

Chaplain 5a

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A Chaplain Discusses God and Man at UBC

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United Church Observer

Mr. Shaver is a chaplain at UBC. The Observer is published twice a month in Toronto by the general council of the United Church.

Today's university, like any living reality, is a constant surprise. It is shallow where I expected depth. In other places its dizzying depth shames my shallowness.

There is the campus atheist who writes drivel for the college paper. There is the campus atheist who changes his philosophy master's program from one university to another because no one at the former school is taking the philosophy of religion and ethics seriously. There are the campus Christians who smile and whistle under all difficulties, and feel nothing. There are the campus Christians who feel everything, making up in themselves what is lacking in Christ's suffering.

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IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT this position does not go unchallenged. A significant number of status people are very concerned about the promiscuity and even more concerned about the students who are in the lonely darkness of not knowing what to think.

It is interesting to be on campus with a generation of students who are among the first products of the new permissiveness. Superficially, at least, there is a striking absence of inhibitions against the frank discussion of sex, yet the fascination with the "dirty" joke still appears to receive

its power from the fact that it is forbidden.

Other indications suggest that the modern student is not as liberated in this matter as it might seem. It is still not easy for people to talk openly about what they fear and there is a great agony of uncertainty about one's personal sexual code.

Is sexual morality as promiscuous as the surveys make out? Probably. I have been on the UBC campus for five years, and I don't know, and I have found no one who knows.

But I do know that at seminars and in classes, significant status people are saying, "Do whatever you like."

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HOWEVER, MY MOST surprising discoveries since becoming a university chaplain are of the places in which Christ is already hidden Lord of the university.

This hidden Lordship confronts me in the quality of thought and moral responsibility of people who profess atheism.

An atheist student is profoundly upset by the smallness of the God of religious people. Another has spent time in jail with the freedom-riders in the south. A group, made up largely of atheist students and faculty, championed the civil rights of the Freedomite Doukhobors during a recent crisis. An atheist professor carries on a personal crusade to turn the public education system into a program for producing citizens who can make responsible political decisions.

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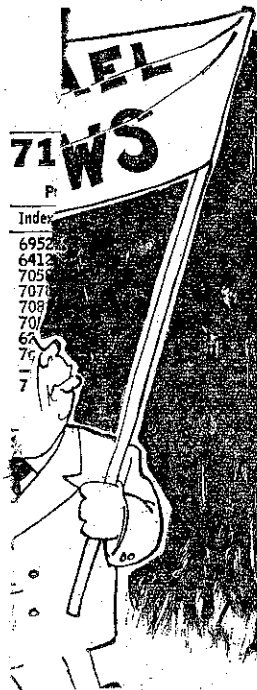
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT one of the chief ways in which the Word of God in Christ addresses the Church today is the world of the university. Certainly one of my chief thrills in the campus ministry has been the discovery that there is nowhere is the Word of God absent.

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