



WORD & WORLD
WHAT IS A UNIVERSITY FOR?
ISSUE 7 · JULY 2019

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INTRODUCING WORD & WORLD

John Stott, pastor, teacher, and friend to many in IFES, recommends “double listening, listening to the word of God and listening to the voices of the modern world, its cries of anger, pain, and despair.” Inspired by this, *Word & World* has served as the title for sessions at IFES World Assembly since 2003.

The gospel attributed to another John places Word and World at its heart. This gospel draws on an Old Testament portrayal of God as one who “words”, who gives words to Israel, of the word as shining light and as sent to heal. In John, **the Word** was in the beginning, with God, and was God; this Word became flesh, the stuff of this world. Jesus Christ is this Word, and he speaks a word which when heard and believed gives never-ending life. In John, **the World** is what it is only through this Word. The World came into being through the Word, and the World is saved through the Word. The Father sent the Word into the World so that Jesus could tell the World the truth: that it lacked righteousness and justice and that it deserved judgment. The Father sent the Word into the World as an act of love, saving the World and bringing it health and wholeness. The Word’s gift to the World is life in all its fullness.

To listen to both Word and World, then, is to see the World as coming into being through the Word, as crying out in despair and alienation, and as made wholly alive through the Word. This listening is what *Word & World* seeks to enable.

IFES Word & World builds on the foundations of earlier publications like the *IFES Journal* and the *IFES Review*. We publish two issues each year, drawing in voices from around the world to address a contemporary issue. *Word & World* seeks to enable those involved in student ministry to be nourished by the gospel and attentive to the world that students inhabit.

More issues can be found online at: ifesworld.org/journal

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THE MAY 2019 ISSUE: WHAT IS A UNIVERSITY FOR?

What is a university for? I heard Christian students, academics, and staff workers from around Latin America explore this question at an IFES consultation in Panama on big issues in the university. They asked:

Should universities aim to provide a public service, or should they aim to be a factory producing professionals?

Can universities dedicate themselves to discovering knowledge in a local context, or will they simply transmit knowledge from the Global North?

How can university members act ethically and be formed as moral beings?

When students struggle, how can university communities support them?

And how can worshippers of the God who creates and restores the world contribute to university life?

The Latin Americans I heard from recognized the challenges that faced them in seeking to make universities places promoting social good, sharing knowledge, and building up students intellectually and morally. Still, they had hope that universities remain places to praise God through learning and supporting fellow learners.

These questions about the purpose of a university are reflected in the articles in this issue of *IFES Word & World*.

As you reflect on the struggles and fears of members of universities today, may you be equipped to contribute to university life with love and hope.



Robert W Heimburger, Editor
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IN THIS ISSUE:

Esther Phua, a recent philosophy graduate from Singapore, offers snapshots from life as a university student. She tells about times to ask questions, to discover, to make friends, to grow up, to relate to family, and to grow in faith. She also tells about times to deal with shame, suicide, and difficult family relationships. Recognizing the fears that students face, she says that universities are places to try out ideas about changing the world, places to dream, thanks to the Word that became flesh.

Brian A. Williams, theologian and dean of an honours college in the United States, looks to the tradition of Christian humanism to frame what universities are for, a tradition that has taught him to value every art and science as a gift from God made available to students to develop their full humanity. He writes that this kind of education starts with wonder and amazement. It goes on to learn, not using of knowledge for selfish aims but learning as a grateful and humble response to the gift of knowledge. Such learning equips university members to love their near and distant neighbours. Knowing ultimately leads us to praise God, Williams writes.

Santa J. Ono, president of a university in Canada and a medical scientist, thinks that the best universities are places where people from different backgrounds come together for open dialogue about questions, exploring mysteries, developing new ideas, and shaping people who can create a better world. He relates his story of coming to Christian faith as a student, a faith that he says disposes him to serve people of any or no faith as a leader of an educational institution.

Jeremiah Amai Veino Duomai, a philosopher from India, responds to the shrinking space allowed in Indian universities for evaluating and criticizing government policies. He argues that free thought in universities is not only important for the health of a democracy. It is also an important way to speak out against what the Scriptures call "the powers that be," fighting a temptation to worship political leaders or deify nations.

Ross H. McKenzie, a physicist from Australia, says that in a time of crisis about the purpose of universities, Christian theology has a contribution to make. The approach of turning universities into businesses and letting them be guided by free market forces predominates today, he says. And while some Christians hold to a vision for educational institutions as sectarian, he advances a Christian theological vision for the modern secular and multicultural university. McKenzie believes that the categories of creation, fall, redemption, and renewal can both explain and shape what counts as good activity in the university.



WE BECOME DREAMERS

Snapshots from the life of a university student

Esther Phua

“What is a university for?” Where I live, people rarely ask this question. If they do, the answer is practical. Getting a university education is the way to a well-paying job and therefore the way to a comfortable life, a good life. But there is a quiet persistent thought at the back of my head—surely, there is more?

I sit in what was my first philosophy lecture ever. The lecture hall is large and surprisingly filled. This module is popular, because it has a multiple-choice question paper for exams. Almost unheard of. Most people take it to fulfil university requirements. I take it out of interest. I zone out a little as he introduces the concept of metaphysics. I look around and most people are on their devices. Shame, he’s quite interesting and very bright. Then he says something that will shape not just my philosophy, but my theology for a long time to come. “You apply your mind! Unrelentingly ask difficult questions, pursue truth, and then sometimes you reach a point when you realise, there are mysteries in this world. There you sit down in quiet, and marvel.”

“So, I heard you want to serve in the Christian student’s group? Why? What do you see in the university?” A senior sat me down for coffee and began like this. I confess I was slightly caught off guard. I look into the distance and probed my mind. I explored how I felt and took a look at what I thought.

I looked at her.

“The potential.”

She raised her eyebrows.

“The potential to shape hearts, and to shape thought. The potential excites me greatly.”

I did not know then, but I would go on to give the next eight years to serving students in the university.

"I hate the library," I mutter to my friend, as we walked into the heavily populated yet unnaturally quiet place, our arms full of books and our laptops.

"Why? I thought you like quiet, and you like the smell of books?"

"It's coerced. It's oppressive." I grumpily reply.

We make our way down to the study tables, where we see some friends. I pass shelves and shelves of books I had always ignored. A title at the corner of my eye catches my attention. I ignore it and go to sit by the window. I gloomily look out at the people crossing and hurrying to classes and other things. Perhaps it is the light, or maybe the time of day, but Proustian-like, I am transported to high school again.

It was after class, we were hanging out when we see a teacher, Mr. H. He joined us and asked if we're ready for university, I shrugged and mumbled something about no expectations. He looked into the distance and then cheerfully said, "I never went for my classes! I spent all my time in the library. I tried to read everything I could, on anything. Especially things outside my discipline," He lowered his voice, "and try to download as many online journal articles as you can, you're never going to get such access again."

I get up and go to get that title that caught my eye. It read: *Between Declarations and Dreams: Art of Southeast Asia*.

I am an introvert. I enjoy attending lectures on my own. There was a boy who seemed intent on following me wherever I went. It would ordinarily seem creepy except he was rather charming, generous and kind, and I knew him from the Christian group on campus. He inundated me with questions. What tutorial slot did you choose? Why do you go to lectures by yourself? Do you want to be in the same group for the Plato assignment? Have you read this philosopher called Martin Buber? I really like Heidegger. What do you think of Confucian ethics?

I began to understand that there are people in the world who are different from me, and I began to take joy in meeting all sorts of people. One thing this particular friend would teach me was to always read people as charitably as you possibly can. I would often cheekily add, before taking down the strongest formulation of their argument. This friend would also show me that all of us are broken, but there is power in a love that meets a hurting life. It is a power to transform, a power to make new. When I came to face my own brokenness, it was having observed his life that I found renewed faith in a God who makes beautiful things out of us. The bread was broken, and then it multiplied and nourished. The alabaster jar was broken so the scent and its beauty could come forth. Christ himself was broken, that we might behold! God is making all things new.

PS: I married him.

It is dark, and I am about to walk through the empty cafeteria to go home when I spot a friend. The few stragglers finishing their dinner had long gone; she had been sitting there and doing her work. I head over to sit with her. We chat about niceties before the conversations takes a significantly deeper turn.

"It's not pornography per se, but it's just as bad I reckon. I'm struggling with erotic literature. It doesn't help that sometimes I have to study it in this discipline. Can Christ redeem this? Or even literature as a field? I don't know. It's hard. And I don't know enough theology maybe."

"Maybe. Our theology got stuck in Sunday school, even though our studies move on to university. I don't know why it doesn't grow too."

We sit in silence for a while.

"Could you pray for me? There is so much shame I feel I can't go to God."

"Can I sing?"

"Sure."

The night got heavier, and we spend the rest of that evening in an empty cafeteria, singing light.

"Go for it!" I was slightly surprised. I was young and female and for some reason I really did not think this committee was going to take me seriously. But here was my chairperson encouraging me to do it.

"You're the dreamer kind. So ... go and try it out!"

It was here that I discovered that university was a place I could test my ideas to change the world. A large sandbox if you will. Because in the university, we all still believe we can change the world, like children believe in magic. What makes it all the more magical, is we *also* believe we can actually do it!

I was fifteen minutes late. I walked quickly to the café where we had arranged to meet. My step slowed down, and I paused to say a short prayer. I had rescheduled her twice now. Each time, a quiet guilt and resigned desperation lay beneath a growing anxiety at the prospect of meeting. I had not said anything, yet like grace, she reached out first. Her question was gentle and affirming, and I felt the anxiety dissipate as it was met with compassion. It felt like it was okay to say that I was not up to meeting. Today though, was the day. I felt just enough courage to meet the world. Well, in this case, to meet a friend.

We sit quietly around the table with our professor and tutor. My professor gets up as the mother comes over. "Mrs T, I am very sorry for your loss." I am feeling rather subdued as they speak in hushed tones. We all had lunch last week together and he had seemed fine. It felt surreal to be at his funeral. His sister comes over, and we express our condolences. No one saw it coming. He kept to himself. What caused it? No one really knows. My professor reminds us of all the counselling services the university provides. A classmate mentions he had been devastated about letting down his group in the video game that he played. I discreetly search him on Facebook and scrolled. Perhaps it had been too much.

I sent out a text, "Hey R, could I crash your room tonight? Long story." I packed my bag and left my home quietly and angrily. I had honestly never done anything of this sort, but tonight I was so very angry. On hindsight I think perhaps the part of my brain regulating self-control or emotions had not been fully formed but in that moment of anger, the only option I could see was to leave. I walked to the university and to my friend's campus dormitory, calming down in the process. I knew the facts, but it did not help regulate my emotion. I knew it was a stage of life where I am discovering who I am in relation to my parents and my family of origin, but no one said the friction would be so heated. For that matter, I'm finding out who I am in response to all these new exciting voices and encounters. Who am I? What am I here to do? Who am I in relation to my family? My nationality? My country? My discipline? When I leave, do I return, and when I return how is it that I am so changed, and they are so changed, yet so much is unchanged, and I am not sure where or what home is anymore? Does God hear this? Does God care? Who is God? What do I believe?

"Hey, Esther." Her voice gently broke my flurry of thoughts. "I just have a deadline tonight so I'll be working here but the toilet is down the corridor and you can use my stuff." I nodded and obediently went to shower. My angry hot mind was calmed and in that little room, I felt safe. Safe

to be myself and safe to not be perfect. I remember thinking as I fell asleep, friends are safe places to which we can run to. I have friends.

I would eventually grow to learn how to interact in healthy and helpful ways with my family and regulate my emotions. They can be them, and I can be me, and we can still be a family.

I grieved when I left the university. Seated in a carpark, between sobs I told God and the car parked in front of me, that this feels like an awful, awful breakup. How could I leave a place I had come to love so dearly? It can't be the geographical space, was it the people? The intellectual rigour and exploration? The freedom to question and be questioned? The safety of knowing that falling and failing was okay? To have come to discover that I am loved, there exist people who see worth in me, and I do have a role to play in this weird, wide world. It was all of those and more, surely.

We're scared. Terrified of what is to come, expressed in plans and doing as much as we can but there is always that quiet uncertainty, or that first rejection and failure. The fear of losing someone or something we love. Losing hope in a dream. Afraid of not knowing. Not being in control. Afraid that no one is for us and afraid that when we are finally put on our two feet we fall and don't make it.

But we're also excited. University presents a place of new adventure. New ideas, new people, new lands. New worldviews that challenge and excite. A world that is not as it is, but as it could be. We become, as it were, dreamers.

To the fear, and to the dreams, we hear it said – the Word becomes flesh and dwells amongst us. Immanuel. Christ with us. Further, we hear, and we have hope – behold, I am making all things new. What a glorious, difficult mystery.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Esther Phua read philosophy in the National University of Singapore and received a Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies at the Biblical Graduate School of Theology. She is also a member of the IFES Board as a student representative. She can be contacted at phua.esther@icloud.com.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do people around you ask what the university is for?
2. What do people at your university (or a university near you) think the purpose of a university is?
3. What aspect of your university (or home or country) needs to hear the news that Christ was made flesh and is with us?
4. What aspect of your university (or home or country) needs to hear that God is making all things new?
5. What do you dream of the university being?

FURTHER READING

- *Why Study? Exploring the Face of God in the Academy*. Singapore: FES, 2017.

- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.



TO WONDER, LEARN, AND LOVE

Christian humanism in the modern university

Brian A. Williams

The university is a convoluted, maddening, and contentious cultural institution that praises novelty, promotes rivalry, and rewards self-promotion. It always has been. It's also a glorious, inspiring, and beneficial institution that nurtures human flourishing, equips people to serve their neighbors, and gives them more to worship God with. It always has been. Apocalyptic laments about the university's irrelevance, decadence, and dis-integration constitute a genre as old as the 800-year-old institution itself. But the hoary pastime of university-worry reminds us that the university is a cultural creation. No platonic form of the university exists at the top of either Diotima's or Jacob's ladder. Instead, it is a perennially contested precious endowment of medieval Christian culture shaped by social, political, and economic forces. Even so, there are enduring Christian traditions that can guide how we relate to the university and the knowledge it pursues. In what follows, I explore the basic contours of one I call "didascalical Christian humanism."

Education and academic institutions are a personal and professional interest of mine. I remember struggling in high school to understand and justify my intellectual appetite for history, numbers, and literature. And I couldn't. No one had offered me a sufficient framework and I didn't think to ask anyone, even though I was the son of a college professor and had inhabited the world of academic institutions my entire life. After high school, I earned five degrees in three countries, and eventually became an educator, theologian, ethicist, dean of a "great books" honors college, and director of a unique Master's program for teachers. So the rhythms of the academy are mine and always have been. The desk I'm sitting at is the boyhood desk I inherited from my grandmother, and though I haven't always known what to do with it, I've never strayed far from it.

Among the books currently strewn across it are four about the contemporary university. The title of one raises the important question, "What are universities for?" but fails to offer an entirely coherent and compelling answer. The other three take up the question, but supply competing answers. One contends that universities should produce ideal citizens for liberal democracies who are cosmopolitan, tolerant, and suspicious of tradition, trained to exclude religious convictions from the public sphere but equipped to mobilize political power for liberative ends. The next book argues that higher education should eschew the muddy world of politics and morals in order to

produce disciplinary specialists who pursue idiosyncratic interests in the ivory towers of the research university. The final book subjects education to a strict cost-benefit analysis, insisting that education should create skilled workers for the market economy who can maximize their potential for gainful employment and wealth creation. I like to imagine these books barking at each other after I leave my office each evening.

For some historical perspective, I could invite a shelf of books whose pages substantiate my assertion that academic institutions are malleable and precious endowments of human culture. These trace the history of education from ancient Greece through the Medieval and Renaissance eras to the rise of the university and beyond. They recount the beginning of monastic and cathedral schools, the rise of independent scholars, the gathering of scholars in cathedral and royal cities, and their unionizing to found a new guild or “corporation” called the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*. Woven throughout are anecdotes about personal conflicts, licentious students, violent riots, power struggles, and the growth of all the quirky customs, traditions, and titles we associate with the university. These also narrate the births of countless ideas, discoveries, and inventions that altered the way human persons experience themselves and the world. Besides being entertaining reading, this long story convincingly demonstrates that education matters because it informs how people and their cultures think, love, and live.

On the individual level, consider that most people who complete university will have spent at least sixteen years deeply embedded in a nexus of academic customs, curricula, and pedagogy. And they will not be the same for it. I often tell students trying to decide what college or university to attend that their first question should be, “Who do I want to become, and will this college or university help me become that kind of person?” Because many of them are Christians called to love their neighbors and serve the common good, I also tell them that they are responsible to the 28- and 48- and 68-year-old versions of themselves and to the families, businesses, and cultures they will help create along the way. And so where they study and who they become matters.

The teacher I learned much of this from was the unassuming 16th century university professor and theologian named Philip Melanchthon. He was colleague to Martin Luther, author of the Augsburg Confession, and Professor of Greek language and literature at the University of Wittenberg from 1518 to 1560. I have no less than two portraits of him in my office. Upon arriving in Wittenberg at age 21, he delivered an address entitled “On Improving the Studies of Youth.” In this and subsequent speeches, he laments that contemporary universities have abandoned the Muses, neglected the common good, and hindered students’ full intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and spiritual formation. Instead, students were enamored with political power, pursued obscure and idiosyncratic topics, and chased after “mean and gainful arts” that promised wealth. This left them arrogant and shallow, and the church, state, and society impoverished. Melanchthon feared that if the university limited itself to these three goals—political clout, disciplinary specialization, and wealth accumulation—it was risking the *humanum*, or humanity, of its students and the humane cultures they could create. Clearly, the educational debate happening on my desk is nothing new. Melanchthon then spent his life teaching students in his home, lecturing at the university, writing commentaries, producing textbooks, advocating before town councils, eventually founding or reforming at least seventy schools and universities, while sending his students to teach throughout Europe. It’s no surprise that contemporaries referred to him as “the father of most educated men” and the *Praeceptor Germaniae*, or “teacher of Germany.”

Unlike many educators, Melanchthon was attentive to whole persons, that is, to the integrated intellectual, moral, aesthetic, spiritual, and practical formation of his university students. For him, the *telos* of education and the *telos* of human nature should be aligned so that education contributes to the holistic flourishing of individuals and institutions. Therefore, his curriculum included not only Scripture and the great works of history, literature, theology, ethics, and philosophy, but also mathematical disciplines like physics, geometry, astronomy, and a nascent economics, as well as natural sciences like anatomy, physiology, early psychology, and another of his passions, medicine. According to Melanchthon, every art and science is a gift of God given to benefit humanity, and to study them is a form of godliness. Hence, he wanted the full humanity of his students nurtured in classroom and chapel together.

Melanchthon finds his place in a long tradition that stretches back through Erasmus and Hugh of St. Victor, to Alcuin of York, Rhabanus Maurus, Cassiodorus, and many others. And he inhabits a tradition that stretches forward through Calvin and Comenius, to John Henry Newman, Dorothy Sayers, Stratford Caldecott, and, again, many others. This tradition, in which I place myself, could be broadly described as “didascalical Christian humanism.” This is not modern secularist “humanism” that scorns religious conviction, nor is it merely the Humanism of the Italian Renaissance. Instead, didascalical Christian humanism refers to the perennial concern for human and humane knowledge and culture, the integrated formation of students, the comprehensive flourishing of individuals and communities, and worship of the triune God through whom, by whom, and for whom all things were made.

Several distinct features characterize this venerable tradition. Together, they help me answer my late-teen questions about the value of learning and education. Christian students and scholars looking for a conceptual framework to make sense of their intellectual appetites, university years, or academic careers could do worse than start with these.

WONDER

Though the intellectual appetite can be aroused by many things, it is often provoked by sheer stupefied wonder, that basic human experience of being astonished or puzzled by something and wanting to discover what it is and why it is the way it is. This is not the ‘wonder’ of Wonder Bread or the Wonderful World of Disney that fed and entertained me as a boy. Instead, the paradigm case for “wonder” is that educated Israelite who is astonished to see a bush burning but not consumed, who says, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why this bush does not burn up” (Exodus 3:3). Or the newly converted Augustine, who declares, “I love nothing but God and the soul, and I know neither,” and sets the rest of his life to discovering both.¹ Or Melanchthon, an amateur astronomer, who writes: “Who is so hard-hearted ... that he does not sometimes, looking up at the sky and beholding the most beautiful stars in it, wonder at these varied alterations ... and desire to know the traces ... of their motions?”² If not the stars, consider the human eye. It need not have the 120 million rods and six million cones that enable it to see approximately seven million colors. There need not be 10,000 species of birds, 400,000 types of beetles, or 100 billion planets in the Milky Way. The universe would endure without the dumbo octopus, pink fairy armadillo, or naked mole rat, yet they are there, along with Egyptian hieroglyphs, Benin masks, Machu Picchu, and Dante’s *Comedy*. And, of course, there is chaos and disorder in our souls and the world, and we wonder at these, as well.

This wondering inquiry is the beginning of knowledge, because like the theologian’s faith, it seeks understanding. And it is “holy” wonder when the wonderer experiences it *coram deo*, before God, acknowledging his or her finite place within a capacious creation.

LEARNING

However, we do not just passively wonder at phenomena, we also want to peel back the appearances and understand the causes. Wonder whets our appetite to learn, and so the tradition affirms learning as one important way we participate in the world. We walk through the world, see it, eat it, breathe it, meet its residents, and make things with it. We also wonder at it and want to understand it, entering it with our minds as well as our hands and eyes. Thus, learning is a creaturely good that partially fulfills our nature, delights us, and helps us feel more at home in the spaces and places we occupy. At their best, schools nurture wonder and teach students how to learn.

However, didascalical Christian humanists also remind us that the intellectual appetite can be disordered. Therefore, it cautions against the moral vice of *curiositas* that misuses the intellect by pursuing knowledge through disordered means like manipulation or cheating; pursues it for disordered ends like propaganda, violence, or prestige; lusts after knowledge as if it were one’s

highest good; or abandons more profitable studies and activities for lesser ones. It drives the gossip, the tabloid, the utilitarian careerist, and the person who desires to appear rather than to be wise. Think Adam and Eve, Icarus, Dante's Ulysses, the sorcerer's apprentice, Dr. Faustus, Hans Christian Anderson's little mermaid, or, of course, the proverbial cat. The opposite virtue is sometimes referred to as *studiositas*, a moral virtue that directs the intellectual appetite toward good ends through ordered means. It describes a grateful and humble desire for knowledge that respects the thing known and desires knowledge that nurtures human and non-human flourishing. It is driven not by cupidity, but by love.

LOVE

One way the tradition resists *curiositas* is by framing learning as a way to love and serve one's near and distant neighbors. This is rooted in the belief that God loves and desires the good of people and societies, but that God rarely chooses to be God in isolation from us. Instead, he equips and calls people to use their gifts, passions, and possibilities in order to partner with him. Hence the tradition frames learning as one great but ordinary means through which we can love our neighbors and "keep" our world as a well-tended garden. Thus we ask not only how education will benefit us, but also how we might employ it to benefit others.

Of course, not everything we learn has to be channeled toward an immediate application, and not every kind of good work requires advanced knowledge. But some do. For example, it is one thing to protest human trafficking with a picket sign, and another to become a human rights lawyer prosecuting international traffickers. It is one thing to console a terminally ill cancer patient, and another to pursue a degree in pluripotent stem cells in order to cure that cancer. Both acts in each pair are good, but only a person who has been educated is free to perform the latter as a work of love. And people can be impoverished and threatened in many ways: physically and economically, of course, but also intellectually, culturally, morally, aesthetically, and spiritually. Hence, the Christian tradition asks us to consider how learning equips us to bring salt and light wherever it's needed in the world in whatever ways we can. To do so is to adopt as our own Hugh of St. Victor's wonderful phrase: "Each one does not have for himself alone even that which he alone has."³

WORSHIP

Finally, wonder, learning, and love should ultimately be framed by and lead us to worship the God who graciously offers us the opportunity to explore the world, know it, make things with it, and dwell in it together. Hugh relates knowledge and worship when he insists that "God would not be praised in all His works by the rational creature, if all the works of God were not known by the rational creature."⁴ To know enables us to praise. It gives us more to praise God with and more desire to do it. Adopting the posture whereby one is quick to worship with any means ready to hand prepares each observation, discovery, insight, pleasure, or person to be a conduit of our adoration. And according to several representatives of this tradition, these moments of wonder, learning, love, and worship anticipate the eschatological leisure of eternal life in the new heavens and earth.

Now, all this might sound a little grandiose to a bleary-eyed student struggling to finish an essay or to a professor hours deep in a policy meeting. Even now, it sounds so to me as I edit this paragraph. Still, we ought not assume that reality fully manifests itself in appearance. The Christian faith apprentices us to see human beings as images of God, washing in a river as dying and rising, and the church as the body of a cosmic Christ. So the suggestion that schools, colleges, and universities can assist people to become more fully human, love their neighbors, worship God, and prepare for eternity should not be dismissed too quickly. Instead, I hope that Christian scholars and students might find their way into this older tradition of didascalical Christian humanism and remind each other that classrooms can be holy places where sacraments of eschatological joy are shared and even a childhood desk littered with books can be the site of profound worship.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where you live, when are universities at their best? When are they at their worst?
2. What would it mean to be a Christian humanist? Is such a thing possible?
3. When do you wonder about the world? What distracts or inhibits you from wondering?
4. How can someone learn in a grateful and humble way? How can someone learn in a sinful or vicious way? Do you tend to learn in a grateful way or a sinful way?
5. How could Job 36–41 nurture humble learning?
6. When does learning become a way to love and serve? When is learning not about loving or serving? Is your way of learning a way that you show love?
7. How can knowledge draw someone into praising God? Does learning draw you into worship?
8. How might Genesis 1–2, Psalm 104, or Psalm 148 inform the posture a scholar adopts toward his or her studies?
9. Daniel 1 describes four Israelites who showed “aptitude for every kind of learning” and were “well informed” and “quick to understand.” What can we learn from their experience receiving an elite three-year education in the language, literature, and learning of the Babylonians?
10. Does the fact that the world came into being in and through God's Son affect the way you relate to the world (John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:1–4)?

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³ *Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith: De Sacramentis*, trans. Roy Deferrari. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), II.ii.2.

⁴ *De Sacramentis*, I.VI.v.



THE HUMILITY OF WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

My story of serving as a president and a scientist in a secular university

Santa J. Ono

I believe a university's purpose is to explore questions and mysteries together, to create and share knowledge, to inspire new ideas, and to encourage people to maximize their potential to create a better world. I further believe that my spiritual path and philosophy of servant leadership are wholly supportive of this vision.

Thus, I don't feel a tension between the secular university and my faith. All of the different views and questions and conundrums that are explored in a university, for me, underscore my faith. As Jesus says in Matthew 22:37: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." That phrase "with all your mind" invites us to welcome discourse and dialogue and difficult questions in our spiritual life.

I didn't start out imagining that one day I would be called to be a leader of a university. I became an academic because of my natural curiosity and passion for science. That passion and curiosity led me to an academic career in medicine and biology.

My research encompasses the immune system, eye inflammation and age-related macular degeneration – a leading cause of blindness. Early detection and treatment could reduce vision loss and allow more people to enjoy their retirement years and maintain their independence.

As I progressed in my academic career, I also began to assume administrative and leadership responsibilities, first at Emory University and then at the University of Cincinnati and now at the University of British Columbia. My own leadership style is based on a philosophy called "servant leadership." A leader has to start from a position of humility and respect. There are all kinds of people that I work with or encounter as a university president. My style is to consider myself as their servant.

Servant leadership doesn't mean that I don't, at times, have to make tough decisions or assert myself, but the foundation of how I interact with people is one of mutual respect. Part of how I reach out to the least-powerful individuals in an organization or society comes from remembering

what it feels like to be undervalued. The other part comes from my faith. As Jesus says in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

As a university president, my focus on service is agnostic of denomination or faith. It is about my responsibility for others and focusing on them. And so it's entirely consistent with my own Christian faith that I can be supportive of all faith groups, and also of students who are still searching or have decided that there is no room for faith in their lives.

My own faith journey was a personal exploration of science and faith. I was born in Vancouver in 1962, some years after my father and mother had emigrated from Japan to North America. At the time, my father was a professor of Mathematics at UBC. My mother and father were not believers and did not practice any religion. From kindergarten through high school, I had very little concept of what happened in churches. The only times we, as a family, would enter churches would be to listen to music concerts.

My first introduction to God and Jesus occurred in my first year as a student at the University of Chicago. With the sudden freedom of living far away from home, and with no parental guidance, I partied hard and frequently drank too much on weekends. Indeed, I think part of that behaviour had to do with a deep dissatisfaction with my life deep inside my soul, but I didn't know it at the time.

Thankfully, I had two friends who were very active in church on campus and they started to take me with them to church services and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, the IFES movement in the United States. They also took me back home to their churches and families. I remember feeling very special when I entered these churches. I felt chills down my spine as I knelt down to pray, not understanding what that meant.

After graduating from the University of Chicago, I made my way back to Canada to be a graduate student in Experimental Medicine at McGill University. There, I met a fellow graduate student. She played the piano; I played the cello. The pianist's name was Wendy Yip. Sometime later we would start dating, and eventually she became my wife.

Wendy took me to her church, and we would spend hours talking about why I had problems believing in God and Jesus. I had been educated as a scientist, to look for proof, and I could see no proof of the existence of God or Jesus.

After many conversations, and attending Sunday school with 11-year-old kids, and thanks to a particular pastor that worked with me, my faith emerged and grew stronger day by day. I'll never forget the day I was baptized in Westmount Baptist Church, on a glorious, sunny Easter Day.

There was a pivotal moment when I was a Senior Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs at Emory University in Atlanta. Emory was originally a Methodist university but is now a secular, multi-faith university. I discussed the issue of faith with then-president of the university, Jim Wagner, and also with a professor that I admired greatly, Tom Flynn, a Catholic priest.

President Wagner was relatively open about his faith (he is a Presbyterian) but he reminded me that, as a senior administrator, it was important for me to respect and support staff, faculty, and students of every faith, as well as those who had decided not to believe. Professor Flynn, on the other hand, was discreet about his faith and encouraged me to be discreet about my Christianity and to be, as he said, "a stealth Christian."

After more than a year of considering the possible options, I made a decision not to be "a stealth Christian." In fact, I immersed myself in supporting students of all faiths at Emory University. I continued this practice at the University of Cincinnati and now at UBC, and I am not discreet about my Christianity.

Can faith and science coexist at a modern secular university? The "tension" is between science, on the one hand, which is evidence-based or proven, and faith, on the other hand, which is something that transcends human understanding. When we make the conscious decision to have a faith in a

particular religion, whether based on indirect references in history or in the Bible or in some other foundational document, we take a leap of faith.

I was trained as a scientist to prove everything, to only make pronouncements about something being true because there's empirical data that supports that view or that statement. However, one of the privileges of being a scientist, is you begin to understand the limitations of human consciousness and human conceptualization of things that transcend our ability to understand or explain or to prove.

My research focuses on how the eye works or how the immune system works. Much of how the immune system works has been discovered in my lifetime, and it's truly remarkable. In witnessing, with a front-row seat, how the immune system works, I can testify that it is so complicated, there are so many checks and balances and there are so many layers of complexity, that the brightest of engineers would not have engineered the immune system the way it is.

As a scientist, the crux of my faith is learning first hand that the tremendous diversity and complexity of biodiversity exists beyond the explanation of the brightest human beings. I started my faith journey with a very closed mind, thinking that the only things that could be true are those things that could be proven. The deeper I delved in experimental science, the more I appreciated that so much that exists in this world that cannot be explained or proven. Not only did this realization open my mind, it was the pivotal force in my faith.

My view of science changed when I became a Christian. In turn, my view of religion changed, and changes regularly, because I'm an active scientist. Being a scientist pushes me to think about the Bible and whether the stories in the Bible are literal or figurative. And my faith influences how I think about data, how I think about potential flaws in data, and how I think we have to be very careful in how we interpret data as a scientist.

Through questioning our faith, I believe we become stronger individuals. A real gift of the spiritual path is you grow as an individual and your faith becomes stronger because you're constantly asking yourself questions and perhaps sometimes doubting your decision. This is really at the heart of what it means to innovate.

Just as the best universities are spaces where people have the freedom to voice different points of view and to either change their mind or strengthen their belief based upon honest discourse, I believe the strongest churches are spaces where we work through inconsistencies or differences of opinion together, and where we acknowledge the humility of what we do not know.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Santa J. Ono is the President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of British Columbia, a global centre for research and teaching with 64,000 students, 16,500 faculty and staff, and a \$2.5 billion operating budget. He is also a professor of medicine and biology, Chief Advisor of the British Columbia Innovation Network, and a Director of Universities Canada. He is married to Gwendolyn (Wendy) Yip and the father to Juliana and Sarah Ono. The family attends Tenth Church and Origin Church in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. For many years he has been involved with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, the IFES movement in the USA, including serving on the InterVarsity Board of Trustees and acting as faculty adviser for InterVarsity's three chapters at Emory University. He can be contacted at presidents.office@ubc.ca.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does being on a spiritual path make you more open to new knowledge as a student or an academic?
2. How do you ask questions and welcome innovation in your spiritual life?
3. Can faith and science coexist at a modern secular university?
4. Jesus says in Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Is servant leadership realistic in today's complex and demanding society?

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UNIVERSITIES AS WATCHDOGS

Democracy and critiquing the powers that be

Jeremiah Amai Veino Duomai

A university is a space for ideas to be explored, advanced and critiqued. It is also a space for critiquing government policies. Such critique is important for the health of liberal democracies, and it also follows the example of biblical prophets.

That there is shrinking space for free speech in Indian universities today is a sign of a withering liberal democracy. Democracy is young, shallow and fragile in most of the South Asian countries. It has been largely stable in India for the last seventy years except for the brief period of Emergency in 1977, but since the sweeping electoral victory of Narendra Modi in 2014, India's democratic ranking among the countries of the world has slipped from 27th in 2014 to 41st in 2018.¹ One effect of Modi's victory is to polarise citizens who toe the government's line of thought from those who dissent. This polarisation is sharply visible in many university campuses.

The matter gets worse when voices that critique the government are labelled as 'anti-national'. Visual and print media that are close to the government increase the volume of this rhetoric. NGOs and news channels that criticise the government's action are raided by income tax officials and other agencies in the name of checking for tax compliance and other excuses.

Recently the Indian government issued a circular to bring the faculties of universities funded by the Union government under the Conduct of Central Services (CCS) rules which have been regulating the conduct of the bureaucrats. The implication of such a rule is that teachers in the universities would be restricted from speaking out against government policies or actions. This measure allows the political authority to selectively target dissenting voices that cause inconvenience for those in power. The irony is that the leaders across political parties generally take pride in India's democratic tradition and loathe being told that their deeds undermine democracy.

ACADEMICS AS POLITICAL WATCHDOGS

Lawmakers can sometimes make bad laws. Governments can sometimes frame bad policies. Sometimes, it could be an error in making judgement; other times it could be a deliberate measure to further the interest of those in power at the expense of the citizens' freedom. This is a story that people in many parts of the world can relate to. In 2015 the government of India demonetised 86% of the cash available in the economy. Whether it was an effective and an efficient method to curtail, say, black money will be seen in the coming years. To that end economists in the university will need to study and provide assessment of such a measure. If the negative outcome outweighs the positive, this is a lesson that the incumbent government as well as others need to bear in mind.

However, if the economists in the universities are banned from dissecting and critiquing government policies like demonetisation, there is no lesson that can be learnt from such a colossal experiment. Given the kind of monetary and social cost involved, it is too significant to leave the matter unexamined. The other equally negative aspect of gagging teachers is that it undermines the very purpose of the university. After all the university is supposed to be a space where ideas of various kinds must be allowed to contest against one another. Thus, those who see merit in demonetisation may voice their opinion and those who think otherwise may as well be allowed to voice their opinion, and the audience can make a judgment based on the merit of the arguments and conclusion arrived at.

It is reasonable if those serving in the army do not have the liberty to criticise the government policy. The chain of command in the army functions in ways that are different from that in university settings particularly when it is the ideas that are being contested. It is even understandable when the bureaucracy is not given much freedom to speak out against government policy. However, in university settings, the contest of ideas forms the bedrock of how research programmes are pursued. Whether it is in natural sciences, applied sciences, social sciences or humanities, freedom of expression is essential to pursue knowledge for human flourishing. This freedom must include the freedom to critique and challenge the government policy and opinion on various issues by even filing Public Interest Litigation (PIL). The government's stance on human rights, wealth distribution, foreign relations, business deals and other matters must be open to criticism when it is or deemed to be unjust or harmful. Speaking truth to power is a key aspect of research programmes.

CRITIQUE OF "THE POWERS THAT BE" IN THE SCRIPTURES

In the book of Revelation chapter 18, John presents what Richard Bauckham calls one of the most forceful critiques of the Roman empire and its economic system.² John's use of the picture of Babylon to critique the system of the day may be read beyond the then ungodly Roman empire. G. K. Beale argues that John's concentration is not just on the "wicked religious-economic culture" but the church and Israel too that have compromised their godly ways to become part of the worldly system.³ For John to be critiquing the government and its structure is not to contradict with what Paul says in Romans 13:2: "... whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." Paul understands that rulers bear swords – or guns today – to maintain social order through punishing criminals. Putting this into perspective Nicholas Wolterstorff underlines that God given task on the rulers is to punish wrongdoers, the flipside of which is to enjoin doing good.⁴ However, if rulers begin to do wrong or implement harmful measures that damage citizens' lives or social relations, then being a good citizen of that territory would include critiquing the flawed policy or calling out the hypocrisy of those in power.

John was not located within the safe premises of the university where freedom of speech is better honoured than outside. However, for him it was a God-given task for which he critiqued the wicked economic-religious system of the day. Our location as well as the challenges and issues we face today are different from that of John. The wickedness and the oppressive measures, however, do reappear in various shades. For example, it is becoming more common today to deify a political

leader or the nation and vilify those who refuse to toe the line of the rulers. A few years back the then President of Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) and former Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) spoke about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as an incarnation of god, saying he was greater than Mahatma Gandhi.⁵ Economic structures that widen the inequality gap between the rich and the poor even more in the name of wealth creation are being seen. It is reported that 26 individuals own as much wealth as the 3.8 billion people who are the poorest half of the world population, while India's richest nine individuals own as much wealth as the country's bottom half.⁶ Followers of Christ who are placed in a safer position by being in a university need to examine the government's stances on religious liberty, healthcare policy and more and provide a measured view of the issues at hand.

We have seen in history how worshipping a political leader undermines democracy or how worshipping the nation can lead to war between nations. Discourse in the university must seek to critique such deification or quasi-deification.

CONCLUSION

In the face of a strong political leader or an oppressive state, it is risky to speak out against unjust measures or human rights violations in the name of hyper-nationalism. Incurring the wrath of the leader or the state might include being abused verbally or physically by those who disagree. It may even result in being fired from a secure job, being sent to jail or being assassinated. Someone who has a home to lose or children that may be orphaned may choose to remain submissive rather than stick out their neck and fight against such injustice.

I showed restraint in critiquing government policy while working in the staff team of UESI, the IFES movement in India. Though the organisation does nothing wrong, its members think that open criticism of government policy may invite a crackdown on its functioning. Since no organisation wants to invite the wrath of any government when it has done no wrong, staff workers prefer to maintain a safe distance from issues that are overtly political. However, now that I wear a different hat as a postdoctoral fellow in a liberal arts institution, I have more freedom to criticise public policies that I believe impede flourishing.

Waiting for another election to arrive to vote out a tyrant or a divisive political party is not enough. Unless educated individuals speak out, the less educated may remain relatively uninformed. The less educated sometimes, unlike the more educated ones, do not have adequate resources to engage critically with unjust state's policies. The educated ones, especially those situated in the university settings, thus have a weightier obligation to speak forth truth to power.

To give allegiance to the crucified and risen Christ and not to the Caesar of the day means securing freedom, justice and equality not only for myself but also for fellow Christians and citizens in my community. Doing so is an expression of my obedience to Christ who instructed the scribe to demonstrate love for his neighbour by showing concern for the one in a helpless state.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeremiah Amai Veino Duomai formerly worked as a staff worker of Union of Evangelical Students of India (UESI), the IFES movement in India. He earned his PhD in Philosophy from Delhi University, and is currently an Indian Council of Philosophical Research post-doctoral fellow affiliated to Delhi University. He is a member of the Executive Council, UESI Delhi Chapter. He lives in Delhi with his wife Savita, a paediatrician involved in providing palliative care to the terminally ill, and their two kids. He can be contacted at jeremiahduomai@gmail.com.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read 2 Samuel 12: 1-15, Matthew 14: 1-12 and/or Revelation 18. How does the prophet confront or critique the power structure of the day?
2. How do you reconcile these prophetic passages with what Peter says in 1 Peter 2: 13-17?
3. How have voices from the university visibly shaped public policy? Give an example.
4. How can you express love for your neighbour, especially your needy neighbour, through your academic discipline?
5. How can we prepare ourselves to be voices from the university that may advance democracy and human flourishing?
6. Can critiques of the power structure lead to a more extreme eventuality like political anarchy where different non-state actors battle to fill the political vacuum? If yes, how may our critiques not lead to such a situation?

¹ The five parameters used to measure this are: electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties, 'Democracy Index 2014: Democracy and Its Discontents' (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015), <http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy-index-2014.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=Democracy0115>; 'Democracy Index 2018: Me Too? Political Participation, Protest, and Democracy' (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019), http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_2018.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=Democracy2018.

² Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 338.

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⁵ Shubhajit Roy, 'Meet the New ICCR Chief: Modi Avatar of God, Bigger than Gandhi', *The Indian Express*, 1 November 2014, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/meet-the-new-iccr-chief-modi-avatar-of-god-bigger-than-gandhi/>.

⁶ 'Telling Numbers: Nine Indians Own as Much as Half the Country', *The Indian Express*, 22 January 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/telling-numbers-9-indians-own-as-much-as-half-the-country-oxfam-wealth-inequality-report-5549151/>.



TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN VISION FOR THE MODERN SECULAR UNIVERSITY

A theological contribution to competing visions of the university

Ross H. McKenzie

As a Professor at an Australian university I have observed striking and profound changes in universities since I was a student. Indeed in the West, authors with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and agendas are all claiming that universities are in crisis. This is not just a crisis of funding or governance, but rather a crisis of identity, purpose, and mission.¹

IFES recently organised six regional consultations to discuss [big issues](#) and questions in the university.² Participants were a mixture of IFES campus staff, university faculty, and student leaders. Some of the questions and issues were distinctly regional or national. Across the Majority World there were many common social issues such as strikes, corruption, poverty, and conflict. However, what surprised me was that the question, “What is the university for?” is being asked and debated, not just in elite institutions in the West but also in Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and the South Pacific.

Ronald Barnett, Emeritus Professor of Higher Education at the University of London, states³

Around the world, what it is to be a university is a matter of much debate. The range of ideas of the university in public circulation is, however, exceedingly narrow and is dominated by the idea of the entrepreneurial university. As a consequence, the debate is hopelessly impoverished. Lurking in the literature, there is a broad and even imaginative array of ideas of the university, but those ideas are seldom heard. We need, consequently, not just more ideas of the university but *better* ideas.

Competing ideas include nation building, moulding good citizens, social critique and transformation, and a finishing school for the privileged elite. Here I briefly describe three other ideas and visions of the university.

NEOLIBERALISM

This is the “entrepreneurial” university. Neoliberalism (or economic rationalism) is the view that public institutions like hospitals, universities, and energy utilities perform best if they are left to free market forces. This usually means increasing privatisation and decreasing regulation.

Neoliberalism has an economic, political, and philosophical dimension.⁴ In the neoliberal view, universities are essentially a business, students are customers, and faculty are human resources. Education becomes equated with students obtaining an accreditation that will lead to a job that will increase their wealth, power, and social status. The purpose of research is to produce knowledge that will be commercially valuable, to provide income to the university through overheads, and to increase the global ranking of the university, which in turn will attract more international students who will pay higher fees. The dominant four values of the neoliberal university are money, metrics, marketing, and management. Most Western universities are now dominated by management with neoliberal values, while transcendent values such as virtue, curiosity, scholarship, transformation, and collegiality are considered irrelevant or unrealistically idealistic.

A SECTARIAN RELIGIOUS VISION

Many universities like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were founded by Christian denominations, often with the aim to educate clergy or students from a particular denomination. Students and faculty were required to assent to a particular doctrinal statement and sometimes be members of the denomination. Students who disagreed were expelled and faculty who expounded views seen to be contrary were fired. This still occurs in conservative Christian colleges in the United States today. Until the early nineteenth century only Anglicans could study and work at Cambridge. The dominance of these sectarian institutions led to the founding of secular competitors such as University College London in 1826 and Cornell University in 1865. Clearly a sectarian religious vision for universities conflicts with values such as academic freedom, universal access to education, and pluralism. These conflicts lead to the claim that Christianity should not have a voice in debates about the mission and governance of secular universities in a pluralistic society. However, this is too strong a reaction.

TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL VISION FOR THE MODERN SECULAR AND MULTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY

Mike Higton, a Professor at Durham University, presents such a vision in his book, *A Theology of Higher Education*. He addresses the question: “What is (or should be, or could be) good about universities?” To do this he considers “three core themes: higher education as training in intellectual virtue; the inherent sociality of university learning, reason, and knowledge; and the proper orientation of higher education towards the common good—the *public* good.” David F. Ford, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, argues that Christian wisdom is central to a much-needed renewal of modern universities.⁵

Both Higton and Ford base their arguments partly on an engagement with the history of universities, highlighting how Christian theology played such an influential role in the founding and flourishing of universities. Secularists might counter that this history is now irrelevant and it is best that we dispense with this historical baggage. However, there is an important question of whether this theological perspective was actually a key to the success of universities. Ford particularly focuses on the case of the founding of University of Berlin (Humboldt University) in the nineteenth century. It became the model for most European research universities. In addition to Berlin, Higton considers the emergence of the medieval University of Paris and the publication of *The Idea of the University* by John Henry Newman, in 1852. Although Newman was concerned with defending an exclusively Catholic university in Dublin, his book has had an influence far beyond that context and

perspective. For example, in the 1990s Yale University Press published two books that reviewed Newman's perspective and its relevance to American research universities.

It was not just elite Western institutions that were founded by Christians with a distinctly theological vision. Prior to the post-colonial era, in the non-Western world many excellent universities were founded by Christian missionaries. Examples include St. Stephen's College (Delhi, India), Forman College (Pakistan), St. John's University (Shanghai, China), and the American University of Beirut. The founders did not have a sectarian vision but offered a broad liberal arts education to both non-Christians and Christians.⁶

It is not necessary to be a Christian to share the values that Higton and Ford argue are particularly relevant to universities. However, I think Christian theology offers more than these humanist values. First, it makes sense of what has happened and is happening in universities. Second, Christian theology provides a redemptive vision for their future. Finally, the Gospel provides access to a transformative power for both individuals and communities to work towards this vision. In the pluralist marketplace of ideas the relevance of these theological ideas also need to be debated, particularly given their rich historical legacy.

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL VISION

The four theological categories of creation, fall, redemption, and renewal are particularly helpful for providing both an understanding of universities and a compelling vision of how universities can promote human flourishing.⁷ I first briefly review the four categories, then consider how they were key to the emergence of modern science, arguably one of the greatest achievements associated with universities. I will then discuss how these categories are relevant to universities, more broadly.

CREATION (GENESIS 1-2; JOB 38-39; JOHN 1:1-5; COLOSSIANS 1:15-17)

Everything that exists was made and continues to be sustained by God through Christ. This creation is good and for the purpose of God's glory. This creation is ordered and reflects the power and faithfulness of the Creator. Humanity is made in the image of God, and so is of immense value and shares some of God's qualities such as rationality and relationality.

FALL (GENESIS 3, GENESIS 11:1-8, ROMANS 1:18-32)

However, we do not live in God's ideal world. Humanity rebels against God's ideal purposes and the whole of creation has been corrupted and frustrated. Humans are in conflict with God, with each other, and with nature. Human reason and communication are corrupted.

REDEMPTION (COLOSSIANS 1:19-20, EPHESIANS 2:8-10)

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all of the fallen creation has been reconciled to God and is being restored (now but not yet). Redeemed believers are motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform acts of service and mercy.

RENEWAL (REVELATION 21-22)

One day complete and final renewal of the creation will take place, following the final judgement. There will be complete harmony between God, humanity, and nature. Vision of this future gives hope to believers and motivates them to persevere.

These theological ideas were central to the emergence of modern science in the seventeenth century. This is carefully documented in two influential books by Professor Peter Harrison.⁸ The doctrine of creation led to the view that the world was ordered and intelligible, and there were

scientific laws of nature that were waiting to be discovered. The goodness of creation meant it was worthy of study, particularly as it could reveal the glory of God. The Fall was not just moral and intellectual. Human thinking is corrupted and so one needs to do experiments to learn the true nature of things. Furthermore, given human fallibility it is important to repeat experiments and different parties doing the same experiment and comparing results. The Fall limited human powers of observation and this motivated the development of new instruments such as telescopes and microscopes. God had redeemed believers morally and spiritually through Christ. Believers now had a responsible to act in redemptive ways including pursuing the study of nature.

How are these four theological themes relevant to universities? First, the notion of creation implies the goodness, orderliness, and intelligibility of every aspect of the world. It is both possible and worthwhile to study the world. Given the rationality of the Creator who is the Truth one should expect a unity and coherence to knowledge. This affirms the value of scholarship for its own sake of inter-disciplinary studies. Yet, because of the Fall, the scholarship is hard and frustrating, like weeding a garden. Given the intellectual corruption of humanity and our tendency to vanity it should not surprise us when we encounter brilliant academics promoting dubious theories (and themselves), ignoring evidence to the contrary, and viciously attacking their opponents. The redemptive mandate provides further motivation for academic pursuits, particularly those that partially reverse the effect of the Fall by healing the sick, alleviating poverty, reducing violence, and promoting peace. Finally, there is a limit to what we can achieve because we are finite creatures and live in a broken world. But a Christian academic or student can live with frustration and disappointment. This can come from experiments that don't work, things they just can't understand, or from meaningless and wasteful bureaucratic initiatives promoted by neoliberal university managers. A Christian can persevere with hope of a better future. They live in the "now but not yet."

Around the world universities have a crisis of purpose. Most of the competing visions of what a university is for are impoverished and ignore the history of what shaped universities and enabled them to flourish: a Christian theological vision. Christian students and faculty and IFES staff have the opportunity to contribute significantly to debates on campus about the purpose of their university.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ross McKenzie is a Professor of Physics at The University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. He was an undergraduate at the Australian National University and received a PhD from Princeton University. His scientific research uses quantum theory to understand the properties of complex materials. He enjoys writing two blogs: Soli Deo Gloria: Thoughts on theology, science, and culture (revelation4-11.blogspot.com) and a blog related to his scientific research at condensedconcepts.blogspot.com. He recently helped facilitate the Big Issues Project with IFES as part of the [Engaging the University initiative](#).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the dominant views in your own university as to the purpose of the university?
2. Read the account of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. How might this be relevant to teaching and research in universities?
3. Consider the four theological categories of creation, fall, redemption, and renewal. How do they capture the big picture narrative of the Bible? What passages do you think are particularly helpful for capturing these categories?
4. Do you think the history of universities is relevant to debates about their purpose today? Why or why not?
5. What opportunities are there for your IFES group to join conversations on campus about the purpose of your university?

FURTHER READING

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¹ For example, Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

² www.bigissues.ifesworld.org

³ Ronald Barnett, *Imagining the University* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

⁴ Paul Tyson, "Australian Universities in Transition: Moral, Pragmatic, or Religious Drivers?" *Australian e-Journal of Theology* 13, no. 1 (2009).

http://aejt.com.au/2009/issue_13?article=158549.

⁵ David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially chapter 9, "An interdisciplinary wisdom: knowledge, formation, and collegiality in the negotiable university." See also David F. Ford, "Faith and Universities in a Religious and Secular World," *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 81 (2005): 97-106.

<http://journals.lub.lu.se/index.php/STK/article/download/7416/6228/0>.

⁶ For the case of India, see Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book that Made your World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), chapter 12.

⁷ John Stott says such a fourfold framework is helpful for developing Christian thinking on a wide range of issues. See John Stott, John Wyatt and Roy McCloughry, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006). The categories are also used by Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁸ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

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