

AND MILES TO GO BEFORE I SLEEP

In C S Lewis' children's adventure The Voyage of the Dawn Treader the explorers come to a black and evil-looking cloud. They enter in and find their way by lamp-light and regular depth-soundings. It is not a matter of gloom. It is blacker than black. Soon the water gets shallower - there is nothing to be seen and the darkness appears to be capable of swallowing the light. A piercing cry breaks the silence and a fanatical wild-eyed human wreck is dragged on board.

"Take me away, take me away!", he screeches. "Before it is too late. The darkness will get to you and you will succumb. Do you not know what this is? This is the land where all your dreams come true!"

Remembering that their dreams include some unmentionable nightmares they retreat just as fast as they can, keeping just a hair's breadth ahead of the ghoulish memories of terror which come flooding back. The terror is overwhelming because it grows from with-in-side the person and even when the black cloud is left behind the Dawn Treader ploughs on into the light with a deeply relieved and sober crew.

The amalgamation is the black cloud. The writer of this epistle is the crazed maniac. The optimists are telling us that this will be the fulfillment of all of our dreams. And they may be right! After all, after Dawkins, we will all be in a Business School. We may not all be able to play at being "Dean", but after Dawkins there will be very little room left, if any, for genuinely university education. Why? Because the nightmares will have overtaken us! They are overtaking us already!

There are even blacker depths to this merger business than we have experienced thus far. What about the merky depths of academic conscience? Now Monash academics will have their own institutional history to contend with, but I suggest that we at Chisholm will be in no position to offer viable assistance on the matters of conscience if we simply sail on into the merger as we have been doing. How is your conscience, I ask fellow academics? Are you truly convinced that you should become part of, what is now

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for all intents and purposes, a corporation which in one of its sectors is committed to making money out of the destruction of human life? The programme for experimentation on human embryos has been revealed as a naked attempt to make money, reputations, and as a side effect, make humans and maybe help infertile women become mothers. If this was not the motive why would the doctors have resigned when the Government showed itself as unwilling to bow immediately to the recommendations of the Waller committee?

Something very sinister is at work here and we neglect the long-term and painstaking theoretical reflection and discussion of this matter at our peril. I therefore call on Chisholm Council to call a halt! We do not know what we are getting ourselves into. Our consciences are not at ease, and it is simply a matter of adventuresome foolhardiness to keep sailing into the dark when matters such as these, of life and death, are at stake.

Will our academic community be in any position to pass judgement on previous attempts to subject human peoples to scientific and laboratory experimentation (the work done under Hitler needs no elaboration), if we at Chisholm now fail to raise our conscientious inquiries, if not our outright objections? Will not our silence become consent?

Do not matters such as these need our communal and open discussion before getting down to organizational and other matters. The fact that our Council, Directorate, Deans and Heads of Department have not been convening meetings to discuss matters such as these in philosophical and theoretical ways, casts a very bad light upon their performance as managers of an academic community. Have we not succumbed to the darkness? Are we not being told to have "pleasant dreams"? Are we not forgetting the nightmares that bedevil our recent past? Are we serious about the scholarly vocation or not? Or is it all simply a matter of money? If so then let the mammonists have the guts to say so!

Are we not in the dark because we have snuffed out the light given to us? Is it yet possible to act with integrity in the fields of scholarship and science?

Or did King David sing in vain :

Fulfilled is that man
 who strides out not in the way of
 those intent on evil,
 nor postures himself in the way of
 the sinfull
 nor takes his seat among those who
 make a habit of mocking.

But his one happiness is with the
 Law of the Lord,
 and on this law he gives his utmost
 and diligent attention night and day.

He is like the tree
 planted by streams of water,
 It yields its fruit in due deason
 Its leaf does not wither or curl.
 In all that he does he prospers.

The wicked are not like this at all
 they are like chaff driven away
 to who knows where by the wind.

Therefore the wicked will not stand up
 on the day of judgement,
 And sinners can't find a place to posture
 themselves among the gathering of the
 righteous.

But God truly and utterly knows the way of
 the righteous,

But the way of the wicked is bound for destruction.

Bruce C Wearne
 31 May 1989