

Sept. 16, 1968

Rev. B.J. Stiles
Editor, Motive
Box 871
Nashville, 2, Tenn

Dear B.J.,

Although this will have to be a hurried letter, I have decided not to delay in writing you of several responses I have noticed crystallizing since I left Magruder, since if I delay they will probably get considerably fuzzier than they are now:

(1) The Pacific Northwest region seems more uniform and less complex now that I gain a little distance on it than when I first experienced it. I am speaking of the basic orientation toward life exhibited by students in the student Christian movement in the Northwest, which strikes me as still a reflection of the ethos of the American frontier, now almost completely deteriorated on the east coast and rapidly experiencing deterioration in the southwest and midwest. These students are unselfconsciously more life-affirming, optimistic, at-home-in-the-world than it is possible for most of us to be. I do not make this as a value judgment, but as an attempt to understand the mind-set to which I was attempting to speak.

These students felt strangely unfamiliar with categories of analysis of the human predicament. They politely tried to clue me in on the fact that they did not experience (or did not understand themselves experiencing) the guilt, anxiety, meaninglessness, etc., to which the gospel is allegedly the answer. It seemed to many of them, as one of them stated, that contemporary theology seemed to be interested in creating a bunch of human problems just in order that it may talk about God's solving them. Obviously my failure to communicate clearly and concretely, in language that sunk into their consciousness sharply, about the nature of man's brokenness, was one side of the equation. The other side, however, is the bourgeois mind-set of pietistic liberalism which systematically refuses to entertain any notion of a genuine human quandary in terms of which the resources of reason and technology are in the last analysis impotent. Of course I appreciate the reasons why this orientation seems rather on the defensive these days, for it has many achievements to conserve and protect. And

NATIONAL CONVOCATION
 On The
 CHURCH
 In
 TOWN and COUNTRY

October 16-18, 1962..... Ames, Iowa
 Memorial Student Union, Iowa State University

Sponsored by the Department of the Church in Town and Country...Division of Home Missions...National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. ... 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, New York...in cooperation with The Iowa Council of Churches, Dr. J. O. Nelson, Executive Secretary.

The Convocation will begin at 2:00 p.m. the first day and close at 12:00 noon the third day. Registration - 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Memorial Union Lobby.

WHAT IS THE CONVOCATION?

The National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country, meeting since 1943, has been an informal gathering of men and women interested in the town and country church: ministers, administrators, teachers in colleges and seminaries, sociologists, economists, agriculturalists, special parish workers, directors of rural church work, church officers, and other interested laymen. It provides for mutual fellowship and exchange of ideas and practices among town and country leaders, and provides an occasion for annual denominational meetings.

● TOPICS

Relating to "The Challenge of Change" for the Church in Town and Country...

- The Task ----- Tuesday afternoon
- The Resources --- Wednesday morning
- The Procedure --- Wednesday night
- The Motivation----Thursday morning

● SPEAKERS

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Dr. C. R. McBride, (Worship Leader)----- | Central Baptist Seminary |
| Mr. William Stacy ----- | Iowa State University |
| Dr. Jon L. Regier ----- | Division of Home Missions |
| Professor William Baker----- | University of Saskatchewan |
| Mr. William Koch ----- | Division of Home Missions |
| Rev. Don Koontz ----- | Simpson College |
| Dr. E. W. Mueller----- | National Lutheran Council |
| Professor Rockwell Smith ----- | Garrett Biblical Institute |

WHERE WILL I STAY?

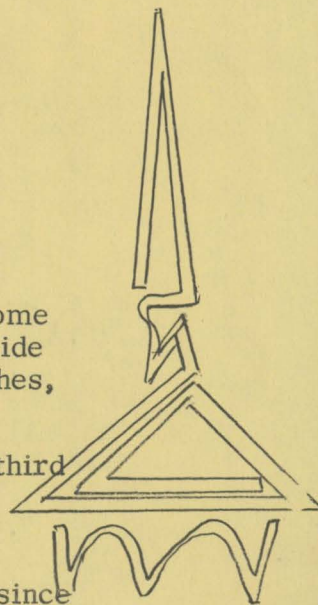
To insure space for those attending the Convocation all available rooms have been reserved by the Department of the Church in Town and Country. There is one hotel, but many modern motels in Ames. In the event that an overflow attendance occurs, it will be necessary to utilize rooms in private homes.

All reservations will be made on a "first come" basis. If interested, write

MARTIN H. DAVIS, JR.
 BOX 3537
 OKLAHOMA CITY 6, OKLAHOMA

for Registration Card.

Singles range from \$5.00 to \$10.00 and doubles from \$7.00 to \$12.00. (A very limited number of singles are available.)



our encounter with it surely is nothing new, since we can find it asserting itself with varying degrees of vitality everywhere in our society, but it seems to me that we encountered it in a rather pure and consistent form in the Pacific Northwest.

Another way to frame the same observation is to note how minimal has been the impact of existential literature and philosophy in this region. Its immunity, isolation, cut-offness from the central vitalities of contemporary existential psychotherapy, drama, novels, and art, to say nothing of existential theology, is perhaps explainable in terms of its geographical situation, but nevertheless is noteworthy for its innocence. Even this southwest region, which is perhaps more culturally isolated and provincial than the Pacific Northwest, has, in my judgment, been much more deeply penetrated by what Tillich has called the "existentialist protest against industrial society" than the orientation which I have been seeking to describe.

Constructively, this seems to indicate that we must look for new ways to communicate to this orientation, and also to learn from it what we can. It makes me wonder just how adequate the language and thought-forms of existentialist philosophy are to speak to what might be called the main stream of the pietistic liberalism so characteristic of later stages of the American frontier ethos.

(2) The Arts Festival was, in my judgment, the most penetrating and significant aspect of our week together. More happened in this confrontation than all our other wordy efforts. Except for the Anatomy of Operation Abolition, which seemed to me that it could have been presented more forcefully and less tediously the case for the students against the committee, all the other films were exceptionally well-chosen, stimulating, gutsy, and good pace-setters for genuine dialogue.

You are familiar with my views (admittedly still under consideration and review) that contemporary art, if it is honest, has a much easier time expressing man's predicament than God's action. This is why it seems to me that the primary (though hopefully not the exclusive) function of contemporary art for Christian proclamation is not to express the kerygma but to serve as a preparatio evangelica. And you know my apprehensions about contemporary art being distorted by being baptized against its will. In this connection I would like to express my feeling that our attempts to exarify meaningfully the nature of the kerygma ordinarily fall short of the power and persuasiveness of contemporary art forms in the portrayal of the human condition. I am simply confessing that my hunch is that in our week together, however much was said about the activity of God, what was heard had primarily to do with man, his limitations and possibilities. This, however, is merely a symptom of a much larger problem of Christian proclamation in our time.

I must close. This gets at the heart of my key impressions. I would also like to add, B.J., that I greatly enjoyed and appreciated the ~~time we were able to~~ converse together, however limited. I would also like to say a good word for the staff at Magruder. I especially found Harold S. monson, Bill Rogers, and Emerson Smith interesting people with a lot to say.

Please relate my good wishes and gratitude to Glen Martin for his patience and good judgment in the preparation of our study papers and Bible study guide.

Cordially,

Thomas C. Oden

P.S.: Enclosed is the bill for the car-rental in Portland, which amounted to \$17.88 above the deposit. Also I neglected to include on my report of expenses our automobile trip from Enid to Newton, Kansas to catch the Sante Fe train, which at 5¢/mi. (240 mi. round trip) should amount to \$12.00. Thank you for taking care of these.

LAYMEN'S RETREAT

Carney O. Dean, President
Seventh District CMF
114 West 5th Street
Chandler, Oklahoma

PLAN ONE

Here is my pre-registration fee for the FALL RETREAT at the Christian Camp at Lake Texoma, 17 miles south of Madill on a marked route, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday,

SEPTEMBER 21, 22 and 23, 1962.

I understand that it is to be returned to me if for any reason I am unable to attend. I understand that the full fee is \$8.00 for all sessions, meals, and lodging.

I will bring blankets, bed sheets, pillows, soap, towels, floor mat and perhaps a shaving mirror - or borrow one - just like I was camping out. I understand that there will be four showers to the building, and four lavatories and four stools. I also understand that there will be an attic fan in each building to provide some lake breeze. I will be happy to have either an upper or a lower berth.

I understand that registration starts at 4:00 p.m. Friday and that meals will be served by Bill Williams, a famous RESTAURANTEUR from Lindsay, Oklahoma. I also understand that he is also a director of the Christian Camp, and that he will feed us well.

I understand that PLAN TWO is for those who wish to arrive for the Saturday noon luncheon and remain for the rest of the sessions and meals with one night's lodging, and that the fee is only \$5.00.

I understand that PLAN THREE is for those who wish to arrive early and return Saturday afternoon before the 6 o'clock dinner. I understand that \$5.00 covers this period also.

I understand that Lloyd McCullough, a Regional Director of State Men's Work, is preparing a worth while program with the help of Martin Davis, our Director of Men's Work, and with Wayne Silver, our State President.

I understand that there will be 100 singbooks, entitled SONGS FOR MEN, available, and that these will be supplied by the 7th District.

Enclosed is a \$5.00 check as a pre-registration fee. I will bring an additional \$3.00 if I use PLAN ONE.

I CHOSE: PLAN ONE _____ PLAN TWO _____ PLAN THREE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

FROM MY CHURCH THERE WILL PROBABLY BE _____ MEN PRESENT.