

Sects Education

by Pat Just

To the average student, it would seem that there are too many Christian associations on campus. The truth is that what is normally seen of them (a table here, a poster there) does justify the impression that maybe they are just a whole bunch of little groups screaming into the wind.

But while these first impressions are valid to the point that, yes, there are many small groups and very little is known of them, there is more to consider.

The numbers of students involved on campus may be relatively small, but most are related to much larger movements throughout North America and the world. Consider these: One Way Agape (Youth With A Mission) is active in 75 countries. I.V.C.F. (Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship) sent over \$5,000 to its main organization this year from the book exchange to pay for missionary and medical work in the third world.

All the groups have similar philosophies, and a belief in Jesus Christ. Differences between them are matters of approach and of different methods of worship. Some are based on the following of a certain religion, others are interdenominational. It is unreasonable to expect a total amalgamation of the Christians on campus, but most of the groups inter-relate with each other.

The question of unity often arises when events are discussed among the groups. Minorities in each group makes it hard for each to sponsor major events, when the whole body would have few problems. That is not to say the communities are not social. Even

Non-Christians are welcome to the functions they hold, because, as Diane North of the I.V.C.F. suggests, people with differences can only stimulate more active thought and dialogue among their members.

At a meeting shortly before the publishing of this article representatives from each group (except the Baptist Student Union which was not in attendance) agreed that students at the U of A have no cause to worry about being indoctrinated or hauled off

in fishing boats to South America.

The problem seems to be much more a matter of public awareness and direction on the part of Christians on campus. One reporter at least, (with a considerably varied religious background) believes that barring this, the people power of the Christians has great potential with just a tad more involvement from the students and a little more agreement between the Christian groups.

A short history...

The many denominations now present in modern day Christianity are largely due to doctrinal and secular disagreements that began in the early 16th century, at the beginning of what is commonly known as the Reformation.

The middle ages were a time of growing unrest in the Church, and the people were not unified in belief because of geographical and political barriers. A Catholic priest, Martin Luther, started a movement to recover the purity of the Church.

At the time, the Church was trying to maintain some degree of order, and breach the barriers it faced; and so refused to recognise the new beliefs. Secular movements in various parts of Europe began to redefine Luther's ideas and form their own religions. As a priest, with concern only for spiritual and not

political matters, Luther did not object.

The major goals of the reformation were to promote simple Church structure, appreciation of the Scriptures and the importance of faith. As the sects grew apart, these things, have not and did not change. But different groups had different ways of interpreting these rules. Eventually, even the Catholic church began to redefine its rules under the influence of the Protestant faiths.

A common denominator is found in that all of the various types of Christianity still preach unity in One God and One Church. Indeed this is the permanent task of all. Whether it will be accomplished is a matter of conjecture, but it is noted that more and more inter-religious cooperation is being accomplished every day.

P J

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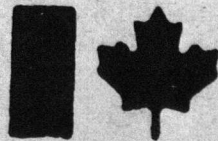
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