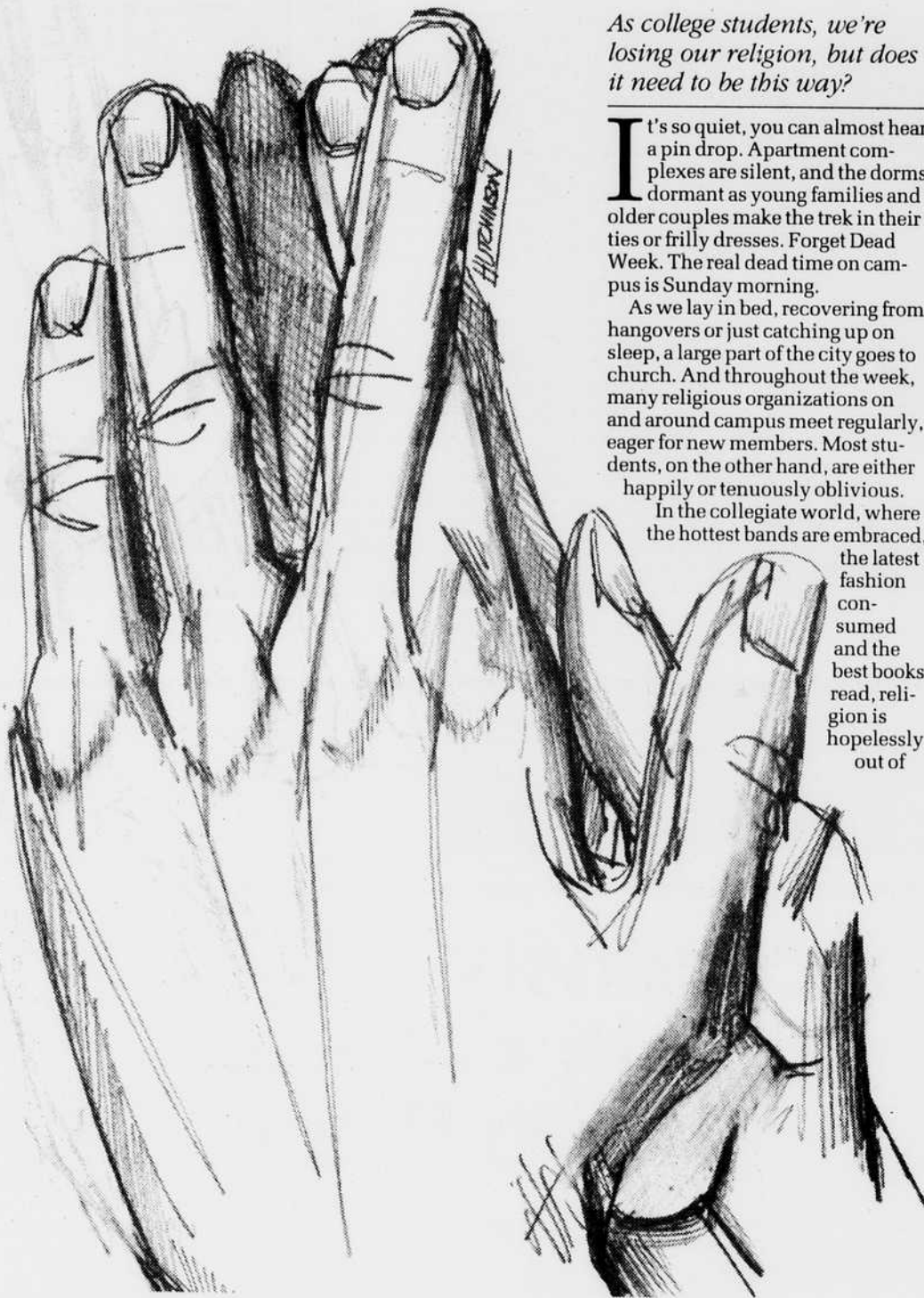


PERSPECTIVES

Faith falters on campus



As college students, we're losing our religion, but does it need to be this way?

It's so quiet, you can almost hear a pin drop. Apartment complexes are silent, and the dorms dormant as young families and older couples make the trek in their ties or frilly dresses. Forget Dead Week. The real dead time on campus is Sunday morning.

As we lay in bed, recovering from hangovers or just catching up on sleep, a large part of the city goes to church. And throughout the week, many religious organizations on and around campus meet regularly, eager for new members. Most students, on the other hand, are either happily or tenuously oblivious.

In the collegiate world, where the hottest bands are embraced,

the latest fashion consumed and the best books read, religion is hopelessly out of

style. Going to church is passé, worshipping anything is misguided. And faith? That's a phenomenon reserved for nuns and monks.

We, on the other hand, are college students, steeped in knowledge, secure in the fact that believing in anything unseen and living by a set of values not our own is purely delusional. It's strange how this works, though.

For so many of us, going to church was part of our childhood. Our parents dragged us, kicking and screaming, to Sunday school, Mass or Shabbat. We may have actually enjoyed it, at times, and a belief in a higher power was certainly important to us.

After college, many of us get married, have kids, grow older and start to question our own mortality and that of our kids. Pretty soon, we're faithful attenders again, giving money every month and going to church picnics each summer. It's as if we never left.

But we do leave. We take a step backward. But why? What is it about college that makes us forget our faith, or if we never went to church, deny any thoughts of a higher power?

Part of the cause, as alluded to earlier, is any belief in the supernatural is scoffed at by professors and staff. The academic world, at least in Eugene, has no room for silly notions of a god and, further, any type of personal faith. We're conditioned, from the time we step on campus, to seek knowledge from the material realm and downplay anything that's not of this world.

Also, we have some societal mountains to climb as young people. Everyone expects us to toe the moral line, drinking heavily, engaging in rampant sex, while we come to grips with our place in the world. We're supposed to be so busy trying to find ourselves that we surely would have no time to follow any type of god.

And we joyously oblige both stereotypes. Political correct-

ness and faux tolerance become our gods, and we relegate religion to the shadows, going so far as to give the few religious organizations in the EMU microscopic workspaces. And, of course, we have no problem fitting the mold of tormented collegians, forced to drown our existential dilemmas in alcohol and empty love.

But if we just put the can of Milwaukee's Best and our PC dictionary down for a minute, we could see that college is the perfect place to have religion. A college campus, for one, should be a place for diverse people with a wide range of ideas. Religion could easily be tolerated and made more available to students.

More important, college students are searching for their niche in greater society and wondering about an uncertain future. This part of the stereotype is true. But is it possible, ever so slightly, that religion provides many of the answers, that it's exactly what perplexed college students do need?

Opinion



Ashley Bach

Our late teens and early 20s are the dark ages of religion, no doubt, and if that's because we need to make sense of a childhood inheritance, OK. But despite what so many people say, there is value in religion, and it needs to be evaluated internally without the influences of a world that can't associate college with faith.

In the end, some of us may choose to go our own way in the world. But in the meantime, we should consider catching something like that sunrise on a Sunday morning; it's seldom seen, but it can be beautiful.

Ashley Bach is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

Letters to the Editor

Campus cash warnings

Thank you for the editorial on "Going Cashless" (ODE Dec. 1), which features the new debit system called Campus Cash. The headline "Charge It" is somewhat misleading because Campus Cash is not a charge card. Instead, the cardholder prepays by making a deposit into the account, then has the convenience of speedier service and reduces the need to carry cash on campus. Many students have mentioned that it could help them stay within their budgets because it is not a buy-now-pay-later account. As your editorial correctly cautions, it is up to each person to manage his/her money and make prudent choices. Campus Cash offers students a convenient way to budget their funds wisely.

Dusty Miller
 Director, EMU

Book smarts

I am so sick of getting ripped off the by bookstore. I sell my books back to them, and they only give me 40 percent of what I paid for the book. Yet, they turn around and sell my book for \$20 more than they paid me for it. That's why I'm so excited for the book swap.

The book swap is an event that is sponsored by the

ASUO. It starts the week of finals and continues through the first week of the second term. During the week of finals you take your old books to the EMU Fishbowl and put a price on your books that is cheaper than what the bookstore sells them for. In return you will get more money by swapping books with students rather than selling it back to the bookstore. Also, it will cheaper for students to buy the books they will need for the next term at the book swap rather than at the bookstore. It is a definite win-win situation. I am really looking forward to making money as well as helping out my fellow students.

Jessica Giordani
 Undeclared

Tolerance

I was struck that reporter Eric Mortenson seemed surprised that a homeless Hispanic man "moved off to the right, making way like he thought he shouldn't be standing there" ("Side streets," Register-Guard Nov. 29). It's a fact of life on some of our streets that poor folks had better make way or pay the price.

No-loitering signs have been posted on East 13th for over a year. I have seen indigents ticketed for the crime of being

on a public sidewalk with no place to go. The worse crime: They have no money to spend. Non-consuming riff-raff simply isn't good for business.

Though it was over a year ago when I overheard a city councilperson's comments to an East 13th businessperson, I remain as saddened over the council person's words today as then. She expressed how much "better things are now on East 13th" and how unpleasant it was when she "sometimes had to step out in the mud to get around those people." How many hundreds of people, those who can afford it the least, have been given stiff loitering fines because this woman couldn't wend her way or couldn't bear the sight of poor folks? I've had no problem with other humans on E. 13th. If congested, a simple, courteous, "Excuse me, may I pass," never fails. But I have a decided problem with the moneyed interests there who have pressured city council to institute draconian punitive regulations against the poor and homeless.

Beaten-down human beings making way for the gentry, huddling wherever they can find shelter is simply a fact of life for many in our town.

Merry Christmas.

Carol Berg
 Eugene