

Christians Plan Faith Displays At World's Fair

By GEORGE W. CORNELL
AP Religion Writer

For the first time, a world's fair is giving major attention to God as well as man.

At the international and universal exposition of 1958 which opens next Thursday in Brussels, Christianity occupies a notable place on the stage.

Two major bodies of believers—Roman Catholics and Protestants—have chipped in around the globe to erect separate showcases of their faith.

By far the largest, and most elaborate, is the Catholic exhibit. Its sleek, graceful "Civitas Dei"—City of God—spreads over 17,000 square yards of ground, and rises to a cross-crowned peak of 190 feet. Altogether it cost about 1 1/2 million dollars.

The purpose, says Pope Pius XII, is to provide a worthy and impressive display of universal catholicism.

In dimensions and investment, the Protestant exhibit is on a smaller scale.

Cross-Topped Tower

Its trim, pastel-tinted pavilion sits on 1,000 square yards of ground. Above it rises a 65-foot pylon topped by three crosses. Efforts are still being made to finish raising a \$235,000 budget.

"The Protestant exhibit is not large," a spokesman said, "but it is beautiful."

For both groups, their participation is a new thing in the century-old history of world fairs. Both Christian groups have choice locations on the 500-acre fair grounds.

About 40 million persons are expected to visit the fair between now and its close next Oct. 19.

The exhibitors, says the fair commissioner general, Baron Moens de Fernig of Belgium, are supposed to present "their conception of happiness and the means to achieve it."

The church groups, as their answer, seek to depict faith and service.

Theme of the Protestant exhibit: The new humanity in the light of Jesus Christ. The Catholic theme: Man and God.

Central Coordination

For the Catholic Church, the project has been a centrally coordinated, smooth-working plan, with contributions from national Catholic committees in 52 countries.

The Vatican-designated commissioner general of the exhibit, Paul Heymans, a prominent Belgian layman, toured the world, organizing support with church leaders in various regions.

For the Protestants, with their denominational divisions and without unified backing, the job has been tougher going, with Belgium's small Protestant minority taking the lead.

On a here-and-there basis, individual Protestant organizations in different countries have donated. A U.S. committee, set up by friends of the World Council of Churches, still is trying to raise its share.

Streamlined, Bold

Both Christian structures are streamlined, bold and modern in design, with sweeping curves, smooth surfaces and vast areas of glass. Continuing programs, worship and outstanding speakers have been set for both.

The extensive Catholic pavilion is built in the form of a walled city, dominated in the center by a strikingly formed church, its contours inspired by an ancient Israelite tent.

From its belfry, holding a huge illuminated cross, an ingeniously arranged series of cables support the slanting roof of the glass, with its wide stained glass windows. The framework is of delicately shaded wood.

Besides the 2,500-capacity church, there is a three-story exhibition building, with escalators and high, echoing corridors, a courtyard with six chapels, a 40-bell carillon, a 2,000-capacity restaurant and a concert hall seating 1,200.

Where Man Stands

In the exhibits, a spokesman said, "The church will try to explain where man stands today in the midst of turmoil and frightening events."

About 50 Catholic organizations have scheduled international congresses at the pavilion before the fair closes.

The Protestant exhibit, stressing Christian unity and the work being done through church cooperation on national and world scenes, includes a 75-foot-long exhibit hall, its floor elevated on pillars.

Color of the building is a pale sky blue. At one end is a round-shaped chapel, with a canted circular roof, and stained glass windows. At one side, rises the cross-topped pylon.

"We didn't want it to be too high because we want people to be able to see the crosses," said Brussels pastor Pieter Fagel, the sparkling behind the whole project.

Almost lone-handed, he launched it on the conviction that Protestants must be represented. The Belgium Protestant Federation, in a country of only 75,000 Protestants among a population of 8 1/2 million, undertook official sponsorship.

Contributions have trickled in from churches in various countries, with Belgium churches alone putting up \$20,000. In the United States, about \$60,000 of the \$100,000 sought has been raised so far.

Although the structure is complete, the remainder is needed to operate it. The plan also is to move it later to another site as a world ecumenical — or Christian unity — center in Belgium.

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