Bishop Refutes Modern Atheism

By RICHARD BEST
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"God is out and no amount of religious manipulation can force Him back in."

Thus spoke Bishop John A. T. Robinson, controversial author of "Honest to God," to a capacity crowd of over 750 which spilled over from the Rice Chapel to the Grand Hall where closed circuit television was set up.

According to the English theologian, in the period after the death of God, as He has been understood in the past, "Man must be an atheist before he can be a Christian."

'Practical Atheists'

Many have felt that in modern times God is "intelligently superfluous." Diety is no longer necessary to explain practical problems in science or even in ethics.

Nor do we really attempt to discuss sickness as God's will. Now no one needs a way to explain reality through a supernatural entity, a "God of the gaps." "Most of us today are practical atheists."

God, traditionally described is also "emotionally dispensible." Robinson reacts against a conception of religion which is but a way to escape facing the difficulties of life.

'Morally Intolerable'

Mature man does not need a God who is a projection of his fears. Thus the bishop ultimately agrees with the criticisms of Freud and Marx who found belief in God either a neurosis or an escape from economic reality.

A third charge, leveled by sophisticated atheists, is that God is morally intolerable. Philosophers from Nietzsche to Camus and Sartre begin with a serious consideration of the problem of evil.

The Christian faith calls man to maturity; into the responsibility of a son and heir of God. Man is called, the Bishop concluded, to participate in the "powerfulness of Christ in the world."