

Religion on campus

There are many denominational groups at U of A, and most are acutely aware of the changes taking place in religion, university and human relations

By MARJORIE BELL

Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Lutherans, Christian Scientists, atheists and agnostics—all are caught up in the unavoidable vortex of the campus complex and tossed together into the anonymity characteristic of the modern multiversity.

When the rattled freshman re-discovers which way is up, he will find countless denominational groups with which to identify. These groups are no less aware of the crisis of university than secular groups, and all find the shake-up of religion applied to twentieth century intellectual awareness thought-provoking.

Hillel, the Jewish students' organization whose function is to present some of the newest ideas in Judaism, packed a crowd of souls, both Jewish and Gentile, into the auditorium of the Beth Shalom Synagogue Feb. 26 to hear Dr. Richard Rubinstein, University of Pittsburgh humanities lecturer and Jewish Rabbi, speak on Israel, Auschwitz and the New Theology.

"We can no longer believe in the God of history, but must believe in the God of Nature, that is, the source from which we come and to which we return," he said. "If you believe in the God of history you have to believe Hitler was God's will, and to Hell with such a God!"

"God is God because he is the source of life, but He does not function today in an ethical decision-making dimension," he said.

"Religion is the way people share critical points of life, the celebration of joys and sorrows."

"Religion is earthbound," he continued. "You pay for whatever you get and the price of life is total disillusionment. There is only one Messiah—the Angel of Death."

Of the new morality he said, "In matters of sex the cultural and psychological impact of religion is less than it used to be. The question facing the religious leader is, what can I do as such for this society?"

He said for the first time in history we have many mobile, affluent single persons—young people looking more to their peer group norms rather than parental. Also a large number of single people are isolated from parental in-

"Religion is the way people share critical points of life—the celebration of joys and sorrows."—Dr. Richard Rubinstein.

fluence, therefore more free. A technological revolution has made sociological results of free sex less awesome, so large numbers of people will do things they would not otherwise do. The end result is more free sex play; the essence of the new morality is a serious testing by young people to find a suitable marriage partner.

"I'm all for a good, turned-on orgasm," he said. "But experimentation in sex is useless unless it leads the people concerned to a good, stable marriage."

"I think to extend the concept of the new morality into additional sex relations in marriage results in psychological havoc within the

family, and is not merely wrong, but destructive."

"Dating," he said, "is one of the most savage adolescent practices I know of."

"There are two major commitments facing graduating college students: finding the proper mate, and finding the proper vocation. Religion is not a commitment. Its role is an intellectual quest for life's meaning, and a kinship group search. The kind of commitment to the continued practice of formal religion is not part of campus life, nor should it be."

His role as a chaplain he saw as rewarding and challenging.

"There is tremendous involvement of students in the questions of the new morality, suburbanization, political involvement."

"Being a college chaplain is more exciting than being a professor,"

"Universities are reputed to be the place where kids lose their morals, but it doesn't have to be, or if it is, it's not necessarily bad."—Rev. Murdith McLean.

he said. "I have learned to communicate with people; also to annoy the establishment, although this was not my intention."

He said many chaplains are sponsored to "keep the home fires burning." Probing such areas as the new morality and emotional reactions does not meet with universal approval from such factions.

"Religion is the way we share the ironies and limitations of life. The college student is not frequently confronted with these."

"Churches and synagogues are restrictive, and try to control chaplaincies; however, universities tend to be open to new ideas. In Pittsburgh the churches have an obligation not to interfere but it is a problem elsewhere."

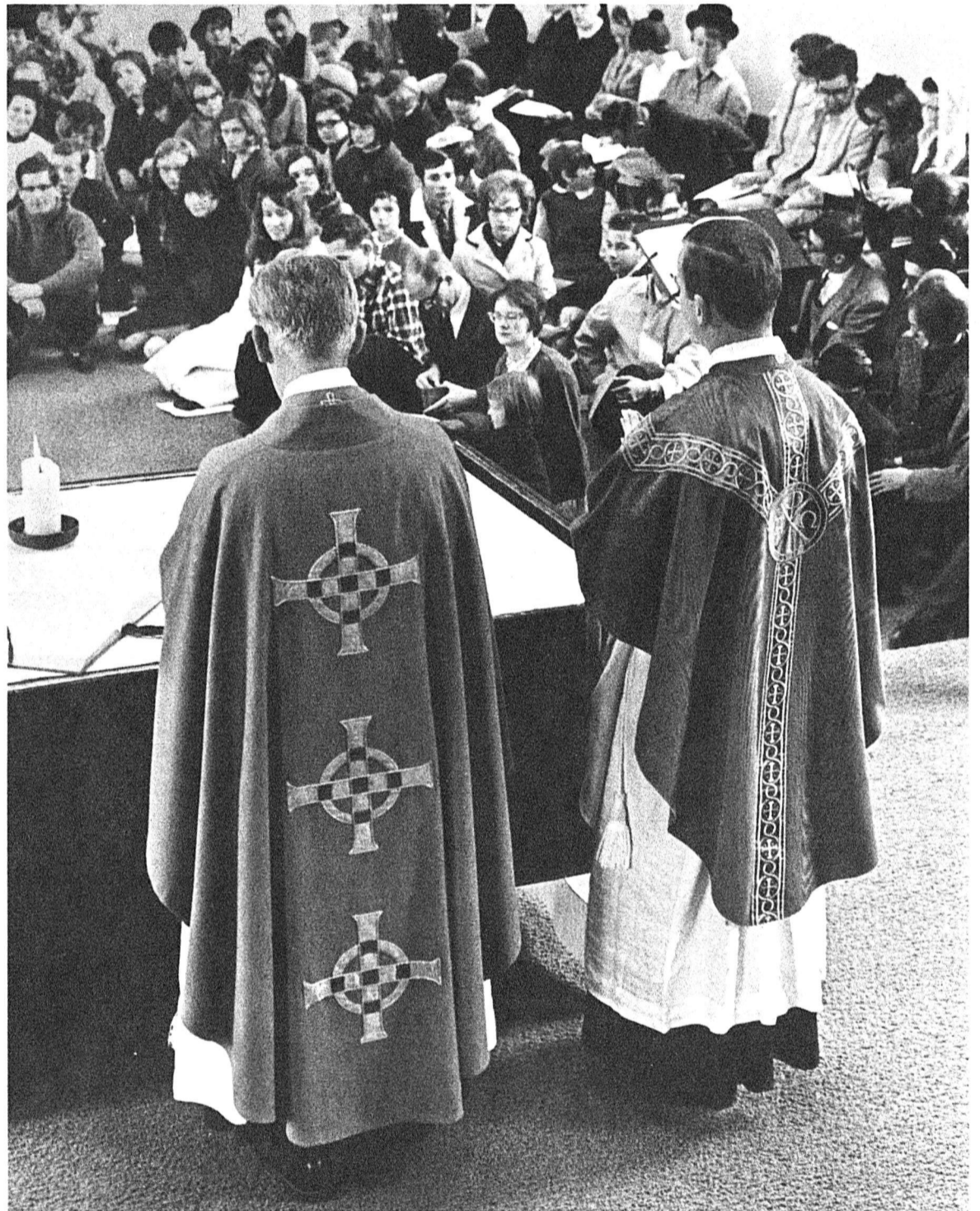
"There are some 300 students in my elective course—they want to hear what I have to say so they can form their own values, whereas a service as a religious practice is not as necessary to the student."

"The role of the college chaplain is to be there," he said. "In some universities the students are better off going to the chaplains than to the psychiatric services. For students looking for life's meaning he will show them directions, but will not force his own directions upon them."

The Lutheran Student Movement, in the same questing spirit, invited Dr. Hobart of U of A's sociology department to speak to them about determinism and free will.

"Of those here who are Lutheran," he told the group, "most of you are Lutheran because your parents are. Those of you who have strong religious convictions are bound to meet at least one other person who has equally strong religious convictions of a different order."

He said, "A collapse of values occurs when the things you have believed to have more meaning than others cease to have more meaning. If no solution occurs, physical or mental suicide or insanity result; however, a new value hierarchy can be rebuilt from your



—Neil Driscoll photo

"WORSHIP HERE IS DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF A CHURCH . . . the kids put it together for themselves"

own insights. In religious values most persons return to the "faith of their fathers" after a value collapse. Thus free will does not play a major role in the determining of religious values.

An LSM member said of the movement—"It's great!"

She said LSM has more meaningful objectives this year than last—they are exploring as many aspects of Christianity as possible this year whereas last year their chief aim was to make Christ known on the campus.

Pastor Herb Keil, Lutheran chaplain on campus, said above all LSM is a motivating factor for social concerns, for example, religious groups have been more concerned about Vietnam than other groups. Traditions such as services are not

of paramount importance to the campus Lutheran.

He said, "Some students don't change concepts when they come

"I think religious questions are still important, but I'm not sure religious answers are."—Prof. Charles Davis.

to university—they become vocational professionals without changing their religious constructs. Personally I think this is very bad."

"Most of the kids we as chaplains meet are questioning—they haven't given up on religion, but they have given up on staid religion. They are interested in ac-

tion. The confessional position the Lutheran church has held traditional is not only being questioned; it's being discarded.

"The only valid question the students ask is, 'who was and is Christ?'"

He said a lot of students in this university feel chaplains have become religious symbols. However, most of us are more concerned with social problems than with deep religious ones.

"We are ecumenically structured in that we have services with other denominations on campus, but don't ask what our bishop or our church is doing. Some people get the feeling we are way out, but we just want to answer questions."

"One of the beautiful things that has happened to me is I've learned