CONFRONTING THE TEMPLE OF VALUE-LESS FACT - 
BETWEEN MOUNT KARMEL AND THE MING-WING
A Christian Radical Critique of University Education

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Universities are a concentrated cross-section of modern life.
Concerned with front-line issues in the development of science,
what happens at the university has tremendous implications on
the rest of human cultural activity. I believe that the time is
always ripe for the world to stand aghast as the power - the
liberating power - of the Word of God comes to expression in His
creation and especially in the life of the Christian community.
This is especially true of the university. Monash University
will be changed from the inside out when the Word of Him who
knows the creation through and through, in its liberating and
life-integrating force has taken hold of human hearts and been
allowed free reign to all of life. The university today is
characterized by its turning in upon itself, and its churning out
prophets and priests to transform society after its Rational
and Scientific view. The intent of the proposal herein presented,
is that the task of the Christian community at Monash is that of
overthrowing the existing life-destroying vision which has this
university in its grip, and educationally working out an alternative
view of all scientific endeavour. We must work for a structural
reformation of the university such that the different life-relations
to which people are creationally bound, can be lived out.

UNITY IN THE UNIVERSITY A MATTER OF AN UNDERLYING WAY OF LIFE

Having said that, outlining the direction I intend to go in,
let us first consider the nature of the university. Look at the
word - uni - versity. Uni - refers to unity. From what I have
already said you may be able to appreciate that any unity found
in the university, in fact in all of life, can only be expressed
in terms of a common vision, a common faith, a common way of
life. But if we look at the university we do not see just one
vision, or way of life, coming to expression. We see that there
are a variety of visions; people are bound to their visions.

The other part of the word - uni - versity is that which refers
to truth and reminds us of our word diversity. I take this to
refer to the One Truth about the multi-sided creation in which
we have our integral experience. Thus we have a diversity of
disciplines, corresponding to the rich creationality diversity.

FAITH IN SCIENCE CAUSES US TO MISPERCEIVE THE RELATION BETWEEN
UNITY AND DIVERSITY

Universities founded on faith in science have inverted these two
central considerations. Modern universities have been organized
as if unity is to be found only around one side of the creation
ie faculty centred education, in which students are taught to
limitedly appreciate all of life from the point of view of one
particular science. The diversity of faiths, prior to the scientific activity, is subsequently squashed by the university structure so that the one dominant (polite) Faith of Science stands supreme over all. Of course it tries to shows its tolerance by making provision for other faiths (ie Marxist, Christian etc.) in the extra-curricula life of the student union.

I assume that the university cannot go on in the direction it is now going and at the same time promote real educational life. I assume that radical reformation both of the structures of the university and the structure of our thought is needed. The attitude of the Apostle Paul (2 Cor 10:3-6) gives us good guidance here—all of life, every thought, is to be brought captive to Jesus Christ. As a Christian I lament the fall away in Christian profession by those who once claimed to be Christ followers as they pass through university. It might be said that this is living proof of how rational the university is. I cannot disagree, although I will not acquiesce in the view that one has to worship Reason to employ our rational faculties. At its centre the university is characterized by its worship of Reason and Rationality; at times it looks to its facilitation of a variety of faiths, just to show how rational and neutral it's own faith in Reason actually is. Alternative faiths, if they are able to be expressed, can only take the form of a protest (different answers to the same question), and maybe at times a protest against the assumptions built into the university structure will also be allowed. But the way the university is structured militates against these alternative faiths going onto something positive and fleshing out an educational alternative.

A BRIEF DEFINITION OF THE UNIVERSITY : ALL MAJOR FACTORS INCLUDED

The university is an institution of a voluntary nature. It should be voluntary to correspond with the open-endedness of the educative task. It is a community of scholars made up of more experienced scholars (we call these faculty) and less-experienced scholars. The faculty-student relationship is the central university relation. This relationship has everything to do with educative authority. It is this relation which must be emphasized in considerations of the university organization. The university is centred around a specific educative task—of teaching and research. It is here that any unity we have in the present situation can be found, although the visions for the educative task will differ with the faith commitment.

The task of the university is to undertake study of an advanced nature, such that educative and other skills can be developed in theoretical enquiry and that research may be done in the foundational and front-line areas of the various disciplines. Since the university is uniquely and characteristically academic, it must be administered in accordance with educative norms. The university must receive its leadership from the academic community of faculty and students, who are in fact the university.

DIAGNOSES OF OUR CURRENT MALADY

The organization of faculty (as more experienced students) in the present faculty-system hinders the centrality of the faculty-student relationship from coming to integral expression. The faculty members, isolated from any real possibility of communal reflection (the Staff Socialists being one notable exception) are blinded by a fat pay packet, and thus cannot afford to put a large part of their time...
into developing an educative vision which radically threatens the prevailing faith in Technique and Science as enshrined in current structures. and anyway they have too many papers to correct to even develop their own theoretical perspective. They see their educative work in terms of the prevailing system, their responsibility to the bureaucracy and proceed accordingly———uncritically. One of the most important requirements for study is time, and this is becoming routinized out of existence. By time I mean extended periods for intense reflection, communal and otherwise. Perhaps of months at a time!!

The fragmented faculty system is accepted uncritically and so both the experienced and the less-experienced scholars are thrown back onto an order provided by the administration; this way chaos is prevented. It is in terms of bureaucratic rationality that the university curriculum expects students to "Get it all together". Proclaiming the supremacy of rational self-sufficiency the university is a glaring example of the poverty of such commitment. Ways must be found by which faculty and students, who adhere to a common alternative faith, can work together.

The faculty in the present university is structurally diversified. Therefore there is a chronic inability to present students with theoretical insights in the context of one world-and-life-view. The relative nature of each discipline (to every other discipline) is not recognized, and as such the university has an inbuilt tensions, as all faculties seek to present a coherent world-view from the point of view of their respective science. Structurally, there is chronic dis-unity in the university enterprise. It is here that the administration enters the picture giving the university its coherent bureaucratic direction. John Alford's "University Zoo" in the 1973 Orientation Handbook is a good expose of this. Underlying philosophies are not recognized as the point of departure for the entire academic enterprise, but each particular science exhibits a diversity of philosophies — the task of the faculty becomes one of (N.B) showing all sides, so that objective, rational judgements can be made. A procedure is thereby adopted which implicitly rejects the fact that it is a diversity of life-visions which have brought these differing and conflicting philosophies to expression. Out of this diversity of philosophy the different disciplines seek for a unified field of knowledge. The law-ful diversity of creation is replaced by a diversity of philosophy.

THE MODERN STUDENT — CONFUSED

Thus the student, in seeking for some coherent view of things, as he is bound to do, is led consistently into existentialist despair...and such despair is powerful...and the world of education is full of despair...yet the awful destruction of life-destroying nihilism is lost to view, if the power of the educator is viewed as a neutral process. The power which educators in the university have, to help form a student's vision theoretically, has in actual fact been used to systematically undermine the student's search for coherence and meaning. The student is creationally bound to live one life; but disintegration is promoted by the life of the modern university.

Mankind, created in the Image of God, lives communally. The university, on the other hand, promotes an individualism as the
way to overcome the dis-integration of the personality. When each person "does his own thing" a retreat is made from the real world and the mindlessness remains, together with a chronic disability to do anything to change a worsening situation.

BUREAUCRATS HAVE WRONGLY ASSUMED THAT THEY ARE THE LEADERSHIP OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

The administration, who have assumed leadership of the university, due, I suppose, to the worship of Science and Rational Technique, accept the place accorded to the university by the wider society, and reciprocally advocate a "community of scholars for the good of society". In that "society" is viewed as one large democratic mass, in which no faith is allowed to prevail except that which is Rational, Scientific and Objective, it is quite easy to appreciate Dr. Matheson's repeated call that "it really is important that university teaching be neutral and objective". Such a view finds it difficult to reject a model of the university-as-corporation. However, the workers or assembly-line are busy compiling systems of facts, data and analysis, are given the traditional freedom accorded to the academic enterprise. In this view, freedom of the academic community, becomes little more than state police being kept off campus. The administration, and the powers that shape the life of the university, worship Science. Their temple is the Temple of Value-Less Fact. They seek to preserve this Idol by having it objectively enshrined in a myriad of temples in the fragmented faculty structure. They assume, by maintaining the university structure as is, that to be engaged in science one must, of necessity, be religiously committed to a Scientific Rational world-view.

Working from a commitment of what is objectively obvious, the Administration finds that university unity does not come as easily as their beliefs do. There is a desperate search for unity. Universities have been established out of commitment to the mighty gods of Science and its hand-maid Democracy, but now that these idols are under threat of being smashed into a million pieces, y people in the grip of other visions, the Rational Bureaucratic unity is under siege.

The university is characterized by a desperate search for a common vision which can democratically embrace all people, but the diversity of faith is not recognized as something which separates people from each other at their most basic presupposition.

Universities are organized as if unity of scientific perspective is to be found within the rational organization of the individual institution. There is no structural allowance for students of different universities to come together and reflect upon the fruits of their studies. Inter-Varisty Programmes and Conferences are limited to a particular academic area, hobby or sporting interest. Such inter-university occasions of learning are not considered as integral to the life of the academic community. The university is organized as if it is a separate world all on its own. But regional and national communal reflection of those who share a common faith is a necessity if the theoretical elaboration of a particular world-view is to grow and unfold in the various disciplines.
Here again, we see a consequence of the failure to recognize the centrality of the faculty-student relationship. It is not recognized in the current university structure, but is replaced by a mode of organization which implicitly assumes that the university itself is central to the learning task.

UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE IS A HINDRANCE IN OUR CURRENT SITUATION

The university as currently structured is on a continual collision-course with the all-of-life unity which people have. At most they encourage students and faculty to concentrate their intellectual energies upon the difficulties in their own university structure. The modern university also provides an extra-curricula diversion, in the student union. The anomalies of the university structure become so large and forbidding, that students very often forget the kind of unity they enjoyed prior to coming to these halls of learning. Students are encouraged to become university-centred. No wonder the university gets torn apart periodically by the student reaction. The reaction, by and large, still accepts the structure of university in an uncritical manner. Student academic unity, apart from AUS - a federation of student unions - is specialist; only the all of life radicals bind students from the whole gamut of disciplines together in an educative programme.

And the Left - and I'm not addressing the fact that they have dis-integrated into a multitude of competing factions - have lost the battle in the Student Union. They have accomodated to the structure of the university as they were bound to do - perhaps indicating a lack of real unity underlying their more spectacular efforts some years back. Perhaps they can regain the lost ground by organizing themselves into a radical left academic infra-structure. Do they really wish to change the structure of the university in a truly radical way? They must show that their leftist vision gives all those bound by it a radical alternative to be worked out in all disciplines - maths to english; physics to philosophy.

Given that the radical left have an alternative vision: Are they going to be allowed to theoretically articulate it within the structure of the university - the administration's responsibility comes in here to allow this work to develop unhindered by the dogmas of a bureaucratic vision.

But do the radical left dare pick up this gauntlet? I suspect that they might try and appoint such a person as John Playford as part-time faculty for this work, but when it comes to working it out, how are they going to escape viewing their own world-view as basically the same as that of the Rational Scientific Elite?

A CHALLENGE TO THE LEFT, THE RIGHT AND THE CENTRE

If the vision of the left is so different, how is it that the organization of the student union - in large measure in their hands a few years ago - exhibits the same bureaucratic tensions and frustrations of the whole university? What both the Leftist opponents of the Administration and the Administration themselves have in common is an uncritical acceptance of their own place in the university scheme of things. The administration's vision is a determined attempt to make the university conform to their
rational scientific model — for administration. They are thus willing to give the students limited autonomy in the Student Union, but to be critical of their own place would be tantamount to querying their unquestioned devotion to Science and Rational Technique. The students on the other hand cannot afford to have a view of the university which queries the place of the student union — the arena of their student power. If the student union was to go they have no guarantee that they would be able to keep up the radical critique of the university structure. They would have no venue in which to express their student solidarity. Both groups fail to effect fundamental reform because their critique of the university corresponds to their idolization of this social institution. There is no thought given to any structurally distinct educational alternative, as for instance, I am here proposing.

Again, if the Leftist students are so opposed to the view of the university as a degree factory how is it that they seek to further implement their view by calling upon students to engage in a university-wide strike? So is the university a corporation after all? What is needed is a truly radical reform of the university based on a re-newed vision of the God-given educative task.

The Christian Radical Club would like to be involved in a national venture to express their God-given unity in Christ, so that it might take on an educational form. They see their task as working towards a radically christian academic infra-structure such that the work produced, and the communal reflection generated, would contribute toward the healing of the gaping wounds that are the marks of the modern university.

Such activity does not require Administration approval. It will work toward administration recognition as a genuine educational endeavour. It would demand in the interests of justice, equal and fair treatment of all communal ventures of faith in the university structure — even the predominating one which is individualistically oriented and bureaucratically servile. We ask for no more than what is currently ascribed to the Faith Community of Democratic and Objectivistic Science.

THE STATE ALSO DOES HAVE A TASK IN ESTABLISHING JUSTICE IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

In the interests of justice the State should subsidize the alternative educative ventures equally. It should not place a monopoly of its aid to those universities dominated by the world-destroying faith in Science. These alternative educational ventures, within the cadre of the present university system will, in their early phases, be seeking financial and other assistance from the Administration. Perhaps it will only be through Big Business capital that alternatives will be able to survive outside the current university system. But they will all have to produce work which indicates by its insight, authority and power, its quality and creational breadth, that this is a real educative alternative which has to be reckoned with.

THE RADICALS HAVE RETIRED

It seems as if the left-wing students have retired to the cool-streams of the student union and discounted the possibility of educative structural reform. In this way they are helping to
maintain the cleavage between study and the extra-curricula student-union, by which students are torn apart in many ways. Woe to those who see the issues clearly for university reform of the structures which constrict real educative life and then draw back saying it's too hard!! Woe to those of us who shrink from the God-given task of theoretically articulating how all of creation holds together in Jesus Christ. And it doesn't matter if you retreat to the MAS - as your haven of solace - or the Evangelical Union, or even the Christian Radicals. If we retreat from articulating an alternative educative vision, and in reaction to the structural oppression you retreat to the student union to maintain the tension from the student's side, then we are going the Democratic Way, MAS becomes a means of educative death, and we end up with the pseudo-radical sophistication of Lot's Wife. Accept the university structure uncritically and prepare to be carried off as plunder by the Bureaucratic Prophets who will not be seeking the good and perfect educational will of the Lord God.

Criticism must be levelled at all of us. We are continually conned. We continually con others. Foresaking any God-given way for critical evaluation we retreat into clubs and societies; Left, Right, Amnesty, Worker Student Alliance, EU, SCM, Christian Radicals; you name it - faculty and administration - we are all guilty of seeking a university structure in which God's creation is torn into a myriad of isolated inter-personal cause and effect relationships, in a rationalistic sea of meaningless facts and truncated values.

We have uncritically accepted the almost-relationship of faculty member and student as a normal state of affairs; we have allowed routine to divert us from exploring the diversity of our integral and fallen condition. There is no bonds of unity concretely expressed between social science students and medical students. The university does not seem to care that they find so little cause for co-operation. And we prefer to have it so; maybe it is because we shrink from the actual task that remains to be done.

Let's see upon what basis there can be true educative unity. Can mathematicians, philosophers and sociologists, biochemists and linguists, work harmoniously together in one academic community? That's the kind of unity the university is striving for, whether it has consciously articulated it or not. Can faculty and students work integrally together, participating in each other's work, and learning from each other as theoretical insight develops and unfolds?

The Christian Radical Club's position is that Jesus Christ is the One True Basis for scientific endeavour. We do not wish to enforce our faith upon those who follow other gods. But we do seek to follow Him, in every nook and cranny of the academic task, in service of God and to the benefit of our neighbours.