Christian environment that has spawned the Christian schools. The old motto "a three-fold cord is not quickly broken"—referring to the home, the church, and the school—means, if it means anything at all for the Christian school, that the Christian school must intimately intertwine itself with the religious community and culture from which it draws its authority. Schools must affirm rather than deny the culture of the children whom they serve.

Perhaps it is inevitable in an age when social values and Western culture itself
have become disordered that the prevailing philosophies of education should reflect this confusion. One would very much like to believe, however, that at least educators of the Reformed faith, heirs to a rich tradition emphasizing the importance of community influence over the how of education—at least we here at Calvin College—would be able to raise ourselves out of the cultural quagmire of the day. After all, Christian educators have something even more solid to stand on than the secular foundations afforded by historical perspective and intelligent conservatism. Does the educational philosophy prevailing in Calvin’s Education Department seem to justify our fond hopes? I think not.

What is needed is a little conservative salt to make educational psychology more palatable. Traditional ideas and practices must be abandoned only with great reluctance. As Edward Wynne points out, “‘racing’ into the future is not wise.” Educationalists who are sure that multitudinous blessings will be brought to modification of the educational systems according to their particular brand of educational psychology ought to be a little less sure that their supposed panacea has no harmful side effects. Writes Wynne: “In social forecasting, we are prone to substitute the most desired future for the most likely, and as a result cohorts who are socialized to one future but must live in another will be subject to enormous stress.” Let us, like Burke, be tolerably sure, before we “venture publicly to congratulate men upon a blessing, that they have really received.”

Educational psychology is not without great value, and I do not advocate abandoning it; it has succeeded in some areas where common sense has failed. It has brought a deeper understanding of the teaching/learning process. I am not calling for an end to educational research, nor for an end to innovation in education. I am not even saying that changes in educational methods and goals are unnecessary. What I am calling for is moderation. The conservative voice must be found within the ranks of educational leadership as well as without. Change must happen slowly; it must build on the foundations that are already there, not destroy those foundations and start building in a bog.

Progress in education is not a straight road but a dialectic, a pendulum. One educator, when asked about the back-to-basics movement, replied, “‘Back to basics? We’re moving forward to the basics....’” To make some progress, we had better go back and forth to the basics—but let us not try to go in both directions at once. The educational pendulum has swung forward far enough. At Calvin as well as in the larger Western culture, it is time for the pendulum to start swinging back.
Grandpa Was a Coal and Wood Man

Grandpa used to sit near the window
and rest his head down nodding
his hat low hiding masking tape
that held up his eye lids

I've seen that old man work in the sun
cleaning the wood piles raking scraps
on a warm spring day he'd say
I always liked a man that could work

That old man could lift a bag of coal
into the trunk of a car by himself
one hundred pounds of orient egg
he'd always see what you got was fair

I went for a ride with grandpa once
to go and paint at a house he rented out
he backed his car into a telephone pole
and muttered into traffic while I laughed

Grandpa and I got along pretty good
they always said at the coal yard
that he liked me a lot
and I sure cared for him

After Phil told me grandpa was dead
we visited the observatory
forgetting about the car
that ran him down in Knoxville, Tennessee

Jupiter is just a big ball of gas
Do spirits take flight off the rings of Saturn?
The angle was right and we saw a plane
cross in front of the big rock called the moon

Galaxy M82 is 2 million light years away
and to think there's more in a chunk of orient egg
than in all that space between the telescope and M82
Grandpa, I know you're all right

Bob Boomsma
T. A. Straayer


This work in a continuing series leaves us with some of the qualms we have been experiencing with increasing intensity for the past few volumes. Like the Airport movies, Prism seems to be getting worse with each succeeding installment. Prism 1977 follows the trend established by its more recent predecessors of surrender to aesthetic banality, thematic irresponsibility, and technical squalor. Instead of spontaneity we have been given randomness; instead of cogent satirical comment we have been given lame vulgarity; instead of a polished finished product we have been given a rough draft.

It is difficult to settle on a general critical approach to Prism 1977 because the work itself seems to have little cohesive structure. Rather than an aggregate of material centering on a single thematic concept (unless a haphazard satirical attack on the college and its folk can be said to constitute a thematic concept), the work would seem to be a conglomeration of various disassociated creative efforts, a montage of pieces ranging from the inspired to the lamentable. The unevenness of the production is distracting. We agree with the anonymous copywriter who handled the blurb for the Prism staff that it is difficult to explain—and appreciate—"something that just got out of hand." Many a word of truth, indeed, is spoke in jest.

Since a yearbook is primarily a visual phenomenon, overall aesthetic distinction might best be gauged by the quality of its photography and graphic art. As to the graphics, we can say little...
It would not be construed as carping. As to the photography, as elsewhere there seems to be little consistency. The laws of probability might be hoped to guarantee a certain proportion of good prints—and, indeed, *Prism 1977* provides its memorable editions to the history and spirit of our college—but the best are slated in a sea of also-rans which are disappointing both ematically and technically. Nor is it at all clear to us why the teen pages of expensive color photography were invested solely in recording fall sports. In short, the theme, quality, and output of the photography leaves something to be desired, especially when measured against past *Prism* successes.

With its literary content *Prism 1977* confronts us with an ongoing trial of taste. It is a truism that taste is a matter of individual sensibility, but surely *Prism 1977* manages to fend—or at least annoy—all but the coarsest palates with its excessive satire. Satire is a tricky business, difficult to contain once loosed; and a little satire goes a long, long way. Its excessive essence in *Prism 1977* vitiates any positive effect it might have had, and gives the book a sophomoric imbalance. The nutty double-entendre and rancorous innuendo of the admissions material parody, the pointless vacuity of the “Restaurant guide to Dayton Ohio” and “You Can Change Your Personality…” pages, and the dreadful “Joe Average” business all arouse us unnecessary grief. Detritus such as this does not a yearbook make. First amendment considerations aside, we question the right of the *Prism* staff to publish, at something over one hundred dollars per page, such stuff and nonsense.

We would also like to grouse about the editing—or rather the lack of editing—which mars the volume. We wonder, for instance, how a photo of a *Chimes* typist came to rest on a page ostensibly dedicated to the *Dialogue* staff. We wonder, too, if anyone bothered to proofread the yearbook’s final copy—certainly no one did so very carefully. *Prism 1977* is a showcase of embarrassing spelling errors, incorrect punctuation, and unintelligible sentences: examples of all three can be found in the two paragraphs of Mr. Talen’s closing acknowledgements and apology. Even the editor needs editing.

*Prism 1977* raises some important questions about *Prisms* yet to come. *Prism 1977* was allocated $20,946, but overspent its budget by more than $4,000. Was it worth the more than $25,000 we paid to get it? Distributed, as it is, within the last few days of the academic year, there is scarcely time to evaluate *Prism* while it is still a live issue. Unlike *Dialogue* and *Chimes*, which receive critical feedback throughout the year, *Prism* seems to be beyond input from anyone but the members of its staff. Oftener than not its editor graduates out of any fray he may have caused. Because there is no mechanism for review earlier in the year we are saddled with an annual fait accompli which can, as in the case of *Prism 1977*, be considerably annoying.

If we decide that *Prism* is worth the large amount of money we must pay to get it, we might do well also to invest some time and effort into implementing some means of criticism and review before the fact of its publication. If we have to pay the piper, let us also call the tune.
The November issue of Dialogue will be on the topic of communications. Contributions in the form of prose (including reviews, essays, articles, and fiction), poetry, and visual arts are hereby solicited, receivable in the Dialogue office in the basement of Bolt hall, no later than October 31.