

United Church Chaplain UBC

Before I launch into the report proper may I put into print my annual reminder that visibility is my biggest practical problem. Any programme that any pastoral charge(either in or outside the Lower Mainland) can undertake which will put me personally in touch with their students or potential students is of great help to me. Almost no one makes use of a Chaplain until after he has been exposed to him.

This year my report will again be an attempt to interpret^{ye} the current state of the University to the Church. To claim that these observations are comprehensive would be absurd. Indeed they are rather a caricature. But I believe^Q that a caricature can make a significant point, and restricted as my vision is, I believe it allows me to see something significant.

Each year my experience gives rise to a constellation of concerns that stand out over all the rest. Last year it was the prevalence of the radical and prolonged identity crisis among students of all ages.

This year I find I am most agitated over what appears to me to be an acceleration[/] in the degree of estrangement between people and between groups of people on the campus. I want to spell this out a bit because I believe that the same situation prevails throughout the community. The world is radically in need of a ministry of reconciliation[/]. It may well be too late for the church to have it.

I find an increasing number of campus people, in the state of identity diffusion, torn between a desperate need of intimacy and ~~XX~~ a desperate fear~~XXXX~~ of it because of the deep hurt inflicted by the intimacy they have experienced. My vision here may be colored by the contacts I happened to make this year. But I can't help but sense that this kind of person to person estrangement is on the increase - in terms both of depth and of frequency. And because I sense its increase on the Campus I seem to see it everywhere.

In the matter of the estrangement between groups, I feel I am less likely to have distorted vision. This year has seen a student radical movement jell on the campus. It is small, dedicated, not without influence and the signs are that ^{it} is becoming more and more isolated. Each of these ~~facts~~ facts are significant.

It is characteristic of the campus that only the extremists are dedicated, and that the dedicated are very small in number. Most of the thinking students are uncommitted.

These uncommitted will sometimes affirm the programme ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ put forward by the radicals, but they won't identify with it completely. Their affirmation is most likely to take place when the establishment, (either student government or University administration) reacts by imposing restrictive measures.

The radical movement shows signs of becoming more and more isolated as the establishment shows its jumpiness, and as the indifferent fun-types give the serious concerns of the movement the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ prank treatment. I fear that this estrangement is on the increase.

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When such a movement gets to the place where it is completely boxed in, then I believe its righteousness becomes distorted. When disputing groups can no longer engage, but must withdraw into isolated corners, the community suffers severely. This happens when groups feel they are not being heard, When others act as though the problems they take with total seriousness don't even exist. And it happens when groups feel that what they hear from others are words that in no way represent reality. And when serious minded groups exist in this kind of isolation the bloody-but-unbowed kind of righteousness that emerges is demonic.

I told the story of this particular group because I see it as a parable of what is happening all over the place. The estrangement between the Church and the secular community is one of many incidents of this kind of thing. The 'Death of God' movement began as a responsible attempt to find whether the gospel could be addressed to secular man without first desecularizing him. The panic that the publicizing of this movement engendered is making it more and more impossible for disputing parties to hear each other. Meanwhile the possibility of continuing the theological dialogue with secular man is becoming less and less likely. Yet I am sure that all parties are very open to demonic influence if they disengage.

When did there ever go up from man a more agonizing cry for a ministry of reconciliation? - - - for the mediation of the kind of grace that puts together disputing parties in a continuing dialogue?

Many people think it is already too late - and that the Church

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isn't up to it. But who can say that there is no cry? And who can deny the connection between this cry for reconcil~~i~~ation and the call of Christ? What if Christ is already there?