

Baptists Supporting Christians in the Academy: A Personal Perspective

ABSTRACT

In the New Zealand context, where anti-intellectualism is a deeply embedded attitude, ministry to the academy faces particular challenges. Yet the University clearly remains a setting of great significance. The first part of this essay reviews a number of calls for thoroughly Christian scholarship. How are these to relate to the ministry of churches? How are we to encourage what Bartholmew and Goheen describe as ‘integrally Christian scholarship’? I suggest that a path forward may be found through recent explorations of the theology of work. The second part of the essay notes various approaches and metaphors for this task. It then suggests a range of strategies by which churches may equip Christians to inhabit the academy more confidently.

Webster and Perry’s analysis of the New Zealand Values Survey data in 1989 demonstrated that Baptists exceeded all other major denominations in advanced education or training and were only surpassed by people in the No Religion category.¹ This raises the question as to how best Baptist churches might support both students and staff in the Academy.

Anti-intellectualism in Aotearoa.

One major challenge in New Zealand is affirming the worth of academic pursuits in a culture that has a pronounced anti-intellectual bias. Even that most widely consulted source of wisdom Wikipedia, includes ‘anti-intellectualism’ as a major subheading in its article on the Culture of New Zealand.² Perhaps more convincingly, this was also the conclusion of historian Michael King after writing his *Penguin History of New Zealand*. King

¹ Alan C. Webster and Paul E. Perry, *The Religious Factor in New Zealand Society* (Palmerston North:Alpha, 1989), 29-30.

² See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_New_Zealand#Anti-intellectualism

maintained that New Zealanders as a whole have shown very little interest in the ideologies that others have brought from overseas and sought to promote in New Zealand. Ideas that in other places have been considered exciting for their own sake and become part of public discourse have usually failed to gain currency in New Zealand: 'New Zealanders at all levels have proved themselves to be pragmatists and only interested in reorganising society in very specific ways that would give them immediate benefits, and the ideologues had no role there.'³ There is widespread cynicism about the worth of academic study unless it is clearly vocationally orientated and working towards economic advantage. It is not uncommon to hear the opinions of scholars dismissed with disparaging remarks such as, 'Oh you can forget that, he's just one of those academics!'

Bill Pearson expressed a similar concern in writing about the way New Zealanders fail to encourage the work of artists in his 'Fretful Sleepers' article in *Landfall* in 1952.⁴ Pearson saw this as the result of both an intellectual and religious failure that fostered a climate of fear and insecurity and stifled intellectual and artistic creativity by demanding conformity. The world Pearson describes in 1952 has changed in many ways.⁵ Diversity and creativity may be valued more now, but intellectual life and artistic creativity are still not easy vocations to pursue in a culture where practical concerns and economic returns are prioritised over aesthetic and metaphysical concerns.

Learning to love God with our Minds

This national anti-intellectualism presents a particular problem for Baptist churches in New Zealand. In part this is because evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal churches in New Zealand have often grown through attracting into their membership Christians reacting against the liberal theology of academics in other mainstream denominations. As a result learning, at least at the popular level, has often been despised or even worse is seen to be more of an obstacle to faith rather than a help. Stories abound of people who have gone to theological college only to lose their

³ Michael King in Laurence Simmons, *Speaking Truth to Power: Public Intellectuals Rethink New Zealand* (Auckland:AUP, 2007), 176-177.

⁴ Bill Pearson, 'Fretful Sleepers : a sketch of New Zealand behaviour and its implications for the artist,' *Landfall* 23.6; Sept (1952), 201-230.

⁵ For some thoughtful analysis of this see Peter Simpson's essay 'Bill Pearson's New Zealand Then and Now' in *Landfall* 194, Spring (1997) 203-222.

faith; or of ministers who can no longer talk the language of the people because theological training has left them relating to another academic world that is detached from 'the real world'. The rapid proliferation of churches that appeal to a younger generation of believers in New Zealand has generally been accompanied by a strong emphasis on the priority of religious experience over Christian beliefs or, alternatively, adherence to some narrowly-defined Christian orthodoxy that must not be questioned. What Mark Noll said about the scandal of the evangelical mind in America is probably true for many younger New Zealand Christians: 'The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind. Evangelicals exhibit a lot of enthusiasm and compassion and courage and many other virtues but they have also failed notably in sustaining serious intellectual life.'⁶

James Davison Hunter suggests that evangelical scholars are 'doubly marginalized': 'Marginalized from the larger intellectual culture, especially to the extent that they pursue Christian distinctions in their work, yet they are also marginalized within Evangelicalism because of this community's long-standing tradition of anti-intellectualism.'⁷ This underlines the need for good support networks and resources for Christian scholars.

Developing Thoroughly Christian minds

Helping Christians to develop more inquisitive and creative and rigorous and robust Christian minds is a challenge. Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton, in their book 'The Transforming Vision', sound this warning: 'The problem isn't that the Christian community is lacking in doctors, farmers, business people and musicians. The problem is that there are so few Christian doctors, farmers, business people and musicians. Most of us are Christians and something else; we do not engage in our daily tasks integrally as Christians ... Well-meaning Christians are merely adding faith to their vocation rather than letting faith transform their vocation.'

Tom Sine suggests something very similar when he says 'For all the talk about the Lordship of Jesus, the real message to young Christians is: get your career underway, get your lifestyle going, and then with whatever you have left over, follow Jesus.'

⁶ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, IL: Eerdmans 1994), 3-4.

⁷ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York: Oxford Uni Press, 2010), 86.

It is a different vision that lies behind the writing of this paper; the glimpse of churches that encourage Christian academics who are not only adding faith to their vocation but letting their faith transform their vocation through the development of truly Christian minds.

The focus on developing a Christian mind through the adoption of a Christian worldview has proved very popular recently. Most often this approach follows the pattern of creation, the fall, redemption and the end. These are used like four different lenses through which any subject might be viewed to gain a more fully rounded biblical perspective.⁸ In this way, it is said, we may catch a glimpse of the good, the bad, the better and the perfect as portrayed in Scripture. Part of the attraction is undoubtedly the adoption of such a simple structure. But also a structure that fits well with some essential elements that shape the Bible narrative. However some of the limitations of this approach are also being examined currently and more nuanced approaches developed in the course of an ongoing lively debate.⁹

Study is about more than just learning other people's thoughts so we can repeat them to pass exams. It is about discovering how God's world works. It is about developing a Christian mind and world view and learning to think Christianly. Students need to be challenged to think about 'How much better equipped would you be to live as a Christian in the world, if you applied the same effort to understand your faith as you are to understanding your studies?' Jesus calls us to love God with our minds, as well as the rest of our being. Arthur Holmes asserts 'To shape a Christian mind is to shape the history of the church in today's and tomorrow's world. To shape the church's influence is to shape history

⁸ Three influential exponents of this approach are John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1984,1990), 34-35; Albert Wolters *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985,2005) and Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999).

⁹For some of the key participants in this debate see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); Andy Crouch *Culture Making* (Downers Grove:IVP, 2008); Kevin Vanhoozer, 'What is Everyday Theology?' in chapter 2 of Vanhoozer, Kevin J et al. *Everyday Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007),15-60; and James Davison Hunter *To Change the World* (New York: OUP, 2010). Other more anthropological discussions of worldview include Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) and Charles Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2008).

itself. If there is anything at all to the adage that ideas shape history, it is also true that God shapes history through capturing the mind for Christ'.¹⁰

The Strategic Significance of the University for Christian Involvement.

Even in a culture cynical about academic enterprise a disproportionate number of leaders and shapers of public opinion and institutions will have passed through our universities. It is Charles Malik, the Lebanese philosopher and former president of the United Nations, who has stated the case for Christian concern about what happens in universities most strongly, 'How to order the mind on sound Christian principles at the very heart of where it is formed and informed, namely in the universities, is one of the two greatest themes that can be considered....The problem is not only to win souls but to save minds. If you win the whole world and lose the mind of the world, you will soon discover you have not won the world. Indeed it may turn out that you have actually lost the world.'¹¹ From Malik's point of view Western universities exercise more influence in the world than all other institutions and 'No task is more crucial and urgent today than to examine the state of mind and spirit of the Western university.'¹² Some might consider Malik's judgements to be overstated. Nevertheless, his sense of the strategic role that universities play in the world is compelling. And churches supporting Christians in the academy need a similar sense of the strategic importance of this ministry.

Yet the track record of our churches and ministries is poor. John Stackhouse wonders, 'why is the intellect not even valued in campus missions?... Why is so little premium placed on having genuine intellectual experts as speakers?...Why so few university professors, rather than popular writers and 'pop pastors'?' The result, according to Stackhouse, is usually some arrogant amateurism rather than a convincing connection between scholarship and the communication of the faith.¹³ It is essential to

¹⁰ Arthur F. Holmes, *The Making of a Christian Mind* (Downers Grove, IL:IVP, 1985), 136.

¹¹ Charles Habib Malik, 'The Two Tasks' in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 23/4 (December 1980), 295.

¹² Charles Habib Malik, *A Christian Critique of the University* (Downers Grove IL:IVP 1982), 19-20.

¹³ Stackhouse, John G. *Engaging the University: The Vocation of Campus Ministry*. A conference address. (Toronto, 2007). <http://stackblog.wordpress.com/engaging-the-university/> (Accessed October 2010).

expose both students and academics alike to Christian scholars who combine inquiring and astute Christian minds with a lively spirituality.

The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship

George Marsden in *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* maintains that genuine Christian scholarship is rare because Christian scholars have generally been trained to keep their Christian beliefs private as the price of their acceptance into the academic community. Graduate students find that the way they express their beliefs must be tailored to fit the modern humanistic worldview or else their scholarship will not be taken seriously. Authentic Christian scholarship is ‘outrageous’, Marsden argues, because it defies this notion and declares that the gospel has a formative role in scholarship.¹⁴

Goheen and Bartholomew echo this concern: ‘We are always aware that while, on the one hand, much true insight into God’s world will come to us from the non-Christian academic community, on the other hand the idolatry that underlies Western scholarship will also work to distort that insight.’¹⁵ However, they are also concerned to make plain that they are not suggesting that a naïve biblicism is any more the answer than some sophisticated dualism.

They suggest three positive ways that Scripture can function in scholarship as we seek to take seriously the cultural distance between the biblical world and the modern world.

1. Scripture offers the true story in which we find the meaning of our lives and the calling by which we carry out our academic tasks.
2. The biblical story may be articulated in terms of a worldview where the categories of creation, fall and redemption are elaborated with respect to their significance for scholarly endeavours.

¹⁴ George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 163.

3. Scripture can help to reveal various themes and norms that can guide the scholar.¹⁶

“There must be an inner connection between the Gospel and scholarship....Since faith will always shape scholarship, we strive to bring Scripture’s teaching to bear in a formative way on theoretical work, (1) critiquing foundational assumptions that are idolatrous while (2) acknowledging legitimate insight into the creation, and (3) relocating such insight within a Christian framework of thought. In all these ways—by positioning ourselves against the ideologies of the age, by affirming the genuine insights of non-Christian scholarship and by working in faith toward the goal of integrally Christian scholarship—we seek to witness to the victory of Christ on the cross, by which we can be set free from idolatry and enabled to live more and more in the new world of the kingdom of God.”¹⁷

The Theology of Work and the Work of Christian Scholars

A major challenge for churches supporting Christians in the academy in New Zealand lies in asserting the importance of developing our minds as an essential spiritual exercise. If we are to do this it will be essential to establish the link between faith and work.

People begin exploring the integration of their faith and work for different reasons. David Miller’s research identifies four dilemmas that get people thinking about how their faith and work are connected: Evangelism, Ethics, Experience (looking for spiritual meaning in work) and Enrichment (looking for spiritual nourishment at work). Miller pictures these as four quadrants in his so-called ‘Integration Box’.¹⁸ Outside this ‘Box’ faith and work are disconnected. Inside the ‘Box’, one quadrant may be the initial concern that gets a person started in the process of seeking a more holistic integration of faith and work, but they may also go on to explore some of the other dimensions of integration over time. Hence churches wanting to support Christians at work need to be aware that different approaches are required to connect with the needs of people at

¹⁶ Goheen and Bartholomew, *ibid.* 163-165.

¹⁷ ‘The Cross and Our Calling’, Redeemer University College, www.biblicaltheology.ca/blue_files/Cross&Calling.pdf

¹⁸ David Miller, *God at Work*, 125- 142.

different starting points.¹⁹ Moreover a holistic approach should probably include all four dimensions.

The heading for this section is the title of a paper by Donald Griesinger, Professor of Organizational Behaviour at Claremont Graduate School, based on his observation that Christian scholars are often unclear about how their faith relates to their academic discipline and the extent to which their own faith walk should be expected to support and inform their scholarly work, if at all.²⁰ Griesinger, drawing on the work of Miroslav Volf, asserts that the creative work of scholars is intended by God to be done under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in view of Christ's coming kingdom. Of course this is not unique to Christian scholars, but rather the mission of the whole church of which scholars are a part. As such, Christian scholarship may connect with the mission of the church in many ways as part of the ongoing creative and transforming work of God in the world. In particular, through the quest for truth and deeper understanding of God's world, God's word and God's ways, the church can be a more faithful witness to a troubled world. As Clark Pinnock says, 'God touches the world when the church speaks the truth, proclaims good news, performs Jesus-actions, identifies with pain, builds community, shares and forgives'.²¹ Other scholars emphasise the importance of seeing our work as a participation in the work of all three members of the Holy Trinity; Father, Son and Spirit, in Creation, Redemption and the New Creation.²² Churches supporting Christians in the academy will develop a theology of work that helps both students and scholars to make sense of their work.²³

¹⁹ Miller *ibid.* 76-77.

²⁰ Donald W. Griesinger, *Christian Scholar's Review* Vol. 39, Iss. 3 (Holland: 2010), 291-304.

²¹ Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downer's Grove IL:IVP, 1996), 141.

²² See Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1999), 71-130. Also Gordon Preece in *Marketplace Ministry* edited by Timothy Liu, Gordon Preece and Wong Siew Li. (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005), Chapter 3 online at http://www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP40_IG11.pdf Also Gordon Preece in *Faith Goes to Work* edited by Robert Banks. (New York:Alban Institute, 1993), 160-170.

²³ One fine example of a scholar articulating a clear and concise theology of work and world-changing in just 3 paragraphs, is found on the very first page of James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York:Oxford Uni Press, 2010), 3.

Churches Supporting Christians at Work

Elsewhere I have traced the development of a growing interest in the relationship between faith and work around the world and in particular noted some of the common characteristics of churches in Britain, America, Australia and New Zealand that have developed specific strategies for supporting Christians at work.²⁴ I don't want to repeat the findings of these papers here, except as they relate more specifically to Christians in the academy. But what I found that may have relevance for this discussion is that churches that are involved in supporting Christians in their work generally exhibit three common concerns:

1. They have a strong missional orientation and have begun to develop a theology that supports this. For a significant minority of these churches this interest is focussed primarily on the workplace as a place for evangelism. These churches do not necessarily see the work people do as of real significance in itself. However, the majority of other churches that have developed an interest in ministry in daily life have begun to develop a theology of mission that embraces both evangelism and the work itself as an opportunity for involvement in the mission of God.
2. They have a view of church that extends to what the people of God do beyond the life of the gathered community. They have started to reshape their gatherings and reorder their priorities and budgets to reflect this concern to see Christians equipped and commissioned and supported for ministry in daily life.
3. Most of these churches have also begun to develop a theology of work. And the most significant shift that has taken place generally is the development of a creation theology to accompany their previous emphasis on importance of redemption²⁵. However, in my experience, very few of these churches have developed a

²⁴ See Alistair Mackenzie, *Churches Supporting Christians at Work* (Melbourne:Zadok Institute, 2009)

²⁵ It is important to note here that the majority of churches that I looked at represented evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal backgrounds, hence the significance of this shift in theology.

significant public theology, or theology of social and cultural transformation integrated with their theology of work.²⁶

Christ and Culture

Richard Niebuhr's categories for defining the relationship between *Christ and Culture* (Christ against Culture, Christ of Culture, Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox and Christ Transforming Culture)²⁷ have been a target for criticism in some Christian circles.²⁸ However other scholars continue to use Niebuhr-like categories in ways which many students and academics have found helpful. For example Robert Webber compares the Separational, Identificational and Transformational models and then introduces us to his Incarnational model which combines all three. For Webber, 'No one model adequately describes the relationship of the Christian to society; on the other hand, each of the models provides an insight into a facet of Christian social responsibility...In Jesus God entered into human history and life and through his person and work modelled the relationship that His body the church is to express to the world. He identified with the world; was separate from the ideologies that rule it; and by His death, resurrection, and second coming assured its transformation'.²⁹

Webber's approach emphasises that there is no single way for Christians to fulfil their social tasks. Nor can we do this by just adopting one model, because no one model is so complete in itself that it doesn't also contain the others anyway. All three operate all the time to some extent. The question is how discerning are we being about the extent to which Jesus is calling us to emphasise the necessity for separation, or identification, or transformation with regard to particular issues?

²⁶ Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York is one exception, because of the theology of cultural transformation that comes from its Reformed background. See <http://www.redeemer2.com/visioncampaign/index.cfm?page=papers>

²⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York:Harper and Row, 1951)

²⁸ See for example D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2008); Glen H. Stassen, D.M. Yeager and John Howard Yoder (eds), *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture* (Nashville:Abingdon, 1995), 6; and Craig Carter, *Rethinking Christ and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Brazos Press, 2006).

²⁹ Robert E. Webber, *The Secular Saint: The Role of the Christian in the Secular World* (Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1979), 188.

‘Ports of Entry’

When it comes to developing Christian approaches to particular academic disciplines, Arthur Holmes encourages us identify ‘ports of entry’ that are readily accessible. He suggests four particular starting points.³⁰ These include:

- **Historical Precedents:** There is already a long history of Christian involvement in most areas of study and our best starting point is to read those who have already travelled the road we are now walking.
- **Theoretical Foundations:** We need to examine and understand the philosophical beliefs and values that have shaped academic endeavour in the area we are studying. How does this fit with our Christian world view and Christian values? Has a Christian philosophy been developed to work out the implications of Christian belief in this area?
- **Ethical Issues:** Most areas of research and professional practice involve moral problems from time to time. Developing a Christian mind should include ethical sensitivity and astute reflection on moral dilemmas.
- **Mandates and Priorities:** Christians may get involved in any morally legitimate human endeavour, however Christian values will also urge us to prioritise some endeavours over others in a way that may run counter to prevailing priorities in our academic discipline or society at large. We need to examine and critique the values that are shaping the development of our particular discipline.

Useful Analogies

In their exploration of the relationship between sociology and Christian faith David Fraser and Tony Campolo illustrate what this process can look like with a number of imaginative analogies.³¹ These include:

³⁰ Arthur Holmes (ed.), *The Making of a Christian Mind* (Downers Grove:IVP, 1985), 133-136.

³¹ David A Fraser and Tony Campolo, *Sociology Through the Eyes of Faith* (Leicester:Apollon IVP, 1992).

- Planning an intercultural, interreligious wedding: People coming from quite different backgrounds have to learn to cooperate and get along, or call off the wedding.
- Gladiatorial Contest: This is where each side says ‘the only truth that exists belongs to me. All others must submit to me.’ Each competitor fights to force the other to submit.
- The Freezer Treatment: As you begin to enter into a new area of study many issues arise which can’t easily be incorporated into our existing world view. You may choose to store some of the questions and contradictory evidence in an intellectual refrigerator until a recipe can be found for deciding how these are incorporated into your overall thinking.
- The Tossed Salad: This all depends on which particular mixture of faith and learning ingredients a particular academic chooses to toss into the bowl. These may involve development of systematic recipes or more spontaneous creative mixtures.

Fraser and Campolo go further, suggesting some strategies for relating faith and learning, including:

- The Horse and Carriage Model: Recognising that faith and learning are complementary yet clearly distinct matters. The objects of study for theology and your discipline are often quite different and they also offer quite different angles of vision on the area of study. But differences don’t have to mean deficiency. Like a horse and carriage, if hitched together properly, faith and learning can assist each other to achieve together what neither of them can accomplish alone thereby enhancing each other. The differences may be explained in terms of division of labour, levels of analysis, or a more dialectical link.
- The Somebody’s-Got-to-Be-in-Charge Position: Apparent conflicts can only be resolved by either faith or learning being the paramount partner with the power of veto.
- A Partnership for Truth: This view sees faith and learning as dialogue partners in a long term conversation. There is no automatic conclusion that conflict will be resolved in favour of one or the other. All the terms of the relationship can’t be settled up front.

Fraser and Campolo acknowledge that there are a variety of possible ways of relating faith and learning. They do not advocate the mortal combat approach, nor an idiosyncratic approach just drawing on the personal preference of particular scholars. They commend the flexibility of the partnership model which also keeps open the possibility of several of the other strategies in service of the search for truth.

Either by using authors like Campolo and Fraser, or by getting local academics to share their own stories, churches can expose students and teachers alike to different models for relating faith and study. These can then be used as a basis for discussion to help students move towards understandings they can own for themselves.

Strategies for Engagement

Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York carries this mission statement as the lead banner on its website: 'Redeemer Presbyterian Church: Seeking to renew the city Socially, Spiritually, and Culturally'.³² Their Centre for Faith and Work, headed up by businesswoman Katherine Leary, aims to be 'the cultural renewal arm of the Redeemer movement, founded to equip, connect and mobilize leaders in their professional and industry spheres toward gospel-centred transformation for the common good.' They compare their approach to those of churches who adopt conversionist (change through personal conversions), political (change through Christian political power) and separatist (the witness of a distinctive Christian subculture) approaches. While each has its merits, and Redeemer includes elements of each of these in its overall approach, ultimately Redeemer seeks to promote what it calls 'the renaissance of Christian cultural engagement in New York City'.³³ Redeemer encourages members of 17 distinct professional groups (including one group for educators and another for PhD students) to meet regularly to discuss issues in their professions from a Christian perspective and to pray for each other.³⁴ They offer classes on Theology of Work, Finding Your Calling, Leadership Development, Ethics, Cultural Renewal and Culture-Making. Here is the example of one church actively seeking to resource its academics and others through promoting a theology of work that includes

³² See Redeemer website www.redeemer.com.

³³ See Redeemer Vision Paper #6 *Christians and Culture* on Redeemer website www.redeemer.com.

³⁴ See http://www.faithandwork.org/vocation_groups_page36.php

a theology of cultural transformation. They also offer a nine month Gotham Fellowship internship programme for young professionals designed to provide the theological, spiritual, and relational foundations required for meaningful and sustainable integration of faith and work. The Fellowship is designed to integrate three primary elements to further the social, cultural, and spiritual renewal of New York City: gospel worldview development, spiritual and personal renewal, and community formation.³⁵

Redeemer has been very deliberate and methodical in the way it has developed resourcing for its members in their daily work. In the final part of this essay I want to suggest further practical means of local engagement.

Partnership with Chaplains and Parachurch Ministries

The nature of relationships between university chaplains and the leadership of parachurch groups and local church leaders varies greatly from place to place. This depends to a great extent on a combination of the effort made by each of these people to relate to the others and the personal chemistry that helps to cement relationships. Parachurch ministries can provide an opportunity for students and Christian faculty to enjoy fellowship with Christians from other churches and be involved together in mission on campus in ways that individual churches cannot. They have privileged access to the campus and can specialise in ministry to the academic community. That said however, their ministry is often more focussed on students than faculty and even most chaplains struggle to know how to minister to those in the upper echelons of their institutions. Chaplains can exercise a ministry both from the church to the campus and from the campus to the church. Sadly this ministry to the church is often neglected, because the experience and perspective of chaplains is seldom shared with churches. This is not only true of university chaplains. In his history of the Interchurch Trade and Industry Mission in New Zealand Seton Horrill concluded that, although using the experience of its chaplains to challenge the church to respond to issues confronting people in the world of work was one of its four primary objectives, in this respect it had largely failed: 'the chaplains' statistical returns show hundreds of indepth conversations on faith/work concerns everyday ... ITIM through its chaplaincy team is making a vital contribution in 'coal face' theology. However, this massive exposure and experience in faith and work dialogue has not been taken further than a one-to-one encounter. Nor has it been

³⁵ See <http://www.gothamfellowship.org/>

the seed bed for growth into the formal Christian education programme of the Mission's member churches. In fact I am not aware of any suggestions or attempts to do so.³⁶ Chaplains often feel disconnected from the life of local churches and are open to relationship with these churches and working in partnership with them in initiatives on campus. Chaplains could also play an important role in helping to facilitate communication and mutual support between Christian faculty from different disciplines if they were focused more on resourcing faculty members and staff to have effective pastoral and prophetic ministries rather than just being concerned about their own pastoral and prophetic roles.

Hospitality for International Students

There are particularly good opportunities for churches to help provide hospitality for students from overseas in local homes. A significant number of international students never enter a New Zealand home. A national survey of international students showed that increasing contact and developing friendships with New Zealanders were sources of concern for international students.³⁷

One in four students said they had no interactions with New Zealanders in social settings, and 35% reported that they had no New Zealand friends. Seventy percent of the international students wanted more New Zealand friends, and findings confirmed that increased contact with New Zealanders was related to positive academic, social and psychological outcomes for international students.

Less than half of the students believed that New Zealanders had positive attitudes toward international students, and one in three believed that international students often experience discrimination in New Zealand. The results of the survey indicate that increasing the frequency and enhancing the quality of intercultural contact between international students and both domestic students and members of the wider community warrants increased attention.

³⁶ Seton Horrill, *Forging a Workplace Mission: The ITIM Story* (Orewa:ColCom Press, 1995), 218.

³⁷ Colleen Ward, and Anne-Marie Masgoret, *The Experiences of International Students in New Zealand: report on the results of the national survey.* (June 2004)
<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/international/14700>

Preaching and Worship that Bridges the Gap Between Sunday and Monday

Most Christians cannot remember ever hearing teaching about the meaning of work from God's perspective.³⁸ Churches that are learning how to teach and preach the Bible story for academics are likely to at least pick up themes like:

- Loving God with all your mind
- Your mind matters to God
- Your work matters to God – Genesis 1 and 2
- Foundations for a Christian worldview.
- Daniel and friends at the University of Babylon
- Paul exegetes the cultural icons, philosophers and poets in Athens
- Learn from Him - Matthew 11:29
- On being a good Teacher and a good Student – 1 Corinthians 11:1

I have written elsewhere about the need for Liturgy, Bible Readings, Intercessions, Benedictions, Hymns and contemporary songs, Visual Images, Festivals, Commissionings, that forge stronger links with daily life outside the church by incorporating elements (both verbally and by using symbols and images) of people's every day circumstances and concerns.³⁹

Songs are a particularly powerful way of conveying a message that people can take away with them, especially if it is attached to a catchy tune. When did you last sing a song that talked about aspects of faith related to academic life?

³⁸ Alistair Mackenzie 'Supporting Christians in the Marketplace 1993-2001: What I Have Learned'. See <http://www.faihatwork.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Supporting-Christians-in-the-Marketplace-1993-2001.pdf> This article includes results of my survey work.

³⁹ See Alistair Mackenzie, *Churches Supporting Christians at Work* (Melbourne:Zadok, 2009), 8-9; Also Mark Greene, *Supporting Christians at Work: a practical guide for busy pastors* (London:London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, 2001); Bernard Braley (editor), *Touching the Pulse: Worship and Where We Work* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1996); Cameron Butland (editor), *Work in Worship* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985).

*Lord of science, Lord of art,
 Lord of map and graph and chart,
 Lord of physics and research,
 Word of Bible, faith of Church,
 Lord of sequence and design,
 All the world of truth is thine.⁴⁰*

*God of offices and kitchens
 Lecture halls and factory floor,
 God of internet, computers,
 T.V. screens and so much more.
 You are always here around us
 Even when we do not know.
 Help us realise your presence
 That our Spirit life may grow.*

*Ploughing, seeding, patient waiting
 For the harvest of the soil;
 Typing, phoning and collating
 You are with us in our toil.
 In the workshop, store and office,
 Classroom, kitchen, garden, too,
 Help us see your gift and glory,
 Serve you well in all we do.⁴¹*

When R. Paul Stevens was asked, 'If there was only one thing you could do to change the culture of a congregation to support Christians at work, what would you do?' He said, 'Give me three minutes and four questions in a service every Sunday for a year.

I would get a different person up in front of the congregation each week and ask them

1. Tell us about the work you do?
2. What are some of the issues you face in your work?

⁴⁰From *God of concrete God of steel* by Bill Wallace, Christchurch NZ. (Tune: For the beauty of the earth)

⁴¹ An Australian hymn, *God of Gumtree and of Quandong*, by Rev Neville Threlfall. Slightly reworded for a student congregation by Rev Colin Wood (and sung to the tune 'What a friend we have in Jesus').

3. Does your faith make a difference to how you deal with these issues?

4. How would you like us to pray for you and your ministry in the workplace?

Then we would pray for them.⁴²

Not Just Church as Event but also as Resourcer

Given the widespread influence of Bill Hybels and his Willowcreek Church on Baptist Churches in New Zealand we would do well to heed the warnings sounded in the results of their Reveal Survey conducted at Willowcreek and with six other congregations. It was discovered, contrary to expectations, that church attendance and participation in church programmes is not directly connected with spiritual growth except for a believer's early Christian experience. The development of personal spiritual practices is the key to ongoing spiritual growth. The report concluded that churches need to transition from the role of spiritual parent encouraging dependence on church programmes to spiritual coach providing resources for people to feed themselves.⁴³ A similar warning is sounded by academic J P Moreland also writing out of the American context. Moreland says that his conclusion after twenty-six years of ministry as a professor of philosophy and also planter of two churches and four Campus Crusade ministries is that 'we evangelicals neither value nor have a strategy for developing every member of our congregations to one degree or another as Christian thinkers.' In fact, worse than this, he sees the existence of widespread 'hostility or indifference to the development of an intellectual life in the way we go about our business in the church'.⁴⁴ Moreland blames this on the move away from an emphasis on the pastor as the resident theologian and Bible teacher to the model of pastor as CEO of the church organisation and/or the pop therapist who is interesting to listen to. The church has become primarily a hospital to soothe empty selves rather than a base to equip and support God's people for their mission in the world and ministry in daily life.

⁴² Quote from a question and answer session in a class taught by R Paul Stevens that the author attended at Carey Baptist College.

⁴³ See Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Reveal: Where Are You?* (Chicago:Willow, 2007).

⁴⁴ J. P. Moreland, *Love God With All Your Mind*. (Colorado Springs:NavPress, 1997), 188.

Moreland goes on to suggest a number of strategies that churches can adopt to help deepen the value of intellectual life and raise the visibility of Christian intellectuals and intellectual work including:

- A church library where books are promoted and circulated
- All ages Sunday school and study centres
- Regularly incorporate vocational and apologetical testimonies and book reports on timely topics into our services.
- Give selected worshippers 5 minutes to share how they are growing to think more Christianly in their particular work context.
- Identify Christian intellectual leaders, both those alive and those gone before, whose work we can celebrate in person or through offering an explanation and tribute.
- Better prepare teenagers for the intellectual challenges they will face at university.
- Offer better support and encouragement to those who are pursuing post-graduate work making sure that more involvement with their peers at university doesn't mean that they are also socialised out of church involvement.
- Increase giving to support Christian scholarship.⁴⁵

Community

In the course of conducting Faith at Work surveys⁴⁶ I have found that many Christians feel isolated and disconnected from other Christians in their work. There are suggestions that many academics are even more prone to work in isolation than other people. I haven't seen that proven beyond the anecdotal yet. However churches do have the opportunity to help get people connected during the week. Some connect people with prayer partners, or in prayer triplets, or small workplace cell groups. In

⁴⁵ J. P. Moreland Ibid. 197-200

⁴⁶ Alistair Mackenzie 'Supporting Christians in the Marketplace 1993-2001: What I Have Learned.' See <http://www.faithatwork.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Supporting-Christians-in-the-Marketplace-1993-2001.pdf> This article includes results of my survey work.

other cases people maintain regular contact online. Sometimes Bible study groups have been formed. Some of these groups are connected with particular churches while others are resourced by parachurch ministries. Another strategy to keep academics connected is through churches encouraging the formation of mentoring relationships often initiated when people are students. Or the mentoring may go on through the formation of professional groupings. Large churches (such as Redeemer Presbyterian in New York referred to previously) can support the formation of a number of different professional groups that can meet regularly, but this opportunity can also be promoted by smaller churches linking with the graduate groups of particular student ministries or partnering with groups from other churches.

Some churches develop their own student ministries. Many encourage their students to get involved in student ministry groups on campus. A particularly crucial time for churches to keep connected to their students is as they embark on postgraduate study. Churches need to make sure that more involvement with their peers at university doesn't mean that these young graduate students slowly get socialised out of church involvement. Also when young people move from one centre to another during the course of their education this is a crucial time when relationships with churches can be lost or new relationships forged.

Coaching

Church communities can also offer coaching in a variety of ways beyond just the personal mentoring networks mentioned above. The Willowcreek Reveal Survey mentioned previously provides a sobering reminder that church attendance and participation in church programmes does not guarantee spiritual growth in itself, unless people are also being encouraged and resourced to grow themselves. The development of personal spiritual practices is a key to ongoing spiritual growth. The report concluded that churches need to transition from the role of spiritual parent encouraging dependence on church programmes to spiritual coach providing resources for people to feed themselves.⁴⁷

One helpful and necessary addition to this coaching is teaching and resources for making career choices and life planning. This may include a

⁴⁷ See *Reveal: Where Are You?* by Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, Chicago:Willow, 2007. Results also summarised on www.reveal.com

variety of different dimensions: how we experience God's guidance, how we understand the meaning of our vocations from a Christian perspective and how we understand our gifts and values and dreams and what this suggests about where we fit in God's purposes. I have worked personally to produce resources for this, believing that churches need to reclaim the ministry of vocational guidance and provide more assistance for students considering career options, including academic careers. This will also give Christian academics themselves tools to provide more help for their students.⁴⁸

In this coaching role churches will also hopefully emphasise the importance for students and academics to develop and mature as whole people. Os Guinness's claim that we have 'betrayed the Great Commandment to love God with our minds'⁴⁹ is probably true and is a challenge we need to respond to. However, the spiritual formation of disciples of Jesus involves learning to love God and other people with our hearts and souls and strength as well as our intellects. Approaches to Christian formation that focus on the development of the intellectual understanding of our faith but neglect other dimensions will not help to reproduce mature believers. Neither will they produce the sorts of academics who can make as much of a contribution to the life of the institutions they are part of through the sort of humanity they model as they do through the gift of their intellects.

Pastoral Leadership that Equips

To take seriously the coaching and equipping role of churches many pastors will need to change their priorities. David Miller identifies five factors related to core aspects of pastoral ministry in general that he thinks need to be more specifically applied if church members are to be more effectively equipped for ministry in daily life. These include:

- a ministry of presence and listening in the work sphere, by visiting people in their places of work.
- A ministry of preaching and prayer that intentionally and constructively addresses faith and work issues.

⁴⁸ See Mackenzie, A., Kirkland W. and Dunham A. *SoulPurpose: Making a Difference in Life and Work*. (Christchurch:NavPressNZ, 2004) Please note: the approach taken in this book is not just about finding a job, but shaping a life that expresses our faith and fits our gifts and values.

⁴⁹ Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds* (Grand Rapids MI:Baker, 1994), 133-134.

- A ministry of teaching designed to address faith and work issues, also using the experience and expertise of other church members for input.
- A ministry of personal integration that ensures that church members are trained to utilise personal prayer and devotional study in their daily lives.
- A ministry of gatherings of working people. David Miller comments, ‘my research has found that lay-led and lay founded groups are generally more effective at understanding and meeting workplace integration needs.

It is not hard to see how these can be applied more specifically to supporting Christians in the academy. But it is also important to note that Miller is not suggesting that pastors alone hold the key. Pastoral leadership that helps to promote and cast a vision for this ministry is clearly influential, and in most cases essential. However an equally clear essential is the involvement of other church members whose enthusiasm and drive is also required to start and sustain things. And a third additional contribution that is also often required is some outside resourcing, which can often come from the leaders of parachurch ministries or chaplains or other churches engaged in this sort of ministry. There is no set pattern but most often some combination of these three contributions is involved.

Conclusion

Worldwide there has been a growing movement of interest in faith and work issues in recent years.⁵⁰ However, as David Miller’s research demonstrates, this has largely been a grass roots awakening that has developed in isolation, without engaging the structures of church or the ideas of the academy.⁵¹ As a result, churches that intentionally support Christians at work in general are quite rare and distinctive.⁵² Churches supporting Christians in the academy specifically are even more rare. The primary reason for this lack of engagement with the academy, according to

⁵⁰ Described in Alistair Mackenzie, ‘The Future for Faith at Work: a New Zealand Perspective’ in *The Diaconal Church: Beyond the Mould of Christendom* edited by David Clark (UK: Epworth, 2008), 72-73.

⁵¹ David Miller, *God at Work*, 148.

⁵² Some of the distinctives of these churches are described in Alistair Mackenzie, *Churches Supporting Christians at Work*. (Melbourne: Zadok Institute, 2009).

Miller, is the suspicion of intellectualism and fear that secular insights will undermine confessional beliefs.⁵³ If the statistics quoted earlier still apply then New Zealand Baptists include a relatively high percentage of members pursuing tertiary study. It is reasonable to assume that many of these will graduate and become significant leaders in many different fields of endeavour worldwide. Others are likely to become researchers and teachers in these same tertiary institutions. We have heard voices in this essay suggesting that as go our universities so will go our nation and our world. How will we support our students and academics? Here is a strategic opportunity for churches to make a more significant investment in the lives of some of its potentially most influential members. I hope that some useful ideas and strategies for this have been suggested in this paper.

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⁵³ Ibid. 148.