

# SKANDALON

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EDITORIAL: Or Christianity will not outlast this generation . . .

The time has come for us to again take typewriter in hand and clarify the position of Skandalon and Campus Christian Council within this community. Campus Christian Council is a composite group, seeking to speak to and for at least part of that group of persons on this campus known as "the Christians." Due to the realities of Christian life today, of course, it is obvious (painfully so) that we speak in the last analysis only for one segment of the Christian community.

It is the contention of Skandalon and the organization that it represents that the Christian church has been guilty of gross immorality within the context of the modern world. No other institution makes such grandiose claims regarding its claim to Truth; and no other institution has failed so miserably in its stated purpose. An institution that claims, by divine sanction, the moral leadership of the world cannot evade the condemnation that is heaped upon it for failing to assume its responsibilities. Yet, it is not Christianity that has failed, but Christians.

We do not claim divine sanction for our utterances. We do not, for instance, claim that every Christian must support every aspect of the civil rights struggle, nor do we say each must support the pacifist movement. We have some strong opinions on these matters, to be sure. But we do not claim to be the sole purveyors of Truth, nor do we demand each and every Christian have exactly the same interests and viewpoints as we.

Nevertheless, we have a theological viewpoint, one we believe to be valid. We believe in the truth of the cross; we believe the faith given to us by God through Christ to be absolute and everlasting. But our understanding of this faith is never static. And the mode by which we make it relevant to our lives is dependent upon the world in which we live. If we abjure divine authority for our statements, we nevertheless retain it as justification of our search for truth and what is right.

Christians have failed to see their faith in modern terms. Many Christians claim the agnostics with whom they have come in contact fail to adequately consider Christianity. If the agnostics have not, they are in good company; for neither do most Christians. Complacent in the womb of the mother church, they place the burden of moral judgment upon authority figures who are, in many cases, less informed about the world than they themselves; thus, erroneously, they think they can abdicate their own moral responsibility.

There are those who question what possible relations there could be between a journal such as Skandalon and a "religious" group. Campus Christian Council has been questioned regarding the "appropriateness" of its participation in the civil rights movement last spring, or its concern about peace. Some say we have no business sponsoring "racy" panel discussions on sex. There are those who would prefer we took no stand on "political" issues, and that we made no statements regarding philosophy or Ayn Rand. These people would see us keep within our "proper bounds." They would have us only sponsor prayer meetings and make abstruse comments about the transcendence of God and what a jolly thing it is to be a Christian. But Christianity is not simply a "religion"; it does not begin at ten on Sunday morning and end at eleven. Christianity is a way of life.

Skandalon means "stumbling block." We do not seek to be a stumbling block; nor do we wish to be irritating and obnoxious. But we base our editorial policy upon the conviction--conviction, not opinion--that our religion and our God calls upon us to accept responsibility for our own moral state and to unflinchingly confront ourselves and the world as we see it. We seek, however, not to lead, but to prod. We direct our prodding, not only against the agnostic, not the atheist, but specifically against those who label themselves "Christians" on this campus; those Christians who find religion an escape, who use it as a defense rather than as a weapon. And we challenge all to think, to question, and to act.

Only faith is absolute; the application of one's faith to life, however, is not. Christians must continually be open to the changing world. An institution that claims for itself a "higher truth" that is obviously contradictory to the truth which man discovers in the world around him is an institution on the verge of decadence. Unless Christians make an active effort to relate Christianity to their own lives within this modern world, Christianity will not outlast this generation.

Having to walk (cautiously) over three blocks of ice, I wandered into 820 Madison Avenue, home of The Golden Eye, at about 9:20 p.m. on the evening of February 5 thinking I was plenty early to get a table; the program usually starts at about 9:30 and, I reasoned, who arrives anywhere on a Friday night before ten? However, it seems that most people are punctual for The Golden Eye; for that night the coffee house had already run out of tables. Grabbing an extra chair, I joined a group of friends from the dorm who had the wisdom to arrive early. It was obvious, by the size of the crowd, that The Golden Eye was sponsoring a program of interest: "The Absurd University, Part II."

Starting promptly, the program was a discussion by four students of varied university backgrounds: Edie Hardy, co-editor-in-chief of ASP; Toni Mester, an English Honors student; Art Johnston, President of Student Senate; and Howard Miller, a graduate student in English, who also served as moderator. Following the panel discussion was an open discussion in which the patrons participated, giving those who desired a chance to have their say. (Ah, Berkeley! How you would envy us!)

To begin, the panel tried to establish what the university ought to be; they suggested it was: a way of life; a community where we spend a relatively short period of time; an apprenticeship; an intellectual endeavor. The panel then suggested what was wrong with the university. Some members felt that there was a lack of strict academics, while others believed that academics were over emphasized. Another problem seemed to be the confusion that is engendered in making a commitment because of the curriculum's lack of relevance. A fourth problem, which was suggested by a member of the audience, was the lack of intellectual atmosphere.

Once the open discussion was under way, there was no stopping it. It seemed to me that The Golden Eye was the haven of the campus intellectuals; the atmosphere which some considered lacking in the university reigned supreme. Suggestions differed and opinions varied, but the interest in the absurd university was unanimous.

When it came time to close The Golden Eye, many tarried, continuing the discussion, I among them.

As I finally made my way home on the treacherous Albany sidewalks, I pondered the main questions raised: Does Albany foster a commitment? Is there a need for a more specialized or a more liberal education? Do secondary schools fulfill their obligations to the college bound student? Has the educational system grown too large?

One of the problems raised, is, I have decided, being treated successfully: the lack of intellectual atmosphere. Why not join me at The Golden Eye come Friday night and see if you don't agree.

--Peggy Llaveria

Editor's Note: Attendance at The Golden Eye is not limited, however, to an "intellectual elite." If you're pseudo-intellectual, come too. If you're not an intellectual, of any stripe, come anyway--I need company.

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TO THE EDITOR:

I remember when I was small, my parents would buy my brother and me toys. I was especially fond of tinker toys and erector sets. I recall building all kinds of complicated structures with them: gigantic towers, huge buildings, and funny looking tables, just to mention a few. Sometimes my brother and I would argue, often over the ownership of a particular toy. "It's mine," he would say, grabbing it from my clutching hands.

"No, give it back or else I'll break your tower," I retorted as he ran away with his newly won prize.

Of course, he refused, and just to prove that I meant business, I wrecked his tinker toy tower. And now it was his turn to destroy, and destroy he did--my carefully constructed tinker toy building. Infuriated, I would chase him, and would begin fighting with him, ending the fight by grabbing the toy that I considered to be my own. However, once while wrestling for control of this object, my grasp slipped, and it pierced his eye. I was really scared--afraid for my brother's eye, and for what my father would do to me. Thankfully, his eye became better, and the sting of my father's spanking also wore off. Yet, my father's words about our childish behavior have remained with me. He said that grownups don't fight to settle differences but find a better means for working them out.

Today the United States is engaged in a struggle with Vietnam. In many ways this struggle bears a resemblance to the selfish behavior described above. Each side feels the need to retaliate with acts of destruction for the aggression committed by the other side. And each act of aggression seems more severe than the preceding one. In truth, this response reduces the powerful United States to the status of a child, seeing only one response to aggression, more aggression. And as each action becomes more serious, I am forced to think that by the time we

nature it will be too late to prevent meaningless loss of life and property which such a policy inevitably must bring about.

-William McPherson

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VIET-NAM: ?

When President Kennedy ordered the blockade of Cuba, and President Johnson ordered retaliation for the Gulf of Tonkin incident as measures designed to meet blatant communist threats against the United States and world peace, the people of America rallied around them in a unified effort to confront the communist menace. In recent weeks, there has been a singular lack of enthusiasm on the part of the American peoples for the administration's escalation of the war in Viet-Nam. President Johnson was elected to office on the premise that the obtuseness of his opponent, Barry Goldwater, might more readily lead us into war than the policy of the Democrats. Thus far, the vast majority of American newspapers have been cool about that "policy," and writers of news articles have been, at worst, reserved, at best, critical. Why? Let us examine the Administration's premises.

Administrative Premise # 1: It is necessary to respond to aggression with force.

Truth: First the administration has not been able to document any serious aggression by North Viet-Nam, other than its practice of shipping arms to the rebel forces. This is no more reprehensible than our handling of the Cuban situation. Troop movements observed from North Viet-Nam through Laos are, at least in part, simply returning troops who voluntarily exiled themselves from South Viet-Nam; they are not "invaders."

Second, it has not been shown that the total destruction of North Viet-Nam would seriously hinder the war of the Viet-Cong; despite North Vietnamese arms support, most Viet-Cong armaments come from captured United States' shipments to South Viet-Nam.

Administrative Premise # 2: As leader of the Free World, it is necessary for us to meet our commitments to our allies in defense of liberty; failure to do so would be akin to appeasement.

Truth: The South-Vietnamese are demonstrably not overly sympathetic to us. Any number of Vietnamese could have alerted our forces to the movement of the Viet-Cong, according to military advisers, but they failed to do so, resulting in unnecessary loss of life on the part of our people. A US soldier, wounded in action by the Viet-Cong, has made the extremely serious charge that the South Vietnamese were seemingly reluctant to fight so long as Americans would fight for them. Freedom cannot be imposed upon a people; it cannot be thrust down their throats. The South Vietnamese wish nothing but an end to the conflict; they are not our allies, they are governed by non-democratic autocracies and military juntas, and they are not, apparently, interested in preserving that government or working to establish any form of liberty.

Administrative Premise # 3: Attacking the North Vietnamese will illustrate our good faith in the area and keep the action from spreading, as it will become patently clear that our intention is to remain in South Viet-Nam.

Truth: There is clearly no reason to support this view. The Viet-Cong cannot break the stalemate that now exists in South Viet-Nam without external assistance. If attacks upon United States bases will bring retaliatory attacks upon North Vietnamese bases, with the prospects of increased aid from North Viet-Nam, China, and Russia, why should the Viet-Cong cease and desist? While the North Vietnamese may want no further extension of hostilities, it is not the North Vietnamese that we are contending with in the South.

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Barry Goldwater (Herald Tribune, February 14) has stated that negotiated settlement in South-Viet-Nam can only lead to the spread of communism and the weakening of defenses in other South Asian nations that now are free, specifically in Thailand. This type of statement, typical of the former Presidential candidate, is rather sweeping in its impeachment of those who seek peace, and rather meaningless in its generality. Certainly, there are settlements that could only be dishonorable to this country. But a settlement establishing South Viet-Nam, in accordance with the terms of the 1954 Geneva agreements, as a neutral nation would be no more dishonorable now than it was then.

Certainly, the United States cannot crawl on its knees to the communists. But neither can we afford to blithely sweep aside the offers of such men as U Thant of the United Nations, who have offered to serve as mediators in an honorable settlement. Such a settlement is obviously preferable to fighting a war against those who are not guilty of direct aggression upon us or our allies, or of prosecuting a war, a war that would be contrary to every statement of United States policy since World War II, against the internal, revolutionary forces of an independent nation.

The United States is not the policeman of the world; nor can we expect to remain forever in Asia. The time to get out is now. But the question is not "When?" - but "How?"

-Guy M. McBride-

SOME THOUGHTS: ON STUDENT GOVERNMENT REVISION

Student Government Revision, we are told by President Arthur Johnston, is at a point where it needs a month to month and a half of intensive work by interested students to complete the task of organizing the new student government. In order, therefore, to make it operational as soon as possible, a provisional council has been proposed by President Johnston and set forth to the students in a referendum as required by the constitution.

This referendum did not, however, achieve the 20% vote of the student association required to validate it. The problem, therefore, was thrown right back into Senate's lap. Senate met Wednesday, February 17, and dealt with this problem by continuing the referendum.

This was the end result of senate's meeting, but let us examine the means.

Let it be understood at the outset that I am not expressing any judgment on the worth of the new student government. What I am questioning are the ramrod tactics employed by President Johnston.

These ramrod techniques began February 10 when President Johnston illegally introduced a bill which authorized the referendum. I say illegal since, according to Bill No. 6465, only a senator (italics mine) may present a bill to ways and means committee. The senate approved the bill that night, however, and the referendum was held.

The senate next met February 17. This meeting was interesting since it was opened with 28 senators present. The needed quorum was 28½. After this a motion to suspend the quorum rules was carried. The agenda was thus not followed and was not returned to since the minutes of the previous session were never reviewed.

After this, senate considered and passed, after much debate, an emergency appropriation for the yearbook, and then both a constitution and a budget for the Freedom Council. By this time it was 10:30.

President Johnston now rises and proposes a continuation of the referendum after announcing its failure to gain the needed 20%. He outlined the voting days and places and the public relations campaign which was designed to inform students about the proposed constitutional amendments, enabling them to vote intelligently. Also included were provisions for nominations, voting for class officers, MYSKANIA, and provisional council members if the referendum is passed, and the date of inauguration day.

Senator Bader moved to invalidate the referendum. This motion was defeated and after much discussion Senator Digney moved that President Johnston's proposals be adopted. The motion was seconded, and debate started. At this point, Senator Guddat moved the previous question. This motion was carried, and senate, after approximately fifteen minutes of debate, if that much, on the proposals for a new student government, voted in favor--without a quorum present.

-James Economidis

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

LOST AND FOUND

ASH WEDNESDAY

Newman and Campus Christian Council jointly sponsor a service of prayer on Ash Wednesday, March 3, to be held at La Salle Chapel at 7:30 p.m.

THE GOLDEN EYE

March 5, "Africa and US Foreign Policy," with Maurice Tsododo, Timothy Wanjala, Robert MacOdare, and Paul Salmon.

GOD SPEAKS TO MEN

Lectures on the Old Testament, Mondays at 3:30 in Draper 303 with Fr. James Plastaras. Discussions during the week with faculty and clergy. Jointly sponsored by Newman and CCC.

CHURCH OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Meets for Worship every Sunday at 9 a.m. at United-Fourth Presbyterian Church, 916 Western Avenue. Cars leave New Dorms and Sayles at 8:45. All welcome.

Bill Pasquerella would like to exchange a green loden coat for one (which had his car keys in it) taken by mistake last Friday at The Golden Eye. Please see him at the University Bookstore. And anyone who left a copy of The Complete Poems of T. S. Eliot the week before can contact Mr. Snow, Campus Minister, at 501 State Street, (HE-6-9275).

Skandalon is the biweekly journal of Campus Christian Council. Articles, poems, essays, drawings, or short stories are welcome. Welcome also are written responses to articles published in Skandalon. Anyone interested in submitting his or her work should contact Guy McBride, Editor, via Student Mail, or at 500 Hamilton Street (489-4162), or leave materials at the office of the Campus Minister, 501 State Street.