

Regaining our Voice in the Secular University

Trevor H. Cairney
New College
University of New South Wales

*To appear in St Mark's Theological Review Sept 2011 – Please don't reproduce
or distribute without permission*

1. The unhappiness of universities

Universities are very unhappy places today. Academics are despondent about the way universities are run, the weight of their teaching and administration, the level of funding, and their relationships with colleagues. Students also have complaints. It is too expensive, workloads are too high, they have trouble balancing study, part-time work and life, and they decry the absence or lack of availability of the academic staff. Administrative staff tend to complain about both the academics and students, and suggest that administration staff are over-worked and underpaid.

I want to suggest that somehow, today's universities have become disconnected from some of the key goals of scholarship – the search for wisdom, enlightenment, transformed lives, growth in intellectual, social and moral character, an interest in the well being of others, devotion, fellowship and collegiality. Furthermore, even Christians have lost this sense of connection with the very foundations of university education. And yet, from the very beginning of universities there was a connection with these key goals.

Most people agree that the earliest universities were in Italy, at Salerno (9th century) and Bologna (11th century). They typically started as scholastic guilds along the lines of tradesmen's guilds. Many centres of learning also grew up in leading cities during the Middle Ages from monastic and cathedral schools. By the end of the twelfth century a few of the leading schools claimed a higher level of importance. These great schools (*studia generalia*) were places that drew scholars from all over Europe.

In a very short time the mediaeval university had a curriculum that was based on four Primary faculties - Arts, Theology, Law, and Medicine. These early universities were communities of lively religious discussion and scholarship had its foundations in a monotheistic view of the world. Peter Hodgson in his helpful book 'God's Wisdom'ⁱ reminds us that people of ancient, medieval and early modern times saw teaching and education at all levels as shaped by religious objects like truth, goodness, beauty and holiness, and a religious power (e.g. God) or agents (e.g. the Torah) as the ultimate teacher. While in a secular society like Australia this is seen as inappropriate by many, one might question what we end up with in the absence of foundational beliefs shaped by an understanding of God.

In the absence of foundational religious belief, educators at times present foundational principles, 'conditions' and values, which are religious in nature. While at times they are presented as based on evidence, they are just as often reflective of specific beliefs. Almost 90 years ago Martin Buberⁱⁱ suggested that it should not surprise us that educators grapple for an inner religious impulse to be in the service of 'One' who can do things that they cannot. The hidden God he suggested is known in the "in between" of dialogical relationships that are at the heart of education.

We have a big problem in our universities, for no longer does faith have a place except on the periphery. Universities are places that consider only reason as relevant, and religion for many is in the realm of fantasy and mysticism. Yes many universities will tolerate a religious college or two like New Collegeⁱⁱⁱ and religious observance in private between consenting adults. Some will even see benefit in the pastoral care we offer to their students and even a small enclave concerned with religion, philosophy and ethics; but increasingly few would see benefit in the study of theology. Sadly, even universities and colleges around the world that were started by the church progressively became secular institutions with little to distinguish them from other universities except perhaps for their name.

It seems to be stating the obvious, but universities are not the same places as they were in the first half of the 20th century, they have undergone great change.

Key Changes in Higher Education 1960-2011

A growing specialisation of courses, faculties and scholars.

Universities have become bigger.

The university has become more like the early trade guilds with which its origins are linked turning out professionals, but necessarily scholars

Research is no longer seen as having a relationship to moral responsibility^{iv}

The judgement of quality in higher education has been corrupted by the need for research funding and the judgements of the status and worth

The rise of the fee-paying student has changed the face of universities, university colleges and the priorities of staff and administrators.

University education is now seen as something everyone must have - participation in higher education in Australia has risen from 5% to almost 40% in my lifetime.

General and liberal education subjects have declined or been lost in most courses.

University management has become corporatised with the consequence that money and wealth have had an undue influence on what matters in universities.^v

There has been a reduction in importance of the humanities in many universities and fracturing of traditional disciplines like history, English, languages, anthropology and increasingly specialised new fields is worrying.^{vi}

But the problem with our universities isn't just the sidelining of faith on campus, it is also the impoverished view of scholarship that dominates, the lack of community life, the failure to nurture the whole person and the growing irrelevance of academics to things that matter.

2. What is the foundation of the problems with the universities?

There have been many attempts by varied scholars and theologians to put their finger on the problem with universities. I want to mention just four potential foundations to the perceived problems.

a) The Incoherence of universities

In his book 'The State of the University', Stanley Hauerwas^{vii} considers the modern university with a particular focus on how academic knowledge has a relationship to the knowledge of God. He laments that theology is no longer seen as a proper subject in the

modern university and is criticised for presuppositional assumptions, something of which he suggests most other subjects within the university are guilty.

For Hauerwas one of the fundamental problems with the modern university is the incoherence that exists within them. In institutions that have more students and fields of study than ever before, there is an inability to offer a coherent narrative of what a university is and what it seeks to do. This Hauerwas suggests can be traced to a failure of the still oft stated desire for a liberal education to be reconciled with utilitarian courses and research endeavours.^{viii} History professor George Marsden^{ix}, goes even further to suggest that universities are now both intellectually and morally incoherent. This is not to suggest that universities are morally free zones. They monitor ethical practices in research and standards of occupational health and safety. They deplore racism, gender bias and all forms of discrimination and harassment and foster participation in many programs for the ‘common good’ and have numerous policies and committees to enshrine such things. But they are not places where students are encouraged to identify and understand moral agendas and issues, as well as their place in a civilised society.

The rise of a range of new professional departments in the 19th century was the beginning of the weakening of traditional liberal education. Nevertheless, the influence of Oxford and Cambridge continued and so universities were still expected to be the major liberalising agent in society. It was to the Humanities that we looked for the education of the ‘well-rounded’ individual. This simply reinforced a division between the sciences and the humanities. The sciences were increasingly seen as supplying inductive and deductive forms of rationality and liberal education slowly became almost a primer on pluralism. True liberal education has been lost.

What we have ended up with in the modern university is a confused range of narratives that seek to offer a coherent story of what each institution seeks to do. A hint of this can be read explicitly and implicitly from university websites. Most offer a muddled raft of disconnected utilitarian goals and general notions of social good. Some cite the importance of liberal education (rarely), but what we see in most mission statements is a focus on career outcomes, individual growth, the common good and excellence.

But the incoherence that exists within the University missions has many manifestations in the day-to-day life of the universities. We see it within specific disciplines, departments, faculties, across individual universities and we see it across learned academies. Sommerville argues^x that the lack of a central coherent narrative about purpose, reflects the fact that most universities and even their faculties rarely consider two questions: “What are universities for? And, “Who do they serve?” I will return to these questions later in this paper.

b) The cancer of relativism

In 1987 Philosopher Allan Bloom caused a sensation with his book ‘The Closing of the American Mind’^{xi} when he wrote as a frustrated academic of Jewish heritage influenced by the philosophy of Leo Strauss^{xii}. As an academic, Bloom had observed over successive years that his students increasingly arrived at university convinced that truth is relative. He wrote,

“They are unified only in their relativism and in their allegiance to equality...and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating. Openness – and relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and the various ways of life and kinds of human beings – is the great insight of our times”.

Much of his book is devoted to a rant about the limitations of America’s youth in the 1980s, who he suggested would not read, demonstrated few enthusiasms, lacked intellectual curiosity, had poor taste in music, modern films, and were far too liberal in their attitudes toward sex. While Bloom identifies an epistemological problem that still exists in many young people today, his generalizations are breathtaking. But he does rightly identify a failure of our times to consider with rigour the essence of humanity. He writes:

“The social sciences and the humanities represent the two responses to the crisis caused by the definitive ejection of man – or the residue of man extracted from, or superfluous to, body – from nature, and hence from the purview of natural science or natural philosophy, toward the end of the 18th century...The result has been two continuous and ill-sorted strands of thought about man...One must choose between them, and they end up in very different places.”^{xiii}

c) The impact of philosophical pluralism

The rise of relativism is of course related to pluralism. Don Carson, Research Professor of New Testament at ‘Trinity Evangelical Divinity School’, is one of a number of writers who has highlighted the challenges of pluralism, especially for the university and the Christian academic. In his book ‘The Gagging of God’^{xiv} he suggests that philosophical (or hermeneutic) pluralism^{xv} has made the life of the Christian on campus very difficult. By philosophical pluralism he means the view that no single explanatory system or view of reality can account for all the phenomena of life. No creed or religion can be superior to another; none has the right to declare itself as ‘true’ and others incorrect (or even inferior).

Philosophical pluralism has been informed by Deconstruction and Radical Hermeneutics and has given birth to postmodernism.^{xvi} Pluralism suggests that no ideological or religious claim can claim superiority or ‘rightness’ over another. As Carson wryly comments, “the only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism”.^{xvii}

At the base of philosophical pluralism are a number of epistemological challenges. Perhaps, most significantly, in drawing on radical views of hermeneutics it disputes the notion of absolute truths. Language and meaning are seen as socially constructed and hence what a text means is based neither in the text nor reality. Stephen Carter suggests that this fundamental claim has helped to create a “culture of disbelief”.^{xviii} This has impact not just on campuses but in churches as well, with surprisingly inconsistent beliefs being identified in many surveys. For example, many Christians in countries like America and Australia seem to accept that there is one true God, but will disagree that there is such a thing as absolute truth.

d) The anti-intellectualism of Evangelical Christians

Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, Mark A. Noll suggested almost 20 years ago that the Evangelical Christian church had headed down a path towards anti-intellectualism. He opens his challenging book 'The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind'^{xix} with the confronting words:

"The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind...They have nourished millions of believers in the simple verities of the gospel but have largely abandoned the universities, the arts, and other realms of 'high' culture'."

While many Christians found his book helpful and challenging, its central thesis has been contested by others. While some would agree with his most obvious point - that many Christians have failed to engage culturally and have spent even less time thinking theologically about their life in the world - some might question the justification for his thesis. Certainly, Creation Scientists and American dispensationalists would question his arguments, for they bear the brunt of much of his criticism.

Carl Trueman in his eBook 'The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind'^{xx} has sought to turn Noll's claims on their head by making another obvious point; there is no clear definition of what we mean by an Evangelical. For Trueman, the real scandal is that for too many Christians, there has been a disconnect between their intellectual and moral lives and their biblical and theological foundations. Trueman argues well that Christians who claim to be Evangelicals have failed to spend time grasping even the most basic elements of the faith and avoiding engaging their minds about issues that matter. God's nature and character, our personhood as his created beings, moral issues as basic as gender and sexuality, biblical authority and so on. Instead, they have avoided awkward discussions and distilled what they see as the essentials of being an evangelical to anyone who "sees the Bible as a jolly good book and that Jesus was a decent bloke".

Theologically I find myself in agreement on many things with Carl Trueman and I share his view that the term evangelical has become so loosely defined as to be unhelpful or useless for communicating with other people. But, I'm not prepared to so easily dismiss Noll's point. Both Trueman and Noll manage to put their finger on two aspects of the problem of the disappearing influence of Christians in public life. For me, this isn't a matter of academic vanity, or lamenting Christians becoming "less important, more marginal, and increasingly despised" (as he 'gently' puts it). I don't think the point can be won that easily. It is important for Christians to have a voice in all aspects of life and be able to offer a biblically informed view of the things they believe and the actions they take.

There is certainly some evidence in Australia to suggest that Evangelical Christians are less visible in the secular academies than they once were, but evangelicals have not abandoned university campuses, they have simply become 'outsiders' involved primarily in chaplaincy and student-based ministry. And those Christians left on university staff on campus have often made themselves small targets, keeping their religious views and often even their faith, well hidden. The Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES) with its ministry to university students has experienced phenomenal growth in the last 10 years. But the number of Christian staff on faculties

appears to have declined. This could be claimed of other professions and other social institutions.

Noll's point is not that theologians and theological colleges have shown no intellectual muscle, quite the opposite, but that evangelical Christians while placing a primacy on the serious study of the Bible, have spent much less time considering "sober analysis of nature, human society, and the arts." Evangelical Christians he suggests have neglected the 'life of the mind'. By this Noll means the effort to think like a Christian about the world, that is, to think within a Christian framework or worldview. His challenge is for the Christian to consider, critique, understand and think about the physical world, as well as the nature of human structures like government, education, the economy, the past, the aesthetic, and the nature of humanity.

Of course, Trueman might be right in his claim that the reason so many have become impotent as Christians in the academy and other places is simply that they have ignored the fundamentals of their faith and have failed to grasp the deep things of God.

We know that as Paul reminded the Corinthian Church, that we do not impart "...a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory"(1 Cor 2:6-7). No, with Paul we come in weakness, fear and trembling with knowledge of nothing "except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:1-5). But of course these deep things must change us and lead us to live our lives under God's authority. Lives that are informed and shaped by his Word to us, surrendered to his Son and lived sacrificially for his glory.

The formation of 'CASE'^{xxi} at my own college within a major secular university was motivated by the desire to encourage Christians to addresses the relationship between theology and other forms of knowledge and learning. We don't see our primary goal as evangelism, but we see intelligent application of biblical insights to all of life as foundational to evangelism.

Organizations like CASE have an important role to play. We are not alone; there have been other groups attempting such work for a long time. One which comes readily to mind is the 'Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology' (ISCAST). This organization is dedicated to exploring the interface between science and the Christian faith. Its membership consists of scientists, theologians and professionals with standing in their own fields and a commitment to the Christian faith.

Interestingly, St Mark's Theological Centre is one of the few Christian centres for the study of theology that is integrated fully within a university in Australia. St Mark's is to be commended for the way it has sought partnership. Of course, such partnerships are not without challenges and potential problems, but this is a topic for another paper.

3. The need of universities to become more relevant

In his book 'The Decline of the Secular University',^{xxii} C. John Sommerville suggests that the university today is being seen as less relevant in wider society, that academics are less visible as public intellectuals and that they have less influence on media and public policy than they once did. If this is so, what might be the reason for this loss of relevance? There are potentially many factors at work, I will mention just three.

a) The problem of the fact/value dichotomy

Sommerville argues that 'secularism' is at work in universities, and is a more dangerous "ideology that seeks to complete and enforce secularisation".^{xxiii} In essence he claims that "*the secular university is increasingly marginal to American society and, second, that this is a result of its secularism*". His views are perhaps too bleak, but the activities of Christians do seem to be located at the margins of campus life. People of Christian faith still exist on campuses and religious studies still exists at many, but religion and the views of its followers are seen as less and less relevant to anything that matters in the eyes of the world. For the individual, religious faith becomes corralled and isolated in the privacy of individual lives.

Sommerville asks us to ponder why rapid growth, increasing specialisation and internationalisation have been associated with a parallel loss of influence in some areas. He comments rather pointedly:

If universities are exercising cultural leadership, why do they seem more attentive to pop culture than to the high culture they were nurtured in? If universities are offering scientific leadership, why do they mainly hire their labs out to government and business, with the goal being patents? If they are offering social leadership, why don't professors dominate the talk shows that try to embody our "public opinion"? Is it true, as we often hear, that universities have become trade schools, offering the credentials that students prefer to a rounded education? Why are they only maintaining booths in the intellectual marketplace rather than providing leadership of any kind?

While Sommerville doesn't provide a lot of evidence, exaggerates the situation, smooths out the complexity that exists and speaks very much from an American perspective, his central thesis is worthy of consideration. The exclusion of religion or its domestication into increasingly rare theology departments and church-founded residential colleges has left universities with an inability to answer questions that matter.

We need to ask why our universities are failing to connect with our deepest interests. What does the average university professor or school have to say about what it is to be human? How do the increasingly large number of professional courses prepare graduates to deal with ethical issues? Can we continue to justify the fact/value dichotomy that has helped to expunge our universities of discussions about religious belief and values?

The line between fact and values, or put another way, reason and faith is not as clearly drawn as one might think. The unquestioning adherence to this dichotomy needs to be contested. Any Christian who is part of the academy needs to be prepared to engage in discussion and debate, rather than simply allowing concepts like belief, values, ethics and truth to be marginalised.

b) Abstraction as the enemy

Wendell Berry a 77 year old American Baptist, scholar, academic, public intellectual, prolific author of novels, short stories, poems, and essays has been a great critic of the modern university and suggests that abstraction is the “enemy wherever it is found”.^{xxiv} Berry argues that the public simply hasn’t a clue what we as academics are talking about. This isn’t just a problem for the Christian academic, it is the problem of all academics. Berry suggests that the loss of community cohesiveness is correlated to our loss of accountability in the use of language. Common assumptions are becoming uncommon through the development of specialisation. As a result, academics use language to empower themselves and disempower others.

Berry would suggest that such language fails to designate its object precisely, while seeking to communicate a level of objectivity by using specialist words (or application of words), and seeking to signal a lack of bias. In short, academics retreat into narrower and narrower sub-disciplines, understood by fewer and fewer people, with even less readers who can understand what on earth they are saying.

c) The pragmatic pursuit of success

I would like to suggest that there is at least one further reason that academics are less visible in the public sphere. There is a more pragmatic reason. For any academic to spend too much of their time speaking in the public space would be academic suicide. While universities appear to like it when their academics attract good media attention, they give little credit to it within assessments of scholarly output, workloads, promotion, etc.^{xxv} No successful and serious academic in most fields of study would give much value to media presence, but rather would concentrate on refereed publications in highly ranked journals, books by mainstream publishers and prestigious research grants.

Mark A. Noll^{xxvi} points out that even in the evangelical press there has been a reduction in serious intellectual contributions from Christians. He writes, “Throughout this century [the 20th]...the intellectual component in the evangelical press has shrivelled nearly to the vanishing point.” There seems to have been a ‘dumbing down’ of Christian publications as serious scholars fail to turn their attention to Christian publications. This was one of the reasons that my College created the apologetic magazine *Case* in an attempt to encourage Christian academics to consider their scholarship in the light of their faith and biblical teaching.^{xxvii}

4. The challenge to create alternative cultures and structures

I’ve said a lot about the limitations and problems of universities, but how Christians can make a greater contribution to their improvement and regain their voice? Universities are still the primary place where new knowledge is created, new things are discovered, big ideas are expressed, discussed and critiqued, and where the brightest and most influential people gather. Community leaders are largely educated in the university, future leaders gain social capital and networks of relationships, and many public organizations and groups owe their genesis to the university. Christians must be an effective presence and voice being used by God as redemptive agents, not just as visiting evangelists, but also as scholars and leaders from the inside.

Christians can be a voice in encouraging universities to consider things that are important. We need, for example, a more open discussion about what it means to be human, and the place of values, ethics and morality in any civilised society. All Christian academics should heed the call of Professor Kevin Vanhoozer to apply our theology to everyday life, which of course includes our scholarship.^{xxviii} As Christian academics we need to be good at reading culture and contributing to the shaping of culture.

Recent decades have seen matters of faith and belief driven underground and seen as irrelevant to learning and life. Nothing could be further from the truth. We need university staff members to consider how their faith relates to personhood and how the things they believe influence all areas of life. Christians need to be prepared to challenge the fact/value dichotomy that Sommerville notes is so prevalent^{xxix}. As well, we also need to argue more effectively that faith and reason have a relationship within the university.

There is freedom as to how we might make a difference, but being unidentifiable as a person of Christian faith isn't one of them either. Someone who has lots to say about the latter is Professor of Religion James Davison Hunter. In his book *'To Change the World: The Irony, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World'*,^{xxx} he offers insights that can help us to rethink how we as Christians view the University and our presence within it.

He writes:

"I contend that the dominant ways of thinking about culture and cultural change are flawed, for they are based upon both specious social science and problematic theology. In brief, the model upon which various strategies are based not only does not work, but it cannot work."

Hunter begins in his first essay by offering a critique of the assumptions that have driven Christian public engagement and action. He looks first at culture and methodically demonstrates the errors inherent in how people view culture.

The essence of culture he suggests is not found simply in the 'hearts and minds of individuals', that is, in what are called 'values' or worldviews. Efforts to change values, worldviews and impart great ideas of what is real and true, will fail to change the world.

He argues that at every point of significant cultural change there is "rich patronage" that resources intellectuals and educators who within their networks "...imagine, theorize and propagate an alternative culture." Overlapping networks of leaders and resources come together and give a critical mass to the ideals, practices and goods of an alternative culture. Universities are key sites where intellectuals gather.

Hunter also helpfully reminds us that at key moments in history new institutions are created that give form to culture, enact it and give expression to it.

Hunter is at pains to stress that while he believes evangelism and social reform are priorities for the church, he is saying that churches and individuals should pursue right agendas to make Christ known in word and deed, but they will fail if they try to do this from a position of isolation on the periphery of key networks and institutions.

He offers an alternative way for Christians to view how they should spend their lives for God at universities, and in fact, anywhere. He suggests the embracing of a different paradigm to engage with the world, something he calls “faithful presence”. This is an ideal of Christian practice that is both individual and institutional.

His stress on networks and in particular the penetration of elite networks, would seem timely to me as I observe many Christians fleeing the professions, schools and universities to train for full-time ministry. Significant cultural change requires some Christians to present and active in universities.

In the space that I have left I want to suggest four ways that Christians who are academics can make a more significant contribution to university life and in the process regain their voices.

a) Arguing for the strengthening of scholarship within the university

The place to start is to adopt a broad view of scholarship. The work of American educator Professor Ernest Boyer (former Chancellor of the State University of New York) has shown that there is a deep receptivity to the idea that the university has drifted too far away from its traditional notions of scholarship. Boyer reminded us that colleges from which the modern secular universities emerged were designed to “..educate and morally uplift the coming generation”.^{xxx1} Universities were about preparation for life and every academic saw teaching as the first priority, service as the second, and research as the third. Professors were employed as much for their religious commitment as for their scholarship. While I am not suggesting that we should go back to the practices of these times, they offer an interesting indicator of just how far we have moved.

Boyer presented us with a framework for the restoration of scholarship in all its richness. His suggested four scholarships are, in effect, an apologetic framework that highlights that university scholarship has become impoverished. Scholarship he argues is not a unitary phenomenon, but rather four different but related forms that vary in emphasis for individual academics and in fact institutions.

The *scholarship of discovery* is closest to what we understand as ‘research’. This is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake through disciplined investigation that might take a variety of forms.

The *scholarship of integration* involves the academic in an effort to make connections between related and disparate knowledge as well as connections across disciplines. It requires interpretation as the scholar accommodates his or her work into the work of others.

The *scholarship of application* requires the scholar to ask how knowledge can be applied to consequential problems? As well, it often asks the question does a specific social problem serve as a justifiable agenda for further investigation. New discoveries can arise out of the very act of application.

The *scholarship of teaching* is where the knowledge of the teacher becomes of consequence as it is understood by others. It educates and at the same time ‘entices’ other

scholars to the teacher's knowledge. Teaching is highly dynamic building bridge between the teacher's knowledge and the understanding of the student.

The tragedy of the modern university is that increasingly, status is aligned with the 'scholarship of discovery' and teaching is seen as an unfortunate interruption to all that matters for many academics. This narrowing of what is valued is symptomatic of the loss of the university's moral and religious foundations. As David Kelsey suggests, since the Enlightenment, the two models of education that have been the yardstick for quality education, have been 'paideia' (or 'Bildung' as he refers to it in the German) with its emphasis on character formation, self discovery, contemplation, a search for truth, values and meaning, and second, 'Wissenschaft' or science which stresses observation and sees that there can be no truth claims without research and evidence. Each of these he suggests presuppose "two different, and in some respects incompatible, anthropologies".^{xxxii} We see these different anthropologies at work daily in clashes over ideology, method and practice in our schools and universities.

Academic's disciplinary knowledge and scholarship can be informed by their faith. While on the surface, this might seem more difficult for the pure mathematician than the literary theorist; this is not necessarily the case. Our view of the world informed by our faith does have a relationship to our scholarship and needs to be given public voice. How this is done will need to be worked out by each academic, but we cannot continue to allow our faith to be corralled at a distance from our scholarship in all of its varied forms.

b) Challenging academics to move their faith out of the private space

In his book 'The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship'^{xxxiii} George Marsden argues that American higher education needs to be more open to expressions of faith. He points out that while other elements like race, identity and gender, are seen as having a relationship to one's ideas, religious belief (especially Christian belief) is dismissed as irrelevant and even antithetical to scholarship.

Marsden insists that scholars have religious and intellectual obligations not to treat as neutral their religious beliefs. Beliefs, he contends, make a difference to one's scholarship and have relevance for campus life. The Christian should be prepared to argue against some of the prevailing ideologies that remain unquestioned, such as naturalistic reductionism and moral relativism. Contemporary university life Marsden argues is hollow at its core and needs people of faith to speak up.

If we are to heed the call of Marsden, we will need to adopt a far more 'humble apologetic'. In his book 'Humble Apologetics: Defending the faith today'^{xxxiv} John G. Stackhouse describes a new mode of engagement:

"...with a different voice and in a different posture. Our apologetics must be humble."

This is an apologetic that we can witness in Acts 17 when Paul presents the gospel to the Athenians. Not through a moral lesson, nor through denigration or deconstruction of their culture. Rather, he laid out a biblical worldview framework then presented the evidence for the gospel of Christ. Paul afforded the Athenians every respect, but he did not accept that their views of the world had the same authority; instead he presented what he saw as the truth because he

knew that the truth would set them free (John 8:31-32). We must engage the culture and seek to contribute to its richness with Christian voices.

This won't be easy, but we need to encourage one another to think about the relationship of our faith to our work. This might require us to seek out one another for discussion, fellowship and prayer. There are many good examples of Christians who have attempted to form groups on campus. The work of Dr Lewis Jones and his program Resource for Evangelising Academics and Postgraduates (REAP)^{xxxv} is an initiative of the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES) is one example of practical efforts to do just this. Similarly, the Christian Medical and Dental Fellowship of Australia^{xxxvi} is another active group of practitioners and campus-based researchers and academics.

The Centre for Apologetic Scholarship and Education (CASE) that I began at UNSW has also tried to encourage academics from varied fields to consider how their faith informs and has a relationship to their faith. We publish a quarterly periodical, plan seminars and conferences and provide a network and home for Christian academics. Activities of this type can help to encourage Christian academics to consider and apply their faith to their scholarship and work.

c) Creating new structures and cultures

CASE is an example of the creation of a new structure within a university that seeks to make a different contribution to campus life. There are a number of other examples of centres and programs across the country that seek to do something similar. Sadly, most of these initiatives are small and lack resources.

Residential colleges are one structure within the university that do have resources and that have survived the centuries. Hence, they have special potential. Marsden and others have similarly suggested that residential colleges offer a vital foothold on university campuses that permit alternative forms of scholarship to be promoted. However, many of those with religious foundations will need to reinvent themselves if they are to have any impact. Sadly, many today are a remnant of a different age and seem almost out of place in the secular university.

But there is potential to increase the reach of those Christian colleges that are not simply secular institutions. New College is a good example. It is seen as a welcome and important part of campus life. It is highly regarded because of the standard of pastoral care and academic support and the character and achievements of its residents. New College is bound by the policies of the secular university, but is able to exercise influence on policies that give shape to the university, particularly as these relate to campus life. When staff have a personal affiliation with the university, it becomes possible to contribute more fully to teaching, research and scholarship.

The expansion of New College in recent years has also been an attempt to increase its impact on campus life. The New College Village^{xxxvii} was conceived as a different type of postgraduate community and has more than doubled the size of the institution. In 2009 we opened our doors to 315 postgraduates and upper year undergraduates from 55 nations. What we have sought to do is create a community that is founded and shaped by Christian faith and values. To date, the experiment has been very encouraging with community life developing and the reputation of the NCV spreading.

Places like New College make tangible the fact that faith and communities shaped by faith do have a place on campus. Ensuring that they are not simply tokenistic enclaves on the fringes of a campus is the greatest challenge.

d) Strengthening traditional disciplines where Christians still have a voice

One of the greatest disappointments for me is that often our best theological colleges while co-located with universities have little direct contact with the campus. One exception is Trinity College in Melbourne where the college is responsible for the University's entire foundation studies program. Where universities have retained departments of religion and theology the ability of Christians to integrate faith and scholarship has varied. In some cases, there are no Christians present in such departments, while in others Christians have a vital home for their scholarship.

There are many opportunities for Christians to make significant contributions to departments of religion, theology, history, philosophy and anthropology. Sadly, it is becoming rare that you can find departments with these names, but many universities retain good programs in some or all of these disciplines. My hope is that we will see more Christians working as academics in such departments in the future. But there is no reason to stop at these disciplines; there are fewer Christians in education, linguistics, languages, law and the arts than ever before.

5. The continuing quest for relevance and a 'voice'

In this paper I have argued that universities have lost their way. Rarely do university administrators consider Sommerville's two key questions 'What are universities for?' And, 'Who do they serve?'^{xxxviii} Not surprisingly they lack intellectual and moral coherence and academics of faith struggle to find an authentic voice to which there is an audience. I have discussed some strategies that might make a difference, but there is one final point already raised in discussing James Hunter Davison's^{xxxix} call to 'faithful presence', that must not be forgotten. One of the most powerful apologetics that Christians have is the Christian life itself. David Hohne^{xl} writing in *Case* magazine commented that:

"...Apologetics ought to be as much a consideration of our attitudes and behaviours as it is the manner in which we might verbally defend the rationality of the Christian message."

With the words of the Apostle Peter as his inspiration, Hohne's point is that our conduct among non-Christians should draw attention to itself because of its beauty:

12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (1 Peter 2:12)

In environments that can be so ugly and dominated by self-serving individuals, the Christian has the opportunity in doing his or her work as a scholar not only to witness with words but also with lives. As Paul taught the Romans 12, we are to be present our bodies "as living sacrifices". This of course includes our minds! We are to apply the minds that God has given us to all fields of scholarship and as we do so we are to live on campus in ways that are 'worthy of the gospel of Christ' (Philippians 1:27). The challenges for the

Christian scholars are great, but the need for a better integration of faith and scholarship is imperative. Let us spur one another on as we tackle this important task.

-
- ⁱ Peter C. Hodgson (1999). *God's Wisdom: Toward a Theology of Education*, Louisville (Kentucky): Westminster John Knox Press.
- ⁱⁱ Martin Buber (1926). In R. Gregor Smith (translator), *Between Man and Man*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.
- ⁱⁱⁱ New College is a residential college at the University of New South Wales, the Sydney Diocese of the Anglican Church founded it in 1969, and it now serves 565 residents who are students of UNSW.
- ^{iv} Stanley Fish (2003). *Chronicle Careers*, January 23, May 16 and July 11.
- ^v C. John Sommerville (2009) offers an interesting discussion of the growing influence of corporate organization and operation of universities in *Religious Ideas for Secular Universities*, Cambridge (UK): W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- ^{vi} Stanley Hauerwas (2007). *The State of the University: Academic knowledges and the knowledge of God*, Malden (MA): Blackwell Publishing.
- ^{vii} See Hauerwas (2007)
- ^{viii} Hauerwas cites Laurence Veysey's views on the emergence of the modern university to argue that after the American Civil war higher education became increasingly vocational relevance and the making of citizens for a democratic nation. See Laurence Veysey (1965). *The Emergence of the American University*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ^{ix} George M. Marsden (1995). *Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- ^x See Sommerville (2009), pp 76-78.
- ^{xi} Allan Bloom (1987). *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- ^{xii} Leo Strauss (20.9.1899 – 18.10.1973) was a political philosopher who specialized in classical political philosophy.
- ^{xiii} See Bloom (1987), pp 25-26
- ^{xiv} Don Carson (1996). *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, Grand Rapids (Mich.): Zondervan Publishing House, p.18.
- ^{xv} This is to be contrasted with empirical pluralism; that there is a growing diversity of virtually all societies in culture, race, ethnicity, language and religion. The latter can be opposed, but cannot be denied.
- ^{xvi} It is important to note that 'postmodernism' is impossible to 'neatly' define and can mean many different things. Here I am assuming it to be the critique of and movement away from modernism, supported by a set of critical and rhetorical practices that have the purpose of challenging the notion of objective truth and cultural narratives or meta-narratives that seek to defend truth. It is important to note that Postmodernism isn't all bad. See Carson (1996) for an excellent introduction to the topic, pp 96-102.
- ^{xvii} See Carson (1996), p.19
- ^{xviii} Stephen L. Carter (1993). *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*. New York: Basic Books.
- ^{xix} Mark A. Noll (1994). *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Grand Rapids (Mich.): Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- ^{xx} Carl Trueman (2011). *The Real Scandal of The Evangelical Mind*. Moody Publishers, eBook.
- ^{xxi} CASE is the Centre for Apologetic Scholarship and Education that I founded in 2002 at New College (UNSW). More information can be found at www.case.edu.au
- ^{xxii} C. John Sommerville (2006). *The Decline of the Secular University*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ^{xxiii} See Sommerville (2006), *Ibid*, p.11
- ^{xxiv} I'm thankful to Stanley Hauerwas for making me aware of the work of Wendell Berry, particularly his work *Standing by Words* (1983), Washington DC: Shoemaker and Hoard.
- ^{xxv} This is a point that Ernest Boyer (1990) also makes very briefly in his well-known work, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., p. 12.
- ^{xxvi} Mark A. Noll (1994). *The Scandal of the American Mind*, Grand Rapids (Mich.): Eerdmans Publishing Company, p.15.
- ^{xxvii} You can find out more about *Case* magazine on the CASE website www.case.edu.au
- ^{xxviii} Kevin Vanhoozer (2007). 'What is Everyday Theology'. In K.J. Vanhoozer, C.A. Anderson & M.J. Sleasman (Eds), *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*. Grand Rapids (Mich.): Baker Academic.

-
- ^{xxix} See Sommerville (2006), pp 39-46
- ^{xxx} James D. Hunter (2010). *To Change the World: The irony, tragedy, & possibility of Christianity in the late modern world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ^{xxxi} Ernest L. Boyer (1990). *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., p.4
- ^{xxxii} David Kelsey (1993). *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*. Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- ^{xxxiii} George Marsden (1997). *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- ^{xxxiv} John G. Stackhouse (2002). *Humble apologetics: defending the faith today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ^{xxxv} <http://www.afes.org.au/sydney/reap?sessid=00e4b168aed701cfd1d73025eb9b4c5>
- ^{xxxvi} <http://www.cmdfa.org.au/>
- ^{xxxvii} For more information see <http://www.ncv.unsw.edu.au>
- ^{xxxviii} See Sommerville (2009), pp 76-78.
- ^{xxxix} James D. Hunter (2010).
- ^{xl} David Hohne (2009). Becoming an Apologetic Person, *Case*, 20, pp 4-9