

EXAMON

Vol. IV, No. 3

"SKANDALON"

November 11, 1965

CALLED TO BE HUMAN

The Campus Christian Council and the Campus Ministers are privileged to co-sponsor with the National Student Christian Federation an ecumenical study conference in Albany at the Schine Ten Eyck Hotel, December 28-January 2. One of the ten regional study conferences concerning the impact of urbanization and technology on twentieth century man, the Albany group will invite faculty and students from New York, New England and New Jersey to consider the implications of our place as a Christian community in a secular world. The general theme of all the regional conferences throughout the United States is "Called To Be Human."

Called to be human--indeed, what does this mean?

It means that we must learn to make possible human life with dignity and justice in the mass society of the cities' bedroom suburbs, its inner slums, in the all-but-abandoned Appalachia community, the overcrowded village in Bengal, the sprawling expanses of exploding cities in Asia, Africa, Southern America...

It means that we must learn to weep with those who weep and to laugh with those who laugh--and this the world over.

We are called to identification with men as human beings in ever more regimented situations, whether the totalitarian pressures come from oppressive governments, happy peer groups, the human-engineers of personnel departments, physical need.

Americans--and, increasingly, the rest of the world's people--live in an urbanized, technological, fast-changing culture, from the prairie farmlands to the city slum, in large estates and tenements, high-rise and low-rent apartments, in Alaska and the Florida everglades.

Transistors and the computers, the population explosion, instant communication and long-term poverty--these affect us all and affect our humanity.

We are mechanized and manipulated, we are talked at and motivated--and the effect is glory and degradation, opportunity for increased self-fulfillment and imprisonment in the squirrel-cage routines operated by the new power structures of urban culture. And there is the desperate need to understand what it means, now, in this time and place, in this culture, to be a human being. For God calls men and women, here and now, as He always has, in every generation, to be His people.

We are, even now, CALLED TO BE HUMAN.

So much for theme. How do we come to grips with the problem in polis?

The Albany conference will examine three areas of the urban question: urban renewal and planning, the role of education in the urban complex, and the social welfare programs, devoting one day to each area under consideration. The tentative program is as follows:

Tuesday
Evening

"This is Albany" - Mr. Daniel Button, managing editor,
Albany Times Union

Small groups, get acquainted

Wednesday
Morning

City and Suburban Tours - The Rev. James Smythe, pastor,
Inner City Church

Afternoon Housing and Urban Renewal

Small group field trips

Evening

"A City for People"-The Rev. Lawrence (continued, page two)
Durgin, Broadway Church, NYC

CALLED TO BE HUMAN (cont'd).

Thursday

Morning The School - Dr. M. I. Berger, SUNYA
 Afternoon Small group field trips -- Operation Head Start, ACAP,
 indigenous leaders
 Evening "A City for People" - Mr. Durgin
 Coffee House - YWCA Gym

Friday

Morning Social Welfare: Agencies, goals
 Afternoon Small group field trips: involvement in Albany
 Evening "A City for People" - Mr. Durgin
 Coffee House - New Year's Eve Look Ahead

Saturday

"Operation Holyoke"
 A case in point application of insights

The CCC has special responsibility for the day on education and the coffee house programs. Committees are now being formed to investigate the possibilities and opportunities for helping some 200 students and faculty members to grasp the significance of the urban problem. If you have ideas or are interested in exploring some uncharged areas--come forward. Contact a member of CCC or call Father Small, 436-0275.

BRANT LAKE CONFERENCE

Canterbury is planning its annual trip to Brant Lake for the week end of Nov. 19-21, and the members of Canterbury encourage all those who are interested to come along.

The location of this conference is Barry House on the shore of Brant Lake. Brant Lake is very close to Lake George--there are plenty of mountains to climb and, of course, it offers a change from daily routine as well as a chance to enjoy nature. While at Barry House, you will enjoy home cooking (rather than dorm food!)

There will be frequent discussions during the day on several main topics. To give you an idea of the nature of the topic questions, here are a few of the questions discussed at our last conference: What is the purpose behind my existence? How do I keep my faith? What was Christ's philosophical mission? How will God help me understand other people?

However, there is a slight charge for room and board. Since we intend to arrive sometime Friday night and come back Sunday afternoon, the charge for two nights, two breakfasts and lunches, and one supper will be \$10. If you are interested, please contact either Father Small at 501 State St. or Frank Peper (by student mail or call 459-3100, extension 574) before Wednesday, November 17, 1965.

CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE?

by A. William Clark, Art. Dept.

Contemporary religious architecture is supposed to be full of exciting developments. All the "experts" say so. As a matter of fact what it is full of is confusion. We are in the midst of a boom in church, convent, rectory, monastery and church hall building, as a result of suburban movement, population expansion and economic stability. There is no emerging style in all of this building, which is probably a good thing. However, the depressing fact woven into the fabric of most of these new constructions is that they are badly designed and even more poorly decorated. Since not very many are temporary, we are stuck with decades of optical irritation-pity your poor children.

The design of European churches, which those of us who haven't been to Europe frequently see in magazines and books, gives a strong impression of close collaboration of architect, artist and designer. The style which emerges is one of exquisite simplicity and strength, a sort of bauhaus-scandinavian-germanic architecture, in which the emphasis is on the liturgical rather than the decorative portions of religious credos. The famous Coventry cathedral reconstruction is the foremost example of what this style is not, a melange of eclecticism.

What seems to be the reason for bad American religious architecture? Several things probably, among them the uniquely American belief in the value of the amateur's judgment, the growth of architectural firms which "specialize" in religious architecture (designing the same building over and over again), pressure from the hierarchy in some denominations to avoid the controversial (or more

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CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE? (cont'd)

innocently, to deal with "acceptable" firms) and the architectural interior decorators, who assemble mass-produced artifacts for the interior of new churches.

This last factor is the most irritating, because it is the most absurd. Granted, the organization spending thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars has the right to be concerned about the response of its donors and congregation to strikingly contemporary building design. A building can be a compromise and still be effective. However, there is no excuse for desecrating the interior of any religious edifice with manneristic stained glass windows, stations of the cross, reredos, crucifixions and other decorative objects which have more relationship to the W.P.A. art of the 1930's than anything religious. Here is where the obvious difference between American and European contemporary religious architecture appears - the European churches seem to be aware of the move away from figurative religious art, and concentrate on the functional, being decorative - and beautiful.

Is contemporary religious art moving from the figurative? Any exhibition of religious art which attempts to prove otherwise falls back on artists who have not done anything significant for years or are dead. Rouault, Jack Levine, Salvador Dali, Abraham Rattner....and my mind goes blank for more names. The liturgical revival is a thing of reality, a 20th century movement. The art movements which run parallel to it in time are nonfigurative, and the significant artists in the areas which still retain representation to any degree, such as sculpture, can only be remotely connected with religious architecture. Conclusions? --Excellent churches have been built in this country recently, but a drive on Western Avenue as far out as Westmere is a fast course in what contemporary religious architecture should not be, but unfortunately is. Excellent church interiors, coordinated with the architecture, are vitally connected with the quality of the building. Architectural interior decorators ought to be exterminated. Twentieth century religious decorative art must inevitably be concerned with the intellect as well as the emotion-or fail.

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FACTS AND FIGURES

People seem to be a bit confused about Chapel House, the Church of the University Community and Campus Christian Council (and what with the photos in last Friday's "ASP"---which, rightly labled and right side up were great---it's little wonder). Accordingly, here is a quick run-down on what's doing and where.

The Church of the University Community---a congregation of students and faculty---meeting for worship Sunday at 9:45 & 11:00 at Chapel House (see below) and at work in the world in various ways during the week. "News" is a general meeting of all concerned at 5:00 p.m. this Sunday at Chapel House to rehearse some exciting new music to be sung the following Sunday morning. Published under the title "Rejoice", it is described as "music for the worship of God in the Twentieth century." Basically, it is folk music and the accompaniment is guitar and banjo, rather than organ. Those who have had a chance to hear it are enthusiastic. Also on the agenda for the meeting will be the election of three members to Campus Christian Council (again see below) and supper (at 35¢). Everyone is welcome, especially those who would like to see the Church worship in the idiom of our day.

Campus Christian Council---a representative (by intention, anyway) group of students and faculty drawn from the ranks of the People of God within the University, beginning with those who assemble at Chapel House on Sunday mornings, to be sure, but including those who worship elsewhere, as well. Present members are Marcia Lembcke (Chairman for November), James Borrazas, Steven Brockhouse, Ben Sharpe, Nancy Sherman and Carol Walling from the student body and Kendall Birr, David Heal and Thomson Littlefield from the faculty, with the Campus Ministers, the Rev. Frank Snow and the Rev. William Small as associate members. Three additional members will be elected at the meeting on November 14.

Campus Christian Council meets regularly on Friday's at 4:30 p.m. in the Campus Ministry Office at 501 State St. (which is just around the corner from Hawley Library). All meetings are "open" although seating is a bit limited. However, we can always move to another place if necessary. Notices and the like can be left at 501 State St. or in Student Mail under "Campus Christian Council."

Chapel House---well described by Cynthia Goodman in the issue of the "ASP" referred to above---the meeting place for the Church of the University Community on Sunday mornings---reached by a footpath leading off the service road which runs along the Western Avenue side of the new campus or from Waverly Place for those who are fortunate enough to command the use of a car. Also the home of the Campus Minister, Mr. Snow, and after April 1, the Campus Ministry Office (by which time we'll have to build an addition to the place).

"A PHOENIX TOO FREQUENT"

A Review by Marta Satchey

Candlelight played upon the faces of Mary Setter, Mary Woodruff, and Bruce Daniels, as their practiced voices rendered an excellent reading of Christopher Fry's "A Phoenix Too Frequent" at last Friday's Golden Eye.

Taking the myth of the phoenix (a bird which destroys itself in flame and is resurrected from its own ashes) as the germ of this one-act play, Fry cultivates the myth in an almost Molierean soil, leaving one, not with a sense of a noble immortality achieved through suffering, but rather, with a comic sense of the mortality of man, who, in an all too mortal way, stumbles on to an immortality that would have to be termed ignoble if it were not so funny.

Dynamene, recently widowed, chooses to die of grief at the tomb of her late husband, accompanied by her maid Doto, who wishes to share the fate of her mistress. Willing one's self to die is not so hard, or so it would seem, if one has an average ability when it comes to self-deception. Dynamene's will is bolstered by her self-image as she shapes her selfish grief into tragic nobility. Doto, crudely honest, can utter regrets at having to "fast and thirst and cry in a tomb" and yet the situation is rather appealing to her - a change of scene from this "double-bed of a world". Tegeus, a soldier, presently entrusted with the care of six hanging bodies, wanders into this tomb of death and near-death bringing with him two testaments to life-wine and his warm, living soldier's body. Will is strong when there are no alternatives yet flesh seems to win when there are. Doto is the first to fall from her high purposes (mainly because she had such a short distance to drop) while with Dynamene the path that leads her to her first sip of wine and finally to unbuckling Tegeus' uniform is traversed only with the help of self-deception. The final deceptions are made and it is now no great matter for Dynamene to save Tegeus from death by offering him her late husband's body to replace one of the six which disappeared while Tegeus was in the tomb. Thus the immortality of Dynamene's husband is insured in the all too mortal love of his widow and a soldier.

Fry, in mutating the myth of the phoenix, seems to approach a realism that is either lacking or distorted in most religiously-orientated dramas (one need only consider the super-real unmotivated world of Eliot's "Cocktail Party" or the distorted "too real" reality Osborne presents in "Luther"). Through the vehicle of comedy Fry's characters move through various phases of noble purpose, self-deception, and the weakness of the flesh, emerging, not nobly or ignobly, but as representatives of a very mortal humanity. Tension, usually released in humor, develops as these world-and-flesh-tethered characters, almost in spite of themselves, speak of souls, after-life, and love. They seem to touch the periphery of any higher reality that may exist but they simultaneously distort it by their inescapable human natures. It is to Fry's credit as a humorist and dramatist, but more to his credit as an understander of human nature that his over-all view is not tainted with bitterness. He seems to accept the fact that Dynamenes are more frequent than Antigones, silent corpses more common than a Hamlet's ghost, suggesting that Phoenixes will always be too frequent with human nature what it is. Yet Fry does leave us some consolation-the savour of a bowl of wine- the pleasure of a kiss, even in a tomb-and the ability to laugh.

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The Golden Eye

Friday, November 12

Albany Politics:
Decadence & Reform

with George Harder
Ed Rook + Val Mendes

820 Madison - Nine to Midnight

Skandalon is a bi-weekly journal of news and opinion published by Campus Christian Council.

Students and faculty are invited to submit articles, reviews, essays, poems and the like. Contact Steven Brockhouse, Sandy Thomson, Brenda McQueen through student mail or at the Campus Ministry Office, 501 State Street. The next issue is due December 2.