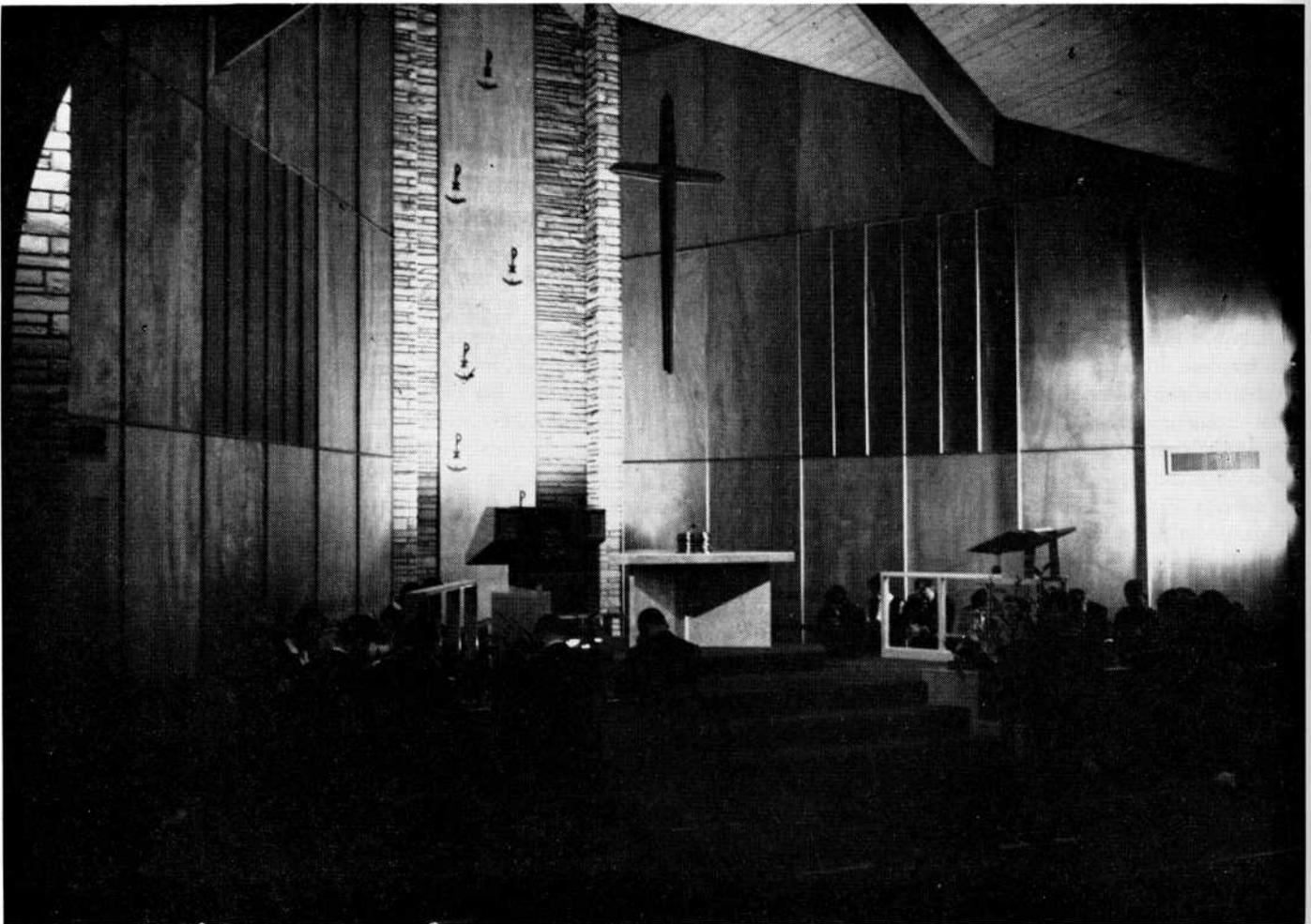


# *Religion on the Campus*

INSTITUTIONALIZED RELIGION TRADITIONALLY TAKES A BEATING  
FROM THE QUESTIONING STUDENT MIND.  
BUT DO DOUBTING COLLEGIANS MAKE THE CAMPUS ATHEISTIC?



*The Methodist campus chaplain, Rev. Clyde Chesnutt, '54ba, feels that the junction of the Wesley Foundation is to challenge students intellectually with his church's concept of Christian faith. Completed in 1957, the student center received statewide Methodist financing, is locally sponsored by McFarlin Methodist Church. O.U. church preference rolls list 2,300 Methodists — a smaller number participates.*

THE religious climate of universities and colleges has been a question mark in the minds of the American public for generations. The old "atheism" cliché has attached itself so firmly to the academic realm that even today, with many of the education versus scripture controversies laid to rest, the aura of Godlessness still lingers.

The nation's religious institutions have recognized this problem and have made a virtual mission field of the college campus. Nearly every religious denomination is now represented at the University of Oklahoma, all with a program aimed at capturing a part of the ever-growing, ever-wandering student mind.

Student centers of the various faiths—Catholic, Protestant and Jewish—encircle the campus. Most of the churches serving the University population have full-time campus ministers or chaplains. B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation is charged with direction of the religious lives of the more than 400 Jewish students at O.U., while the vast majority of the 800 Catholics at the University attend the Saint Thomas Moore University Chapel, established exclusively for their use.

The number of Protestant students is difficult to determine, but the minister of Norman's largest church, McFarlin Metho-

dist, estimates that students comprise 60 per cent of his congregation—an average of 1,200 each Sunday.

Generally Norman ministers are not overly concerned with combating the "atheistic" influences of the academic environment. The questioning, the doubts, can be attributed more directly to the "growing up" process than to the atmosphere itself. To be sure, the conflicting influences are in evidence. While the faiths present their challenges, other challenges are being presented to the student. What should be the ideal place for the strengthening of religious conviction is also the most difficult place to be heard.

Yet ministers assigned to the University will tell you that the college community is no better, no worse than any other community in its religious climate. They will tell you that there are as many "atheistic" bankers or farmers as there are professors—but the latter have a platform the banker or farmer lacks, and publicity-wise the professors are much better copy.

As with every other phase of Norman life, the officer and membership rolls of the churches read like a roster of O.U. faculty and staff, as well as students.

One campus minister doesn't rate the student body very highly in participation in

institutionalized religion. Another believes that the vast majority of collegians believe in God and participation in churches as an essential part of being a good citizen, but religion means very little to them. A third maintains that religion's greatest enemy on the campus is not "atheism," but the clock and the organizations which take up its time—that most students have organized God out of their schedules.

Certainly competition for the student's time affects every aspect of the campus religious programs. In nearly every denomination something is provided for each segment of the student body—from noonday services to married and graduate student classes and study groups to fellowship hours, folk dancing, parties, prayer services and the regular Sunday worship.

Student religious programs, though expanding slowly, are not operating at full capacity—a situation no different from religious programs anywhere. But whether the churches are having any impact upon the students who should be reached and regardless of the student reasons for attending, Norman churches do not stand empty on Sunday morning. And when vacation times roll around, the churches realize the tremendous impact the students in turn have upon the churches.



*Of the 800 Catholics enrolled at O.U., at least 600 attend one of four Sunday masses at St. Thomas Moore University Chapel each week. Father Ernest A. Flusche, campus chaplain, admits religious problems exist, thinks too much attention is paid to what students say about religion.*



*Rabbi Victor Eppstein, director of Hillel Foundation, is concerned with helping O.U.'s 400 to 500 Jewish students adjust spiritual beliefs from a childhood to an adult level and gain a truer and better understanding from an educated viewpoint.*



*The Baptist Student Union, directed by the Rev. Arthur Driscoll, Jr., offers fun, fellowship and an intent approach to God to its 500 members. Daily features are a morning watch and noonday devotional. The Union's theme: Everyone's welcome.*



*Of the approximately 1,000 Presbyterian students on campus, 120 to 130 take part in activities at Westminster Foundation, which offers a wide variety of programs. The Rev. John Heidbrink, director, finds counseling absorbs quite a bit of time.*