

SOME VIEWPOINTS FROM THE CLERGY

THE REV. WILLIAM ROSS
Roman Catholic

"A great many, if not most, people of university age go through a crisis of faith. The university and its 'godless professors' quite unjustly get blamed for it by the folks back home. The judgment confuses what is a catalyst for a cause. The university *does* challenge a person to review critically old certainties. In doing so, the university is fulfilling one of its primary responsibilities. Some certainties, and I include religious ones here, cannot be sustained under such review because some of them are simply untrue and some are untruly simplistic. This is not an indictment of past religious training necessarily. Yesterday's answers seldom satisfy today's questions. Unfortunately, the college student does not always fully appreciate this fact and so in disillusionment may be guilty of throwing out the baby with the bath water.

"The annual Conference on Religion (COR) invites the student and faculty to consider how profound, how significant, how intellectual, how relevant are the questions to which religion is currently addressing itself. Not all will agree with the answers given in this year's conference, but the response, some 2,600 participants, indicates a real interest in the questions. The fact that there was such a turnout for Bishop Pike and Dr. Altizer, who are considered radical theologians, points up that the students of today are questioning radically, i.e., to the very roots of faith. Some will be alarmed at this. Certainly a good number of people were shocked that such speakers should be invited to address the university young people. I for one have more confidence in the young people today. They serve religion poorly who attempt to dissuade our young people from such a quest in the fear that they will be 'lost.' What will be *lost* is not the young people but a great deal of religious baggage that will allow the beauty and force of true religion to shine forth. We are indebted to this year's COR for suggesting that pruning is needed. The task of pruning is that of the next generation. They will not kill the true. They will make it

more fruitful if the old generation will engage in the quest with them. That is why we have universities."

THE REV. JAMES SHIELDS
Methodist

"The Pike-Altizer dialogue, like a great many other things in life, proved better in the anticipation than in the actual event. A great deal of enthusiasm and interest was generated in the dialogue, both by the excellent work of the Conference on Religion committee, and by the exciting reputations that Bishop Pike and Doctor Altizer have. Statistically, the dialogue proved a 'smash success' with a full house on hand for every event. Many of these people came from some distances and even from outside Oklahoma.

"The dialogue had some spots of really brilliant exchange and a rather extended period of excited interest; there were a number of excellent questions from the audience and the moderator did a fine job of trying to get the two speakers to dialogue with each other. On the whole, however, the dialogue came rather close to being two monologues occasionally interrupting one another. Bishop Pike seemed greatly preoccupied with troubles within the Episcopal Church, though he was interested in Dr. Altizer and eager to meet him. Dr. Altizer, on the other hand, found very little to address himself to with Bishop Pike and spent his time in expounding his interest in the religions of the Eastern world (an important and needed area of study and contact) in a style that was personable and engaging but lacking in clarity and sound, ample scholarship."

THE REV. DON SCRUGGS
Presbyterian

"I think the long-range effect of the conference is going to be positive. The kids are beginning to have a strong feeling that if they really go after speakers cutting such a national figure that students will participate in great numbers. The conference spoke to all sorts of people. The only negative factor I could detect was the lack of a real dialogue—bishops are used to talking to people, not with them.

The conference stimulated some serious thinking. Those who heard the speakers had to defend their own point of view with some sort of cogency and sharpness. Faculty response was excellent; most seemed very pleased."

THE REV. DON GIBSON
Christian

"The Conference on Religion was a success—this seemed to be the consensus from people I've talked to. By success these students mean that the number of people who attended and the quality of the speakers were worth the effort, cost, and controversy growing out of this event.

"One effect was the intellectual preparation that went on prior to the appearance of Pike and Altizer. Certainly this was the first year that many students seriously engaged in reading books by the speakers before they arrived. Most students agree that the Pike-Altizer event will be a hard act to follow. The act will not be hard to follow in terms of finding men academically qualified to present religious issues, nor will it be difficult to find men of a controversial background. But undoubtedly much of the success was due to the timing. The bishop had recently been through heresy charges that received national publicity, and Dr. Altizer had been refused a hearing at OSU. But it is quite possible that the interest and momentum created through this year's COR will be picked up by those students responsible for next year's conference."

THE REV. KENNETH FEAVER
Presbyterian

"This particular COR, by reason of the persons who were brought here and their reputations, stimulated interest that perhaps no COR has yet stimulated. There was considerable interest on the faculty level, and here the interest was or seemed to focus on the fact that these were religious leaders who were trying to speak pertinently to current man in his current situation. They were likewise reflecting a vitality of thought that stimulated the openness of concern which the academic situation overtly calls for, whether covertly it accomplishes it or



THE PRINCIPALS SPEAK

Dr. Altizer

I wish to speak about one primary phrase, the phrase of course being the death of God. I think first of all we should understand this phrase occurs in a particular context, in a particular situation. It is when those of us who exist and live in this moment of time, who find the name of God to be unspeakable insofar as we exist and live as men in our time and history. When I say for us the word God is unsayable I don't mean this in a literal sense. Obviously we can and do use and speak the word God, but what I am saying is that it is impossible today for any man to say the word God and to say anything which could in any real sense be shared by a Christian who lived in the presence and reality of God. Upon our lips the word

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Bishop Pike

I can observe as a matter of empirical data in the universe a number of things which have reality. One is that it is a *universe*. It hangs together. It coheres. I can also observe a certain measure of order and on that order is based predictability and on that predictability is based what science and technology we have. I affirm by faith—not by proof (This conclusion is not entailed in the data but is a plausible inference from it)—there is a One that is a Unus in the *Universe*. I emphasize the *-us* ending. Sometimes I am quoted as saying Unum. There is a great deal of difference there. I will also settle for Una, ladies, but a personal ending—not the neuter ending. God is the customary word. I don't use the word in my private

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not. God in the last analysis was not pronounced dead in any final sense at all, nor did there seem to be any intention to pronounce Him dead. Issues centered on conceptualizations of God rather than upon His demise. This does not mean that the two speakers agreed as to what they meant by the idea of God—nor that they were particularly anxious to use the word as such. It does mean that each in his own way was hesitant to dismiss some concept of God altogether. Here the word God is used as a traditional word to point up what others have referred to as ultimately real, truly creative power, the ground of being or being itself.

“The stir which the appearance of Altizer and Pike caused in the hinterlands of the University and perhaps in the University itself reflected the absence of a working knowledge in the area of religious thought across the centuries. This absence of knowledge provoked an initial hostility toward the words ‘God is dead’ and it likewise aroused an undue sense of threat. This situation is perhaps one of the strongest arguments we can set forth for continuance and expansion of the notion of such religious dialogue. If nothing else, it awakens persons to the fact that there is a great deal more in history of religion than has been captured and capitulated in our well-defined credal and doctrinal

pronouncements. Too much attention has been devoted to the realm of moralism without really engaging the person who is to pursue these moral dictums in a real dialogue about the reasonableness or values of these moralisms. Some see the church as an opportunity for activism—without really becoming excited about the content of the area. This is a define-God - in - a - single - sentence - and - let us-move-on sort of attitude. In the last analysis, this reduces religion at best to mediocrity and does not engage the individual who pursues it in any awareness of being involved in something important—either in relation to himself, to others, or even to his own environment.”