

On the Pursuit of Wisdom and Wilful Ignorance

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Abstract

The desire of humanity to understand the universe has been evident from the dawn of historical records. Many worldviews include the concepts of both a natural world and an unseen realm in a cohesive framework. The Greek worldview contained these elements and exerted an influence on Christian thought until the Protestant Reformation. However, this movement was soon followed by the development of an empirical approach to knowing. In practice this meant that human reason backed by experimentation began to assert itself over divine revelation leading finally to the search for a unified worldview in the absence of an unseen realm. These ideas prevailed into the modern era, but a reaction against the concept that the universe operated as a machine now has led to different ways of thinking. For example, in the postmodernist way of understanding, objective truth does not exist. In this way of thinking, reason and the concept of God are both rejected.

Reformation theology gave a unified view of knowledge which held that mankind could reason about religious ideas, historical details and the cosmos: faith was connected to reason. Modern science has rejected the need for the unseen realm leaving Christians to choose between accepting the theories of science and thus admitting that the Bible contains many mistakes and is full of allegorical stories, or maintaining that the Bible is God's divine revelation. The former option commonly has been chosen leading to a collapse of Christian emphasis in many universities whose founders established them on a Christian basis.

Some Christian universities maintain a meaningful presence by emphasising a unified worldview based on the sureties of the Bible and supported by a vibrant personal experience. Their strength resides in reasserting the significance of character development and a commitment by faculty and staff to the betterment of society.

Introduction

The ancient Greeks are thought to have been the first to develop systematic knowledge of the world about them. European science is considered to have its roots among the Greek philosophers of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. The later period was a 'golden century' which ended with the death of Socrates (Sarton 1981, p. 386). He is credited with the dialectic method of enquiry. This involved the formulation of questions to resolve claims and problems and to reveal inconsistencies in arguments. This speculative process ostensibly led to the establishment of truth (Cooper, 1981, pp. 167, 168). Aristotle, in the 4th century B.C., moved beyond the emphasis on speculation and made accurate observations in a disciplined manner and subjected his observations to critical analysis based on reason (New Encyclopaedia Britannica 1983, p. 367). He conceived the world as a unified physical system governed by laws and operating for a purpose. The existence of the physical realm depended, in his view, on the existence of a transcendent God (Feldman 1987, p. 410). Little progress was made beyond these initial advances by other people groups for around a millennium, for all the great names in science until the 7th century A.D. were still Greek (Sarton 1981, p. 386).

It is an interesting observation that modern science was born within the framework of Christianity and not from other belief systems. The early modern scientists believed that the universe was made by a reasonable God and that through the exercise of reason they could understand it (Schaeffer 1990a, pp. 326, 332). For them the ultimate source of knowledge and wisdom in the universe came from God the Creator (Prov. 8:22, 23; John 1:1-4, 14). They believed that we live in an open system subject to reordering by God rather than in a closed system regulated by natural laws and chance events. For them this meant there was objective reality and they believed that humans were made for a purpose. The logical order noted in the physical world corresponded in their minds with the record of Scripture. Furthermore, a standard could also be found in the area of values and morals (Decalogue), which represents God's communication to all people (Schaeffer 1990a, pp. 332-341).

The apostle Peter urged all who followed in the centuries after he wrote to keep the nature of God's communications foremost. He warned that individuals would arise who would doubt the reality of a personal, infinite God who created mankind, who would scoff at the idea of judgment through the Flood, and who would act as though there were no moral guidelines. He urged all to accept the reality of the Fall and the salvation that Jesus offered (2 Peter 3:2-9). In other words, there is a unified framework of essential knowledge and individuals can live a fulfilling Christian life by following God's word.

Unified worldview

Different cultures and groups within cultures have promoted their particular worldview. These worldviews commonly possessed a religious element which dealt with salvation and an after life. Thus people groups attempted to link the seen with the unseen. For example, by Greek times mankind held that the heavenly (other-worldly) domain was connected with the physical world (natural) domain in a cohesive body of ideas (Alexander 2002, p. 74; Schaeffer 1990b, pp. 268, 269).

The same pattern, but using a different structure, was observed in Christian circles. A unified body of understandings joined the other-worldly and worldly domains of knowledge. Initially it was held that things connected with the heavenly domain were holy, remote, but yet important. The natural world was considered, on the other hand, of much lesser significance. The balance between the two domains changed in Christian circles in the Renaissance period (14th to 17th centuries) where things in the natural world were given greater emphasis on account of an appreciation that they were created by God. Hence, beauty was recognised and an increased interest was shown in human activities and needs. Christians understood that God created the whole person and redeems the whole person (Schaeffer 1990b, pp. 210-216, 223, 224).

Western culture developed around mixed understandings of the Christian worldview, Greek rationalism and pagan religions. This began to change during the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment periods, the period of scientific materialism and beyond. During the Renaissance (14th to 17th centuries) learning from classical sources (Greek and Arabic) was revived but thought leaders began to turn their attention to empirical evidence rather than received wisdom and thus they highlighted the genius of mankind (Veith 1994, pp. 31, 32).

The Protestant Reformation (16th century) considered that the Scriptures were the final authority, leaving no place for an unfallen intellect with its ability to autonomously determine truth. It also left no place for mankind to participate in the work of salvation. Man's autonomy was taken away and given back to God – the Scripture alone and faith alone were the watchwords. Mankind understood, on the basis of Scripture, aspects of the nature of God and of man and how both were connected to nature in a unified body of knowledge. Humanity again understood that God had created humans in His image and had rescued them from eternal destruction through the gift of Jesus Christ. The Reformation also emphasized that God created out of nothing and that the infinite, Creator God was separate from

His creation. Humans, being created in God's image, were made for communication with God which set them apart from the animal kingdom (Schaeffer 1990b, pp. 210-222). The Reformation also repudiated an egocentric relationship with God to re-establish a theocentric view of love, a love where God gives to mankind (Nygren 1982, pp. 681-687).

Reason was given the primacy during the period of Enlightenment (beginning in the 17th century). This meant that, for some, the Bible was rejected as the source of true knowledge. For these there were no limits to the accomplishments of human reason. The French Revolution was the highlight of this period where the goddess of Reason was installed in Notre Dame Cathedral. The Festival of Reason in 1793 was the "symbolic climax" to the de-Christianisation movement. The cult of Reason was "an explicit religion of man." All the churches in Paris were consecrated to reason (Hales 1960, pp. 16, 43; Kennedy 1989, p. 343; Soboul 1974, p. 345; Veith 1994, pp. 27, 33).

With the elevation of reason, the modern age had begun and increasingly thinkers were unwilling to include the idea of an unseen realm in their pursuit of a unified worldview. Some solved the problem by choosing a distant God who they believed had left the universe to run without interference (deists). Others entertained the idea that the unseen deity had a very minor role (Veith 1994, p. 33; Roth 1998, pp. 343-344). This unwillingness to give God a meaningful role was rooted in the presuppositions that modern mankind had embraced, which were driven by the scientific enterprise. In fact, those who embraced and continue to embrace such "modern" thoughts are unwilling to admit that an infinite-personal God exists and created man in His image in a singular act (Schaeffer 1990a, pp. 322-326). It was not long before the post-modern era commenced. Now we find that theories underpinning the modern era have been rejected, the intellect has been replaced by the will, reason by emotion, and morality by an appeal to the relative (Veith 1994, pp. 28, 29).

The history of Western thought commenced with a resurgence of Greek ideas in Christian lands, the emergence of empirical methods altered its course and it has finally led, at least in some sections of society, to a rejection of both rational and empirical methods of knowing truth. In fact, it is held by some that there is no such thing as truth, as we will discover in the next section.

Ways of Athens beguiled the world and then ...

The emergence of institutions we consider as universities commenced in Constantinople in 849 and in Italy, Paris and England in the late 11th and 12th centuries. The methods the universities adopted early in their existence derived from the methods of the ancient philosophers, particularly Aristotle and the mathematicians. Here the question and dialectics (construction of a thesis, an antithesis and then achieving synthesis) were used. The central ideas promoted in universities were that truth needed to be pursued single-mindedly by questioning and the use of a rigorous analytical approach. This would ensure self-correction of any inadequacies and deliver satisfying conclusions. Hence, an attempt at detached objectivity marked the emerging universities (Haskins 1972, pp. 2-25; O'Malley 2004, pp. 94, 100-102).

The curious thing is that modern science commenced from a platform of belief in a Creator God who had made a universe which was objectively real. The pursuit of knowledge in the arts and sciences initially was seen as a religious activity, even an act of worship and an attempt to repair some of the damage which occurred as a result of the Fall when mankind lost his dominion over nature. The Creator was seen as reasonable and thus mankind was considered capable of discovering something about the reasonable universe by the use of reason. In other words, the observer was made by the Creator God to understand the handiwork of his Maker. It was this very emphasis on creation and the Creator that made modern science possible as a derivative of Medieval theology and this stands in contrast to the

fate of scientific endeavours in those cultures which did not hold to the idea of a divine creation (Alexander 2002, pp. 78-85; Schaeffer 1990b, pp. 225-227).

It was soon shown by early investigators in the emerging scientific community that Greek ideas about the physical world were unsatisfactory and this led to an unprecedented level of questioning in all areas of academic endeavour. Faith in Athens (human culture – O’Malley 2004, p. 4) was crumbling (commencing with Copernicus in the sixteenth century). Furthermore, the reticence held by many in the ancient world to explore nature was cast aside. Francis Bacon was foremost in advocating “unroll[ing] the volume of nature” through experimentation, through the activities of the observer. The idea of unrestricted investigation led to a gradual crumbling of faith in the Bible (eighteenth century) after universities were criticized as places encouraging bigotry, superstition and tyranny and of being the breeding ground for pedants (Alexander 2002, pp. 82-100; O’Malley 2004, pp. 116, 120, 121). The demise of the authority of the Bible has been documented rather extensively for selected American universities around the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries. There was a radical departure from the position that ‘truth had spiritual, moral, and cognitive dimensions’ to one where true knowledge was considered to reside in the domain of science (Reuben 1996, p. 2).

Just as the nineteenth century was about to be born, the notion of freedom became prominent, as articulated in the French Revolution. Among liberal thinkers, the idea of an unseen domain and the concept of redemption were abandoned in an attempt to find universal values. The individual was finally placed at the centre of the universe. The concept of a supernatural God was no longer considered necessary in important scientific circles as empirical investigations continued to sweep mysteries aside. Indeed, Charles Darwin provided a tantalising solution to the puzzle of origins which allowed God to be excluded and the universe to be considered a closed system. According to the empirical method, the only reality is one which can be observed, measured or deduced from data. As a consequence of accepting the Darwinian theory of origins, the ultimate purpose of man has been reduced to the passing of genes from one generation to the next (Dawkins 1989, p. 137; Schaeffer 1990a, pp. 307, 308; 1990b, pp. 227-230; Veith 1994, pp. 33, 34; Wilson 1975, p. 3).

Others around the same time (late 18th to early 19th century) reacted against the notion of nature operating as a machine and proclaimed that it was akin to a living organism and placed God back into it, not as a transcendent person, but as present everywhere. Subjectivity and irrationality were also in vogue as people sought to fulfil the inner life. Another group, for which meaning was relative, sought fulfilment through pursuing rewards in the objective world by acquiring material things. These trends have been refined so that many in the post-modern times in which we live believe that objective truth does not exist. This means that these individuals reject both reason and the idea of God as representing truth (Veith 1994, pp. 36-38, 42-50).

Today universities have become places in search of truth and centres of research, where open exchange of concepts, where experimental science and the dissemination of ideas hold pride of place. Publication of research bared to the probing criticisms of one’s peers is part of the unambiguous and objective pursuit of truth. Neither Aristotle nor Bible is the basis for learning in these establishments, (O’Malley 2004, pp. 121-125). Research and the advancement of knowledge are central to the enterprise, with moral improvement and the betterment of society trailing in considerations to the main endeavour. In fact, universities do not possess an intellectual framework by which they can assess the robustness of moral claims (Reuben 1996, pp. 268, 269). Autonomous man is in control and seemingly at the centre of the universe. Yet, he has found himself in rebellion against God and in despair because no unified view of the world is now visible (Schaeffer 1990b, pp. 232-236).

Not all the beliefs accepted by the Judeo-Christian tradition (Jerusalem – belief in a transcendent, incomprehensible God – O’Malley 2004, p. 6) are in direct opposition to those promoted by ancient and modern philosophers. However, the abandonment of the idea that a supernatural God

has a place (in modern scientific thinking) has impacted on religious thought, as we will discover in the next section.

Challenge from Within

It was Reformation theology that gave a fresh insight into the possibility of unified knowledge for it held that mankind could reason about religious ideas, historical details and the cosmos. Furthermore, it was faith in Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection which gave meaning to life (McDowell 1979, pp. 15-367; Schaeffer 1990a, pp. 349, 350; 1990b, pp. 232-241; 1990c, p. 100). The Reformation placed God at the centre of the universe and the scene was set for a realisation that God's invisible attributes could be read in the marvels of nature through the discoveries of science. However, the Christian world now largely has abandoned the idea of God's place in the universe. This has allowed God scope to participate in the creation of the cosmos but has excluded Him from directly participating in the creation of mankind (theistic evolution or evolutionary creationism). In effect, the modern scientific understandings of the evolutionary processes have placed faith in reason over faith in the word of God (Schaeffer 1990c, p. 20).

In accepting evolutionary creationism over a literal acceptance of the biblical account, several difficulties are created for Christians. For this group of people, the challenges of evolutionary creationism are more substantial than those which arise from the worldview accepted by the secular scientific community which excludes ideas of there being an unseen domain. Some of the issues and questions are as follows:

1. God as a supernatural being is given a function in the creation of the cosmos and allowed to participate in a package of miracles, especially as described in the New Testament account (Alexander 2002, p. 445). If we accept this approach, the question arises: How are we to decide what accounts are allegorical and which are real in the biblical record? And by what species of reasoning do we allow miracles at all when the science we embrace so fervently disallows these phenomena?
2. If the Bible creation account is simply one of a number of Mesopotamian and Egyptian creation epic stories to be understood allegorically and if the resurrection is (in the view of some) "a conjuring trick with bones" (Alexander 2002, pp. 321-329, 427), wherein lies the Christian hope of dwelling in a newly created earth coming from God's hand?
3. If being made "in the image of God," as recorded in Genesis 1 (vs. 27, 28), tells us merely how mankind related to delegated responsibilities to care for the earth, then where did the race gain its moral perspectives? (Alexander 2002, pp. 361-365, 466).
4. Christians must account for the moral fall of mankind together with the circumstances leading up to the event. If this is not done, then the need for salvation is in question - Christ's sacrifice served no purpose and Christianity is meaningless (cf. White 1958, p. 45).
5. On what basis do we postulate a moral accounting before God or a judgement? If God has failed to provide an absolute standard of justice, can He be considered a loving and at the same time just God? What are we to make of the claim made by some evolutionary creationists that the theory has "neither moral nor religious implications" (Alexander 2002, p. 302) when those within its ranks can claim that soon "a unifying myth will emerge from evolutionary biology and genetics. In short, science will become religion"? (Bentley 1999, p. 4).
6. For many Christians, a soul had to be inserted in the evolving human line at the appropriate point to set humanity apart from the animal kingdom from which it is considered to have emerged. However, secular scientists see such an argument which requires God to intervene, as an anti-evolutionary intrusion which science cannot tolerate (Dawkins 1997, pp. 398, 399).

Besides answering this challenge, How is it possible to have an immortal entity (the soul) in a mortal body? Does not this infer that we possess a Divine element?

7. If God has used the evolutionary process to create the life forms that we see around us, including mankind, then He may be portrayed as "The God of the Galápagos." This means that "He is not the Protestant God of waste not, want not. He is also not a loving God who cares about His productions. He is not even the awful god portrayed in the book of Job. The God of the Galápagos is careless, wasteful, indifferent, almost diabolical. He is certainly not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray" (Hull 1991, p. 486). This perception contrasts rather poorly with the claim that God is a loving and compassionate God and worthy of worship. Will such a God save us?

As a result of the general acceptance of the evolutionary theory, the world has become reduced in the thinking of many scientists and some Christians to a system akin to a machine, so that it is considered to operate by natural laws and God is remote, if He exists at all. These trends have exerted an inevitable effect on the concept of God, on the significance of human beings, and on love and morals. The scientific community considers life a game of chance. This idea has, in turn, dehumanised mankind. Darwin's doctrine of the survival of the fittest has led to some spectacularly bleak developments in thought and practice. It also aided in spawning materialism and existential thought (the relative is valued; people create meaning for themselves) as a reaction against the meaninglessness of blind chance taught in evolutionary theory. Christianity has not escaped these trends for existential thought has invaded its ranks. It is now commonly held that the Bible is full of mistakes so that its prime function is to give religious truth rather than factually objective truth. Bible religion has become irrational leaving those who have gone down the path of relative truth with an unknowable God. In fact, they have become mystics through their "antisupernaturalist stance" (McIver 1996, pp. 15, 16; Schaeffer 1990a, pp. 225-243; Veith 1994, pp. 31-38). The predictions of the apostle Peter about declining trust in God's word have been fulfilled and perhaps surpassed (2 Peter 3:2-10).

If we divorce reason from faith, we have an unknowable God. We have a distorted view of God's purpose for our lives and will develop characteristics in common with the secular world in that we may begin to live primarily for ourselves or at least for the here and now.

Reason and Salvation

Faith has its basis in evidence, for we cannot exercise trust in something that is untrustworthy or intellectually irresponsible (Rice 1991, pp. 19, 217-221). This is the strength of the argument put by the apostle Paul to the Corinthian believers. He reminded them that they were saved through the gospel of Jesus Christ. In presenting the hope of salvation to them, he outlined the evidences for God's gift by reviewing aspects of the life, death, resurrection and post-resurrection events experienced by various well-known believers (1 Cor. 15:3-11). He asserted that neither he nor the other apostles were bearing false witness (v. 15). The apostle Peter made a similar appeal to eyewitness evidence and indicated that this confirmed the prophetic word thus giving a sound basis for the exercise of faith (2 Pet. 1:16-19).

However, it is also true that faith goes well beyond the evidence (Heb. 11:1). We might illustrate this by referring to Peter's attempt to walk on the water. He was given evidence that the feat was possible and Christ asked him to come to him. His first steps succeeded but he could not reach beyond the evidence by faith and consequently began to sink into the sea (Matt. 14:25-31). Utmost trust and commitment to God was necessary for both Peter and those who follow. Reason assists our faith and allows us to rationally defend our commencing evidence for the truthfulness of God's claims in Scripture. Reason is essential to our religious experience, but it is not the most significant element. We must not imagine that the faith experience is subject to rational inquiry or that we can finally dispense

with faith. This means that “faith is *reasonable*, but not a *reasoned* decision” (Rice 1991, pp. 26, 27, 243, 247-282).

It is only through the exercise of faith that salvation is possible (Heb. 11:1) and we cannot by reasoned efforts attain it through works. This means that: “Ultimately, there are only two different religions, that which builds on faith in Christ, and that which builds on reason in one’s own works.” Martin Luther saw the futility of trying to “flutter up to heaven and seek God” through reason. This idea is destroyed forever when we observe that in the incarnation God descended to us; He has come down to sinful mankind (Nygren 1982, pp. 687-690; 702-704). This was the Reformation view - we cannot be saved through the exercise of reason, but faith is not without a reasonable basis. These ideas have been challenged by developments in thought since then.

This brings us back to the universities where reason is paramount and where faith in reason holds sway.

Some Characteristics of Secular Universities

Universities are places where the search for truth goes on, where a unified view of the universe is sought (but in a closed system). Academics seek to find reliable knowledge, to discern pattern and order and to deliver a coherent picture of the natural world. These are institutions where experimental science and the exchange and dissemination of ideas hold central place. Truth is held to be relative so that it can be approached but never reached. There are always further questions to be asked and new vistas to behold and be conquered. Publication of research is exposed to peer criticism as part of the unambiguous and objective pursuit of truth. Research and the advancement of knowledge are central to the enterprise (Alexander 2002, pp. 242-269; O’Malley 2004, pp. 100, 101, 121-125). Academic freedom in the absence of ideological interference is demanded in “the passion for [finding] truth” (Hofstadter & Metzger 1955, p. 366).

Objectivity is sought in all endeavours but is often difficult to achieve on account of the limitations of methodology and the prejudices of the researcher (e.g., viewpoints developed are predominantly from the perspective of a closed system). Objectivity can suffer when data gathered goes counter to prevailing theories in that reviewers may find it difficult to accept the findings. The *status quo* is often appealing. This is illustrated by the pioneering efforts of the recent Nobel Prize winners Drs Barry Marshal and Robin Warren (Nobel Prize Organization 2005) to explain the relationship between the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* and the formation of ulcers in the human stomach. Their ideas were opposed vigorously in the initial stages (Sweet 1997). Objectivity may also be lost sight of in the competitive environment of universities where publishing priority and recognition are paramount considerations (Alexander 2002, p. 269).

The betterment of society may be a research emphasis with some, but primary considerations are sometimes the rewards offered by high profile projects which give the opportunity for recognition. Access to large, competitive grants, well appointed laboratories, post-graduate researchers and authorship in prestige journals often drives the endeavour. The pressure to publish is intense. Pride of intellect and accomplishment, the pursuit of titles and honours is evident and sometimes brings the worst of the competitive spirit to the fore. Scientists can develop characteristics akin to fanatics (Alexander 2002, p. 269; Guthrie 2003; Lynch 1994, p. 1778; O’Malley 2004, pp. 116, 117). The pursuit of personal goals may also lead to falsification and fabrication of results and plagiarism (Whitebeck 2004) or other devices are used in furthering the “chance to survive in the stormy sea of academic recognition” (Lynch 1994, p. 1780). In secular universities, there is indeed a Darwinian feel to life and character development is often reduced to a consideration of ethical behaviour such as tolerance and honesty (Hofstadter & Metzger 1955, p. 366).

This brings us to the challenges the intellectual establishment hands to Christian universities seeking to operate in the same environment.

How Will Christian Universities Survive?

The priorities of Christian institutions should differ from secular institutions. Moral improvement and the betterment of society are non-essential considerations in the curriculum of many tertiary institutions but they must hold a central place in the endeavour when it is a Christian institution. The foremost aim of Christian educators should be to develop the character of their clients for "Character is the great harvest of life" (White 1956, p. 90). Perceptions of purpose and moral and ethical imperatives will influence the pattern of thinking. They will not be afraid to claim that there are God-given moral absolutes. Notice the powerful words used by one Christian writer to express the balance sought: "True education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above information it values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character. The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character" (White 1952, p. 225). In a somewhat similar vein, Cardinal John Henry Newman, in his discourse on Christian universities (1915), saw the formation of character, the development of virtue and the ability to understand relationships as holding a high priority (Millis 2004, pp. 138,139).

Within the framework we are highlighting, knowledge and power take lesser places in contrast to character development. Knowledge gives power; this is an unquestionable fact of human existence. How power is used depends on values and character. The truly memorable people I have encountered in academic life are those who mix their brilliance with humility – they are few in number. Those who mix their accomplishments with arrogance, pride and a highly competitive spirit are memorable for a different reason. Their character traits ruin their influence. They are not people one chooses to associate with in a trusting, relaxing manner just for the pleasure of the moment. The lessons we might derive from the experience of Daniel and his companions, in the ancient Babylonian halls of learning, have relevance to the modern scene (Dan. 1:8-17).

If character development and virtue are given high priorities, then fidelity to the Bible account will form the basis for learning in these tertiary halls, if loss of a Christian identity, as observed in many former church affiliated establishments, is not to be repeated (Poe 2004, pp. 34-36). Religious truth should be regarded as "a condition of knowledge," for to omit one branch of knowledge inhibits development of a balanced view of the others (Millis 2004, p. 141).

Christian universities cannot retain their character when they reject the Christian Scriptures. Today theologians from diverse congregations are challenging the very basis of Christian belief (van Biema 1996, pp. 73, 75, 79). God is on trial in the minds of many rather than the other way about. Such higher criticism has brought disbelief in God's supernatural intervention in the world. For the more liberal minded there is no virgin birth, no resurrection from the dead and definitely no miracle-studded career for Christ (Gledhill 2007, 13). In other words, it is a myth that the Bible is divinely inspired. Others retreat from outright rejection of supernatural events, but are sceptical about the total inspiration and reliability of the Bible. The results are seen in developments within Protestantism in particular which allow practices and beliefs to flourish contrary to scriptural principle (Healy 2001, p. 45). The scourge of higher criticism has swept through the major Christian churches and influences and is influenced by the programs and understandings of thought leaders at universities, whether Christian or otherwise. Today the historical-critical method of interpreting Scripture has all but replaced the historical-grammatical tradition (Canale 2005, pp. 121-125).

Christian universities will not be behind in any good gift (1 Cor. 1:7). They will be known for their research, but pride in superiority of research accomplishments will not mar their witness (Poe 2004, p.

70). Intellectual freedom without anchor points in the beliefs and associations of researchers is the stronghold of the secular establishment. Here it is considered that findings generated in such an environment have acquired the “value of universalism” (Hofstadter & Metzger 1955, pp. 365, 366). When the same spirit invades Christian establishments, then the foundations will begin to crumble (cf. Anon., 1987). In fact, when the concept of a unity of knowledge, based on the surety of God’s word, was abandoned, then religion took a back seat at institutions of higher learning (Reuben 1996, p. 132).

The character of an institution and of individuals also is highlighted in their commitment to service for others. This brings to the fore the idea of purpose. What is the purpose of the institution? And what is the driving motivation in training the clients who pass through its halls of learning? Christian universities will survive if they possess a correct balance of faith, trust, knowing, discovery and service and if these are seen in practice (Poe 2004, pp. 68, 69; White 1952, pp. 29, 30). Their task is to introduce students to the great natural principles underpinning the physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects of human existence (Shipton 2007, pp. i-iii) and to teach the enduring values of Christianity (Poe 2004, pp. 76, 77).

Faith Based Learning

An important issue that Christians must contend with is the idea that scientific knowledge is the only knowledge that can be termed authentic on account of it being derived through the application of the scientific method. Christians believe that scientific understanding is an important area of knowledge but it is not the only source of authentic information. Science does not possess philosophical or theological neutrality. The reality is that the presuppositions that we hold will change our view of the data (Geisler & Turek 2004, pp. 126-128; Millis 2004, pp. 149, 153, 154). It has been incisively noted that scientific discovery is impossible without faith in ideas, which may be purely speculative. This brings the enterprise into metaphysical territory. It is further held by the scientific world that it is the ability to falsify rather than to verify which enables us to separate between claims of truth or non-truth. If those who believe passionately in the scientific method would retain objectivity, then “Every scientific statement must remain *tentative for ever*. This is what is demanded by scientific objectivity” (Popper 2002, pp. 16-20, 280). Unfortunately, this is not seen in practice. Name calling is a favoured occupation of some who believe that the domain of scientific knowledge is the only domain that exists.

Running a Christian university involves articulating all learning experiences within a clearly formulated worldview. I believe that such an approach can be offered most effectively by those institutions that accept that life originated through the creative acts of God within a limited time span. In other words, Darwinian ideas on the origin of life are rejected based on substantial challenges to their underlying assumptions. This does not represent a rejection of the scientific method or the findings of science but rather asserts that data can be interpreted in various ways depending on the presuppositions that are brought to the discussion, the objectivity of the research methods used and thus the weight of argument that can be brought to bear on different items of evidence. Different models have been proposed to explain the origin of the earth. Each has its own set of problems and strong points; arguably the recent creation and evolution models are the most prominent and can assemble the most cohesive arguments (Roth 1998, pp. 340-346). Some relatively recent discussions on the evidences supporting evolutionary theory have shown that it has certain profound weaknesses. The Intelligent Design argument first forwarded in its modern form by Dr Behe, from his background in biochemistry, pointed to the many biological structures which are irreducibly complex. He observed that structures and attenuated biochemical pathways cannot be imagined in a form simple enough to allow the building of complex living systems from the simplest building blocks. Too many parts of the complex molecular machinery are required at once making the evolution of such machinery conceivable only by

the involvement of a designer. Others have noted the paucity of paleontological (fossil) data supporting the intermediate states commonly suggested as being fundamental to the evolutionary process. This lack of evidence for macroevolution is becoming more embarrassing as the years pass (Walton 2007, pp. 15-24).

Acceptance of a relatively recent creation model presupposes that the Scriptures give an accurate account of events, that they are not full of mistakes and have something beneficial to say to us today. This means that the historical-grammatical approach to the interpretation of the Bible, or something approximating this methodology (Canale 2005, pp. 121-125; McIver 1996, pp. 14-16), will gain emphasis as it did during Reformation times. The end result of such an approach will be that God is reinstated and regarded as the giver of the revelation found in both the Bible and in nature. Basically, this is the substance of God's last call to the human race recorded in Revelation 14 (vs. 6-12) through the ministry of heavenly agents inspiring human beings. Christian tertiary institutions who intend to fulfil the Christian mandate (Matt. 28:19, 20) will be enlivened by this realisation. One author has summarised it succinctly as follows: "the last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of His (God's) character of love" (White 1941, p. 415). This applies equally in the classroom as in other avenues of life.

The elevation of the Scriptures also undoubtedly will lead to the enthusiastic support of a theocentric view of *agape* love where God continues to give to mankind. As one writer has commented, we can only "Fellowship with God on the basis of sin, not of holiness." This means that we cannot gain merit before God by becoming or doing good, because we cannot do what God has promised to do. The true meaning of *agape* love will be again revealed and released from the false ideas coming from Greek thought. The possibility of a genuine Christian experience based on trust in God will be made a reality (Mark 2:17; Nygren 1982, pp. 218, 219, 681-687). Faith will again be shown to be the vital link bridging the domains of knowledge. "It forms an umbrella that brings the totality of human knowledge back together." In asserting this, it is observed that our emotions, motives, values and imagination influence how we view the world and evaluate information. Thus, "the totality of our spiritual being affects our knowledge" (Poe 2004, p. 178). Christian universities will not survive unless those who devise policy or teach programmes are committed Christians who give God's word priority status and give glory to Him by upholding the values found in His word.

Flowing from the encounter with God experienced by the faculty in Christian universities, clients will be able to sense a connectedness with God through His Spirit. In the lecture room level there will be a clear articulation of the relationship between the sacred and secular realms of reality because those who teach have experienced the vital connections among worldview, religious experience, reasoning and hypothesis making (Millis 2004, pp. 25-27, 167). The model accepted to achieve this will undoubtedly impact on the long term outcome. Where committed Christians teach using a cohesive worldview backed by experiential knowledge of the divine and use this as the basis for discussion of critical issues in an engaging and tolerant manner, they are likely to preserve the distinctive features of a Christian university (Millis 2004, pp. 165-167; Poe 2004, pp. 155-162). Ideally every thought will be subject to divine revelation (2 Cor. 10:4, 5; White 1948, p. 298), because participants in the ministry of these institutions are committed to giving glory to God.

Conclusions

The issues facing Christian universities working in an environment almost totally abandoned to any notions of an unseen domain ruled by an infinite, personal God are similar in many respects to those operating for the ancient kings of Israel living among the cultural mosaic of nations that did not accept the idea of a Creator God.

The vision and values of Christian universities must answer to the purpose and values of the kingdom of God. This ultimately demands that the word of God is considered authentic, reliable and authoritative. The worldview accepted as foundational to their vision will incorporate knowledge from both the unseen and seen domains in a coherent scheme consistent with the plain reading of the Scriptures in the context of the passage and the history of the times.

The moral and ethical values upheld in God's word will be illustrated in word and practice by the faculty and staff otherwise the only Christian distinctive about the institution may be its name. Ultimately vision statements and names will not preserve the Christian identity of an institution. An active spiritual life, an acute awareness of the assumptions underlying and the methodological weaknesses associated with the works of recognized scholars, and a spirit of teachability, humility and nobility in the faculty and staff are essential for survival (White 1952, pp. 17, 225).

Herein lays the challenge. Ancient "Jerusalem" failed to fulfil God's purpose for it (Ezek. 16). In these end times, God has a remnant people who will fulfil His vision (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). It will take the dedication of the administration, the teaching, research and other staff to ensure that the distinctives of Christian philosophy are transmitted to clients and that these will be evident to the observing secular establishment. The great sin (pride - Lewis 1952, pp. 109-114) will continue to seek expression in those who work in Christian institutions. However, the lives of those changed by an encounter with God will be made distinctive by a repudiation of "pride, vanity, jealousy, and envy" (Poe 2004, pp. 70, 71), the very characteristics abundantly present in many tertiary institutions. Christian institutions will be noted for a different reason – the fruits of the Spirit will be evident – "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other" (Gal. 5:22-26 NIV).

Christian universities have an increasingly relevant place in the world. They will survive and flourish as long as those who administer and work in them maintain their commitment to the Creator God and unreservedly accept the sureties of His revealed will and unfailingly share these values and understandings with others in an engaging and tolerant manner.

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