Chapel Speaker Eulogizes Frost

By RICHARD BEST

In his first address to the University, Dr. Amos N. Wilder, Visiting Professor of Religion at Rice, commemorated the life and work of Robert Frost.

The late American poet was described as "a tiller both of the soil and the English language." The promises Frost kept, said Wilder, are to be found in his poems. He found poetry in reality, not in flights of imagination.

At TIMES was accused of escapism, but he maintained that he was merely drawing far enough back to launch an effective attack. Frost "wreaked himself in a lover's quarrel with the world," and stands in rebuke against the escapes of life today.

Wilder recalled that his fellow New Hampshire man had been termed "a wise old woodchuck." Frost's poetry displays the anguish and weakness of country life. He was very faithful to the facts of country experience, as when he wrote of the children sticking a flower into a filled blueberry pot.

FROST CONCEIVED man's spirit as an obscurity like smoke or haze. His poem "In the Clearing" is at once a symbol of order in the wilderness, and of the clearing of dirty water. It is a message of hope.

For Frost truth comes not in idleness but in labor. Truth is expressed through drama, action, or sacrifice. It is that by which "man lives forever and ever, un-jaded."

As an interpreter of the American dream, Frost is to be included in the tradition of Thoreau, as Sandburg is in the tradition of Whitman. To Frost the Incarnation means that it is worth risking spirit in substance. Wilder feels that Frost "has laid hold upon the basis theme of historical revelation."

IT WAS especially fitting that Wilder should speak on the meaning of Frost. It was during the thirties, when the poet was under heavy attack, being labeled an escapist, that the two men first met. Wilder copied the ad-lib remarks which Frost made while reading some of his poetry, and later asked for and received permission to publish the notes.

Dr. Wilder, himself a poet, critic, and New Testament scholar, will be at Rice this semester as a visiting lecturer, occupying the position held last year by John Selden Whale.

THE HOLLIS Professor of Divinity at Harvard will teach a course entitled "The Christian Faith in the Modern World," a graduate seminar, and will deliver lectures in one of Dr. Nielsen's courses.

The relation between faith and literature is one of Wilder's special fields of interest. An accomplished poet himself, the theologian's brother is the writer Thornton Wilder. Literature is considered by the Harvard professor as valuable in that it reflects the social condition of man, as he is or rather as he will be, since writers are frequently a generation ahead of the rest of mankind.

WILDER SEES as one of the most pressing problems of theology the endeavor to extract the essential meaning behind the gospel narrative and to make it applicable to contemporary man. The question is not so much one of demythologizing but rather one hand, making Christianity irrelevent to the modern society and, on the other, giving the latest philosophical or political find the sanction of the Gospel.

A GRADUATE of Yale, Dr. Wilder studied at Mansfield College, Oxford, In 1926 he was ordained a minister in the Congregational Church. He taught at the Andover-Newton and Chicago theological schools before going to Harvard. His most noted work is "Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus."

Dr. Wilder will again speak in the Chapel this Thursday at 7:15 p.m. His topic will be "Plot and Anecdote in the New Testament."