

# THINK DEEPLY. THINK DIFFERENTLY.

**A series of short papers prepared  
for Associated Christian Schools**

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WRITTEN BY RON WOOLLEY

2019



## **About The Author**

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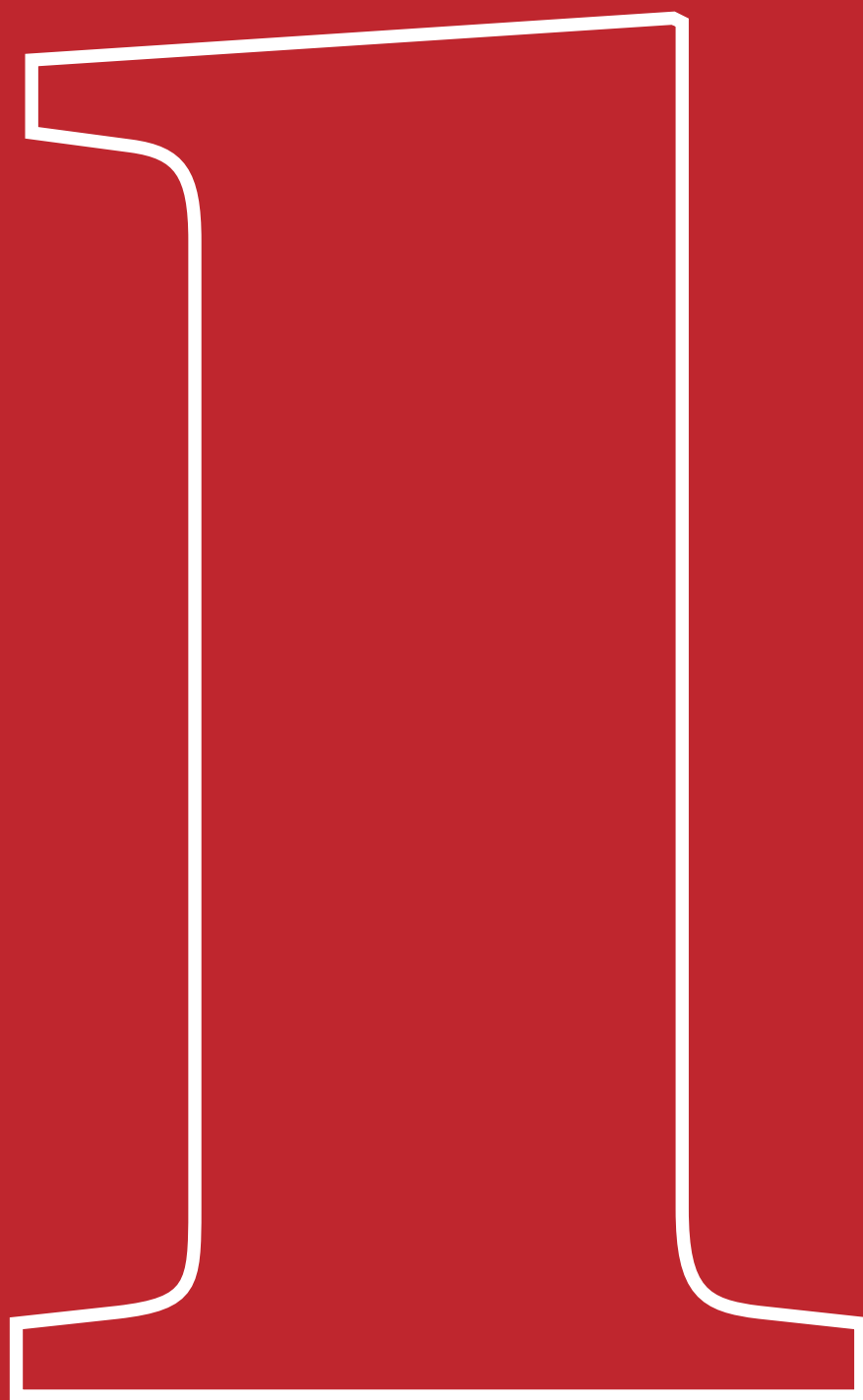
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Areas of particular interest in education include the integration of faith and learning, management structure, and international education.

Recreational interests include reading, world cinema, gardening and ACS Study Tours.

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C H A P T E R O N E

# HOLISTIC FORMATION

**Integrating the life of the mind, the  
life of the spirit & the life of work**

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## **Introduction**

### **AN EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVE ON FORMATION<sup>1</sup>**

Christian spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God and for the sake of others (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

The focus of spiritual formation is the Holy Spirit, who guides the ongoing journey.

The response is submission.

Formation is an organic, life-long, and holistic process involving right (ortho) thinking, right behaviours, and right feelings of individuals and communities.

### **THE PROCESS OF BECOMING CHRIST-LIKE INVOLVES THREE INTERWOVEN PROCESSES:**

1. Orthodoxy – Right-thinking about Christ and the Christian faith
2. Orthopraxy – Right-action/piety and devotional living
3. Orthopathy – Right-feeling toward God, self, and others

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.georgefox.edu/seminary/about/formation.html>

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**"All true Christian spiritualities help those who follow Christ to walk and live in God's presence with body, mind, and soul, in the midst of the sufferings and struggles of this world."**

Iona Conference, 1987

## **Background**

Associated Christian Schools' research tour (September/October 2018) included visits to Christian research Institutions on university campuses. Some campuses were evangelical Christian and private, (Gordon College, Boston; Redeemer University College, Hamilton; The King's College, New York City; Colorado Christian University, Lakewood), some were ivy-League and private (Yale University, New Haven; Cornell University, Ithaca), and one was Roman Catholic within a state institution (The University of St Michael's College in the University of Toronto).

It was notable how frequently the phrase formation entered into the conversation. This was particularly so at the evangelical Christian universities which may be considered within a liberal arts tradition, though they may define that variably. In such institutions, the big questions of life (the search for meaning, identity, purpose) are thoughtfully considered, so it is natural that their students' spiritual growth (formation) would be a priority. Yet it was also the case elsewhere.

As the tour progressed, thinking and conversation drifted from spiritual formation towards holistic formation. As noted in the opening paragraph formation ought to be thought of as holistic. The idea of holistic formation fits naturally into the very nature of what a Christian Higher Education college might hope to achieve, particularly with matriculants just out of school. While maturation brings a greater capacity for complex and integrated thought, such as may be found in Graduate School, that does not mean younger students are not already engaged in formation, but of what kind, and is it purposeful?

The following papers focus on holistic formation, suggesting an integrated approach - formation of the whole person. This might be expressed this way, holistic formation seeks to integrate the life of the mind, the life of the spirit, and the life of work.

## PART 1

## Is thinking about “formation” seriously a new frontier in Christian Schooling?

### CONSISTENCY OR CONFUSION?

In the sense that is defined in the opening paragraph, orthodoxy matters. Herein lies a question, what is meant by orthodoxy in the modern Christian world? For the first half-millennium after its emergence out of Judaism, Christianity was fairly clear about what orthodoxy meant as scholars and church fathers grappled to define what was truly Christian and what was not in countering the many early heresies. The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds remain the fundamental statements of that orthodoxy to the present day, especially regarding the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead.

The modern world is grappling with issues on which the Creeds are silent. That is not to say Scripture is silent on these issues, the most current of which relate to gender and human sexuality. The debate about these issues may have quite some time yet to run. Different Christian groups are struggling to resolve this, and if they do, they do so variably. The results resemble a melee of confusion.

### WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS BE THINKING?

Christian schools will define orthodoxy (ie right thinking about Christ and the Christian faith) according to their founding documents including denominational statements. However, we can expect that the debates swirling around in modern society will inevitably intrude into any school's life and practice, no matter what the written documents say.

Right thinking about holistic formation is something practical that Christian schools can do, focusing their communities on what truly matters to them. This may well be the best antidote to the influence of societal swirl that inevitably seeks to impose itself uninvited into the life and practice of a school.

### WHERE TO START?

It makes sense to begin by thinking about the school's curriculum. Here, Australian schools have a distinct advantage: the Australian curriculum or its state equivalent is an obligation imposed on all schools (a condition of government funding). So at least up to Year 9, the end of middle school, there exists a broad and general curriculum, supplemented typically by lots of sport, arts and service opportunities. It is these that are at the discretion of individual schools, as are any specifically religious activities like Chapel and Christian Studies.

(An aside: A mild surprise to us during the ACS Research Tour was discovering that a compulsory broad curriculum was actually considered in some places to be a liberal arts approach. We typically think of liberal arts in a more specific way, as an approach inheriting its structure from the classical tradition, or one strongly focused on the humanities).

Secondly, it may be helpful to examine what are the school's formative practices? This will include the broad and compulsory curriculum complemented by a range of sport, arts, service activities, and religious activities (which

ideally should be compulsory) like Chapel and Christian Studies.

It may also be helpful to consider issues relating to the implementation of those practices, such as: are they inclusive, is there equal gender treatment, are they open to all ability levels, are they a requirement for all students?

### WHAT NEXT?

James KA Smith in his writings has effectively highlighted the long-term value of habitual practice. In other words, while some activities are one-off, nothing compares with thoughtful, habitual practice. In the exercise of these he maintains, it does not matter to which tradition we belong, so long as we celebrate what is important to that tradition. This was the chief means by which Judaism survived its often-terrifying history, and is similarly true for Christianity. Australian Christian schools may look to older UK or US schools for inspiration on how to develop traditions but should be mindful to do this in a way appropriate for contemporary Australian students. This should be purposeful, not creating a tradition for tradition's sake.

A prime purpose Smith has drawn attention to the value of habitual practice is countering the influence of what he calls contemporary cultural liturgies. By this he means practices of the prevailing culture in which all are immersed. It is instructive to Christian institutions when he suggests modern commercial practice has learned to do this by imitation. Equating the impact of the modern shopping mall in the contemporary world with that of cathedrals to the medieval Christian world, he has given us a powerful image to think about. Christian institutions therefore need to evaluate their practices to make sure they are not obliterated by other more powerful cultural liturgies. Note: evaluate, not imitate.

### A FURTHER THOUGHT

Australia is considered a successful multicultural society, but Christian schools need to ensure that what matters as an Australian school is also celebrated. At stake here is the social cohesion that results from a tacit set of shared values. This includes recognition of and respect for aboriginality (ATSI), ANZAC tradition, and valuing other ethnicities, their culture and languages.

Christianity is on particularly solid ground here, as it has always held to the notion that the Gospel message of

God's love for humanity is applicable to all (mission) and worthy of communication to all (evangelism). Diversity is a matter for celebration in Christianity and evidence of the universality of the Christian message.

Christian schools should focus habitually on assemblies, occasions, chapels, discussions and events, where this message is brought purposefully into the light.

### SPIRITUAL FORMATION?

Much of what is done in schools of different kinds is actually quite similar. But in one critical aspect, this is not so. Christian schools hold out to their students a very different invitation, the one found in Philippians: 2: 14-16a (NJKV):

Christian schools should note that this is an invitation to enter into the life of the spirit by way of the new birth as

.....  
**"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life..."**

explained by Jesus: I tell you the truth: only someone who experiences birth for a second time can hope to see the kingdom of God. John 3:3).

Note too that such an invitation may be refused. While it is no source of joy to a Christian school should some decide to decline the invitation, it is important to remember that those students are merely exercising the free will that God has purposefully given them. It is always for them to decide. Further, there is all of their life for them to consider varying any initial refusal.

What schools do and how what they do shapes students' formation, is by its very nature limited to this one phase of life - the schooling years - in the whole spectrum of what will be their human experience. That said, the practices that enable the invitation to enter into the life of the spirit, are very much the responsibility of the Christian school. It behoves the school to make the formative practices that lead up to the invitation as winsome as possible.

## **IS THE NEW SOMETIMES THE OLD SIMPLY REDISCOVERED?**

The rate of pace of change in the modern world bears no resemblance to the much longer change timeframes of earlier years. In such a world, the eternal values of Christianity faithfully practiced may adopt aspects of style from the prevailing culture, but not its substance.

In Christianity, Orthodox and Catholic traditions have their heroes of the faith – the saints, the church fathers and popes, and their liturgical and devotional life may include or even centre on them. These liturgical traditions are also shaped by adhering to the Christian calendar with its celebration of various holy seasons.

Evangelicalism has its heroes, but usually no systemised liturgical or devotional life that sustains it in quite the same way as Orthodoxy or Catholicism. However, at its centre is a respect for the authority of the Scriptures (Bible) and the work of the Holy Spirit in making this a living word in each believer. In the modern secular world there is a very great risk of this inheritance being lost, and with it, the underpinnings of western culture.

Evangelical Christian schools should develop formative practices then that counter this. In avoiding formalism, evangelical churches have struggled to do this well, but Christian schools would do well to retain those elements of historic practice that demonstrate the profound respect for and centrality of the Scriptures central to evangelicalism. Why?

Because it is the Scriptures that provide us with the essential three interwoven processes (mentioned in the opening paragraph) as vital for formation:

- Right-thinking about Christ and the Christian faith (orthodoxy)
- Right-action/piety and devotional living (orthopraxy)
- Right-feeling toward God, self, and others (orthopathy)

The missionary founder of Tokyo's Joshi Gakuin School, in explaining to her students that the school would have very few rules said by way of explanation, you have the Bible; you know how to behave.

A brave statement perhaps, but there is much wisdom in that generalisation and when you think about it, evangelical Christian schools could become the leading schools in the nation were they to consistently focus on what truly

matters in building up a culture of virtue, and the alumni of such schools in time could become the nation's future cultural leaders. Surely it is for this purpose that God formed the Christian school movement?

In discerning how best to respond to this, evangelical Christian schools in Australia could profitably look to older traditions, particularly Catholic and Anglican, to test how important formative practices were to their success.

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## PART 2

### **Holistic formation – the challenge for Christian Higher Education**

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#### **THE IMPERATIVE**

In his book, *God is Good for You*<sup>1</sup>, Greg Sheridan, foreign editor for *The Australian* and a respected practising Catholic commentator, writes about decline in Christian belief, Catholic and Christian schools, though they do much wonderful work, have not been effective in communicating even the knowledge of Christianity to their students, much less instilling a devotion to lifelong commitment... But part of the crisis of belief in Western Christianity is a paradoxical crisis of knowledge. In our smartphones, we all have instant access to almost all the knowledge that human beings have ever accumulated... And yet here we have a generation who know almost nothing of the content of Christianity, either what it actually believes or its history. Therefore they know almost nothing of the history and the content of their own civilisation.

#### **THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT – CONSISTENCY OR CONFUSION**

In the sense that it is defined in the opening paragraph, orthodoxy matters. Herein lies the question, what is meant by orthodoxy in the modern Christian world? For the first half-millennium after its emergence out of Judaism, Christianity was fairly clear about what orthodoxy meant, as scholars and church fathers grappled to define what was truly Christian and what was not while countering many early heresies. The Apostles' and Nicene creeds remain the fundamental statements of that orthodoxy to the present day, especially regarding the very nature of the Godhead as Trinity. Rediscovering the historic creeds

of the faith could be just the anchor that contemporary Christianity needs.

The modern secular world is grappling with issues on which the Creeds are silent. That is not to say Scripture is silent on these issues, the most current of which relate to gender and human sexuality. The debate about these issues may have quite some time yet to run. Different Christian groups are struggling to resolve this, and when they do, they do so variably. The results resemble a melee of confusion.

Christian Higher Education colleges will define orthodoxy (ie right thinking about Christ and the Christian faith) according to their founding documents including denominational statements. However, we can expect that the debates swirling around in modern society will continue inevitably to intrude into any institution's life and practice, no matter what the written documents say.

Right thinking about holistic formation is something practical Christian Higher Education colleges can do, focusing their communities on what truly matters to them. This may well be the best antidote to the influence of societal swirl that inevitably will seek to impose itself - uninvited - into the life and practice of any Higher Education institution.

#### **THE LIFE OF THE MIND – CONSISTENCY OR CONFUSION**

It makes sense to begin by thinking about course content.

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<sup>1</sup> *God is Good for You - A Defence of Christianity in Troubled Times* (Allen & Unwin, 2018, p9)

It is an identifying feature of Christian colleges that they seek to integrate faith (what is believed, or the life of the spirit) and learning (the life of the mind). Further, on matters relating to academic freedom, it is fundamental though perhaps not widely appreciated, that Christian institutions hold as axiomatic that all truth is God's truth. It is to Augustine, the early church father, that articulation of this is first attributed. Canadian Reformed philosopher Francis Schaeffer coined the term "true truth" to emphasise that knowledge that is true will be God's truth too. It is useful to note this, so that the argument that Christian institutions are philosophically buttressed against new knowledge may be effectively countered. Research in higher education is all about the creation of new knowledge.

This in no way diminishes firmly held views on the inerrancy of Scripture, and evangelicals consider the interpretation of Scripture to be the work or ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. In other words, the Scriptures rightly interpreted gives us a means by which we can judge whether knowledge is true. This is consistent with what the Scriptures teach about wisdom.

Secondly, it may be helpful to examine what are the institution's formative practices? These may be rich and varied, and not limited to specifically religious activities like Chapel and Christian Studies. It may also be helpful to consider issues relating to the implementation of those practices: are they inclusive, available to all, are they a requirement for all?

James KA Smith<sup>2</sup> has effectively highlighted the long-term value of habitual practice. In other words, while some activities may be one-off, nothing compares with thoughtful, habitual practice. In the exercise of these, he maintains, the tradition to which we belong is not so much the issue as celebrating what is important to that tradition. The habitual, regular recalling of milestones of God's revelation was the chief means by which Judaism survived its often-terrifying history, and is similarly true for Christianity. We may look to older institutions and historic Christianity for inspiration on how to develop traditions, but we should be mindful to do this in a way appropriate for contemporary Australians. They should be purposeful, not tradition for tradition's sake.

The prime purpose Jamie Smith has drawn our attention

to the value of habitual practice is in countering or balancing the influence of what he calls contemporary cultural liturgies. By this, he means the practices of the prevailing culture in which all are immersed. It is instructive to Christian institutions when he suggests that modern commercial practice has learned this by imitation. Equating the impact in the contemporary world of the modern shopping mall with that of ancient cathedrals in the medieval Christian world, he has given us powerful imagery to think on.

Christian institutions need to evaluate their formative practices to ensure they are not obliterated by more powerful cultural liturgies. Note: evaluate, not necessarily imitate.

Diversity as a mark of Christianity - a further thought  
Australia is a successful multicultural society, and Christian institutions need to ensure that what matters as an Australian institution is also celebrated. At stake here is the social cohesion that results from a tacit set of shared values. This includes recognition of and respect for aboriginality (ATSI), ANZAC tradition, and valuing other ethnicities, their culture and their languages. Christianity is on particularly solid ground here, as it has always held to the notion that the Gospel message of God's love for humanity is applicable to all (mission) and worthy of communication to all (evangelism). Diversity is a matter for celebration in Christianity and evidence of the universality of the Christian message. A Christian Higher Education college should focus (habitually) on occasions, chapels, discussions, events, where this message is brought purposefully into the light.

## THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT - A DISTINCTIVE

Much of what occurs in Higher Education institutions of all kinds might actually be similar. But in one critical aspect, this is not so. A Christian college holds out to its students a very distinctive invitation, the one found in Philippians: 2: 14-16a (NJKV):

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**"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life..."**

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<sup>2</sup> *Desiring the Kingdom* (Barker, 2017)

This is an invitation to enter into the life of the spirit by way of the new birth, as explained by Jesus: I tell you the truth: only someone who experiences birth for a second time can hope to see the kingdom of God. John 3:3).

Such an invitation may be refused. While it is no source of joy should some decide to decline the invitation, it is important to remember that those students are merely exercising the free will that God has purposefully given them. It is always for them to decide. Further, there is all of life for them to consider changing their initial refusal.

What a Higher Education institution does, and how what it does shapes students' formation, is limited to one short phase of life - the college years - in the whole spectrum of their life experience. That said, the practices that enable the invitation to enter into the life of the spirit, are the responsibility of the institution, and it behoves the Christian college to make sure the formative practices that lead to the invitation are as winsome as possible.

### THINKING ABOUT THE LIFE OF WORK

Australian students are used to thinking about career destinations from an early age, though many are uncertain whether their choices will in fact, be good for them, or even whether they can be realised. The virtue of graduates undertaking a second degree at masters or higher is it that it provides extra time for maturation, and with that maturation, better-informed thinking about the future life of work.

For Christians, this ought to be within the context of a growing sense of God's unfolding purpose for them. It is critical that students develop some sense of God's calling (vocation). This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Purposeful work and individual destiny are the issues at stake here, rather than dollars. Monetary reward for working in a vocation is important, just not the central thing. The sense of vocation is the central issue.

Christian Higher Education colleges will have to be purposeful about the life of work and how that is approached Christianly in helping their students' formation if it is to be holistic. Taking lifelong interest in their alumni is good practice for any Christian institution. Colleges often expect alumni to sow back where they have reaped or benefited. But if ongoing relationships have not been cultivated – and this should be an outcome of holistic formation – then the likelihood of philanthropic support,

so vital to private institutions for succeeding generations, may be low.

### CONCLUDING...

The rate of pace of change in the modern world bears no resemblance to the longer change timeframes of earlier generations. In such a world, the eternal values of Christianity faithfully practiced may adopt aspects of style from the prevailing culture, but not its substance. In Christianity, Orthodox and Catholic traditions have their heroes of the faith – the saints, the church fathers, the popes – and their liturgical and devotional life may include or even centre on them. These liturgical traditions are also shaped by adhering to the Christian calendar, with its celebration of various holy seasons. Evangelicalism has its heroes, but usually a much less systemised liturgical or devotional life that sustains it in quite the same way as Orthodoxy or Catholicism.

However, at centre of evangelicalism is a respect for the authority of the Scriptures (Bible) and the work of the Holy Spirit in making this a living word in each believer. In the modern world there is a very great risk of this inheritance being lost, and with it, the underpinnings of culture. An evangelical Christian college should develop formative practices that counter this. In avoiding formalism evangelical churches have struggled to do this well, but Christian colleges would do well to retain or restore elements of historic practice that demonstrate the profound respect for and centrality of the Scriptures that is so central to evangelicalism.

Why? It is the Scriptures that provide us with the essential three interwoven processes (mentioned in the opening paragraph) as vital for formation:

- Right-thinking about Christ and the Christian faith (orthodoxy)
- Right-action/piety and devotional living (orthopraxy)
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The missionary founder of Tokyo's Joshi Gakuin School, in explaining to her students that the school would have very few rules said by way of explanation, you have the Bible; you know how to behave. A brave statement perhaps, but there is wisdom in that generalisation. And when you think about it, an evangelical Christian Higher Education college has a special responsibility to consistently focus on what truly matters in building a culture of virtue, as the alumni of those institutions in time could become the nation's

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## PART 3

### **Formation of Faculty and Staff in Christian Schools and Colleges**

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#### **WHY THINK THIS WAY?**

We may think of formation as something primarily for students in Ministry, Bible or Theological Colleges. This series of papers encourages us to think of formation as an ongoing all-of-life holistic process encompassing the life of the spirit and the life of the mind but extending to and including the life of work. For this paper, the work context is that of teaching faculty or staff engaged in Christian education. The faculty denotes those who have a teaching responsibility, staff denotes all other staff. Hereinafter the term staff will be used to refer to faculty and other staff together.

It is important for Christian institutions that aspire to integrate faith and learning holistically, that these thoughts on holistic formation apply to everyone who works in the Christian education institution. It has been assumed that this is “not really practical”. However, if we take Scripture seriously, the role-modelling that should be occurring for the benefit of all is not confined to the teaching faculty, even if there is a primacy there. For this reason, Christian institutions seek to appoint staff whose loves are discerned to fit the Scriptural notion of who or what a Christian is.

Scripture sees such as people who have begun a process of transformation. Whether as a child born into a family of practicing Christians, or as an mature person who has come to faith, the process of transformation continues for as long as that individual professes faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

#### **INSPIRATION DRAWN FROM AN EXPERIENCED SOURCE**

Many of our newer Christian schools and colleges have been founded by evangelical Protestants. But before such lies a heritage of several millennia. The whole Judaeo-Christian tradition shows God’s unfolding revelation of Himself to humankind, culminating in the person of Jesus Christ, and propagated now by His church, figuratively and really defined by Scripture as the body of Christ. This tradition represents a massively long time-frame for withstanding both internal and external scrutiny.

It is helpful to ask, what may we learn about holistic formation from older, historic institutions to anchor us in a rapidly changing and sometimes hostile world?

Modern institutions are somewhat in crisis. Secular ones like banks, political parties and corporations have frequently demonstrated human failure at a leadership level – but it is not just a crisis of leadership. It is the age-old human problem that Scripture reveals is why the Saviour came – to deliver a fallen world from the consequences of sinfulness.

The one place where we might have expected outcomes would have been different is the church, but like all human institutions, the church is flawed. We might wish for better outcomes in our evangelical schools and colleges, but that might be simply wishful thinking unless we pay attention to the holistic formation of those who work in them.

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops recently published a booklet, *The Strength of a Vocation* subtitled *Consecrated Life Today*<sup>1</sup>. While this relates Pope Francis's thoughts on Catholics called to religious life in Catholic institutions, it contains insights applicable to evangelical schools and colleges.

Pope Francis himself is a Jesuit, a member of a religious institution, the Society of Jesus.

### **OUR CALL (VOCATION)**

A helpful observation Pope Francis makes is that someone with institutional authority should discern whether or not a candidate's expressed call to a vocation is actual or not. He contends that a failure in discernment at entry point is a contributing reason why institutions have later suffered the ignominy of failure as instances of abuse of adults or children have been uncovered.

It is imperative that a school or college leader (the Head and perhaps at least one senior executive member) take this need for discernment into account when appointing staff. Mostly, appointments are made after perhaps a couple of interviews, where great care has to be taken not to expose the school or college to possible later allegations of unlawful discrimination. Under present law, it might seem almost impossible to get discernment right. Yet we must. The central issue is not just whether the candidate is qualified, but whether that candidate is being called by God (ie has a vocation) to the particular work situation.

Calling for careful discernment by those interviewing means such a process should not be unduly rushed. Discernment takes time, which is why it is better to have a minimum of two people used to thinking about vocation (call) interview.

### **THE PROCESS OF HOLISTIC FORMATION...**

At this point It may be helpful to review the life of the mind, the life of the spirit and the life of work as holistic formation seeks to integrate these three. A candidate who is a Christian has already begun the journey of formation, and once the candidate is appointed to a school or college that formation continues, so it behoves the institution to take seriously the ongoing work of holistic formation by the institution. It should not be presumed it is enough that the appointee is a Christian, or even has some understanding

of how to integrate faith and learning.

### **...AND THE IMPERATIVE**

In his recent book, *God is Good for You*<sup>2</sup>, Greg Sheridan, foreign editor for *The Australian* and a respected practicing Catholic commentator, writes about decline in Christian belief this way, Catholic and Christian schools, though they do much wonderful work, have not been effective in communicating even the knowledge of Christianity to their students, much less instilling a devotion to lifelong commitment... But part of the crisis of belief in Western Christianity is a paradoxical crisis of knowledge. In our smartphones we all have instant access to almost all the knowledge that human beings have ever accumulated... And yet here we have a generation who know almost nothing of the content of Christianity, either what it actually believes or its history. Therefore they know almost nothing of the history and the content of their own civilisation.

### **THE LIFE OF THE MIND – CONSISTENCY OR CONFUSION**

It makes sense to begin by thinking about course content. It is an identifying feature of Christian schools and colleges that they seek to integrate faith (what is believed, or the life of the spirit) and learning (the life of the mind). Further, on matters relating to academic freedom it is fundamental though perhaps not widely appreciated, that Christian institutions hold as axiomatic all truth is God's truth. It is to Augustine, the early church father, that articulation of this is first attributed. Canadian Reformed philosopher Francis Schaeffer coined the term "true truth" to emphasise that knowledge that is true will be God's truth too<sup>3</sup>. It is useful to note this, so that any argument that "Christian institutions are philosophically buttressed against new knowledge" (ie are fundamentalist) may be effectively countered. Staff must be given opportunities to develop insight into Christian thinking about truth, and how to integrate what they know and what they believe into something resembling a consistent Christian worldview.

We should not fear new knowledge, which in no way diminishes firmly held views on the inerrancy of Scripture. Evangelicals consider the interpretation of Scripture to be the work or ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. In other words, the Scriptures rightly interpreted gives us a means by which we can judge whether knowledge

<sup>1</sup> *The Strength of a Vocation Consecrated Life Today A conversation with Fernando Prado CMF* [www.USCCB.org](http://www.USCCB.org) (2018)

<sup>2</sup> *God is Good for You - A Defence of Christianity in Troubled Times* (Allen & Unwin, 2018, p9)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bethinking.org/truth/francis-schaeffers-true-truth>

is true. This is consistent with what the Scriptures teach about wisdom. Christian staff who understand this will be empowered to help their students develop their own powers of critical thinking.

Secondly, it may be helpful to examine what are the institution's formative practices? These may be rich and varied, and not limited to specifically religious activities like Chapel. It may also be helpful to consider issues relating to the implementation of those practices: are they inclusive, available to all, are they a requirement for all?

James KA Smith<sup>4</sup> has effectively highlighted the long-term value of habitual practice. In other words, while some activities may be one-off, nothing compares with thoughtful, habitual practice. In the exercise of these, he maintains, the tradition to which we belong is not so much the issue as celebrating what is important to that tradition. The habitual, regular recalling of milestones of God's revelation was the chief means by which Judaism survived its often-terrifying history, and is similarly true for Christianity. We may look to older institutions and



*ACS 2015 study tour members met with Jamie Smith in Grand Rapids, US*

historic Christianity for inspiration on how to develop traditions, but we should be mindful to do this in a way appropriate for contemporary Australians. They should be purposeful, not tradition for tradition's sake.

The prime purpose Jamie Smith has drawn our attention to the value of habitual practice is in countering or balancing the influence of what he calls contemporary cultural liturgies. By this, he means the practices of the prevailing culture in which all are immersed. It is instructive to Christian institutions when he suggests that modern commercial practice has learned this by imitation. Equating the impact in the contemporary world of the modern shopping mall with that of ancient cathedrals in the medieval Christian world, he has given us powerful imagery to think on.

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<sup>4</sup> *Desiring the Kingdom* (Barker, 2017)

Christian institutions need to evaluate their formative practices to ensure they are not obliterated by more powerful cultural liturgies. Note: evaluate, not necessarily imitate.

### **THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT – CONSISTENCY OR CONFUSION**

In the sense that it is defined in the opening paragraph, orthodoxy matters. Herein lies the question, what is meant by orthodoxy in the contemporary Christian world? For the first half-millennium after emergence out of Judaism, Christianity was fairly clear about what orthodoxy meant, as scholars and church fathers grappled to define what was truly Christian and what was not while countering many early heresies. The Apostles' and Nicene creeds remain the fundamental statements of that orthodoxy to the present day, especially regarding the very nature of the Godhead as Trinity. Rediscovering the historic creeds of the faith could be just the anchor that contemporary Christianity needs.

The modern secular world is grappling with issues on which the Creeds are silent. That is not to say Scripture is silent on these issues, the most current of which relate to gender and human sexuality. The debate about these issues may have quite some time yet to run. Different Christian groups are struggling to resolve this, and when they do, they do so variably. The results resemble a melee of confusion.

Christian schools and colleges will define orthodoxy (ie right thinking about Christ and the Christian faith) according to their founding documents including denominational statements. However, we can expect that the debates swirling around in modern society will continue inevitably to intrude into any institution's life and practice, no matter what the written documents say.

Right thinking about holistic formation is something practical Christian schools or colleges can do, focusing their communities on what truly matters to them. This may well be the best antidote to the influence of societal swirl that inevitably will seek to impose itself - uninvited - into the life and practice of any institution.

### **THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT AS A DISTINCTIVE**

Much of what occurs in educational institutions of all kinds might actually be similar. But in one critical aspect,

this is not so. A Christian college holds out to its students – and should frequently remind its staff of this – a very distinctive invitation, the one found in Philippians: 2: 14-16a (NJKV):

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...

This is an invitation to enter into the life of the spirit by way of the new birth, as explained by Jesus: I tell you the truth: only someone who experiences birth for a second time can hope to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

Such an invitation may be refused by students. While it is no source of joy should some decide to decline the invitation, it is important to remember that those students are merely exercising the free will that God has purposefully given them. It is always for them to decide. Further, there is all of life for them to consider changing their initial refusal.

Staff in Christian schools may become subject to circumstances that challenge the very fibre of their being, let alone their faith. The death of a student or family member, a tragic or fatal accident, the diagnosis of a serious or critical illness (their own or someone else's), a severe marriage difficulty or breakdown, all have the power to shake the faith – and work – of a staff member. It is vital that in a crisis they know to whom they can turn. A pious suggestion that they should simply turn to God may not be anywhere near enough. What they may need more than anything else is a listening ear, perhaps (but not limited to) the Head of the school or college. Pope Francis, in the booklet previously cited, suggests that formators (those involved in leading formation) need to be good listeners. He particularly recommends that the younger talk with the older, but the role of the formator may also include bringing another into the critical conversation so that proper discernment can occur.

The practices that enable the invitation to enter into the life of the spirit, or to meet the severe challenge without crumbling, are at least in part the responsibility of the institution, and it behoves the Christian school or college to make sure the formative practices that lead to the invitation or that help the troubled meet the severe trial, are as winsome as possible.

## THE LIFE OF WORK

In the New Testament, references such as 1 Corinthians 12–14, much of Ephesians, and Romans 12 emphasise the common standing of all believers in Jesus Christ, and the humility required as spiritual gifts and callings are exercised to benefit the body of Christ. In older Christian traditions (from perhaps as early as the third century AD) there grew up a difference between professionally employed clergy and the laity, but in the contemporary evangelical world this difference is now fairly minimal, perhaps reflecting a desire to be truer to Scripture.

It may be argued that all Christians should see themselves as in ministry since all are members of the body of Christ. Staff working in Christian schools and colleges should certainly see themselves as exercising a ministry. For this reason, work may be considered sacred. Contemporary evangelicals may be uncomfortable with the word sacred, as used widely in Roman Catholic or Orthodox traditions, or because it appears to create an unnecessary distinction between what concerns God and what does not. Whether we choose to use the word or not, work done in the service of Christ is indeed sacred.

This should radically influence the way staff in Christian schools view themselves and their work. As staff, they are also under authority, needing to preserve a balance between their sense of call, and letting their institutional leaders lead the institution. Staff must have and develop some sense of God's calling (vocation). This is a ministry



*ACS 2013 study tour members met with Chris Lowney in New York City*

of the Holy Spirit. Purposeful work and individual destiny are the issues at stake here, rather than dollars. Monetary reward for working in a vocation is important, just not the central thing. Vocation is the central issue.

The work of the Head of any school or college is multifaceted. For the Head of a Christian school or college, it is important that one of those facets be that of formator<sup>5</sup>. Whether this word is ever used by them or not, they certainly are involved in shaping the lives of both students and staff, so in that sense, they are formators.

Heads of schools or colleges typically set a vision and appoint the people who will help enact that vision. But the story should not end there. The Head will also institute occasions, events, ceremonies which exhibit the vision, and will conduct assemblies, hold staff inductions and institute regular staff meetings. None of this is exceptional. What would be exceptional is if Christian Heads were to see themselves as formators, and take seriously that the end or result of their work is the holistic formation of students and staff. That perspective may not yet be all that common, however, there are some examples we could look to for indicators of how their view of themselves as formators made them exceptional leaders.

Jesuits have played a vigorous role in establishing excellent schools and colleges. This work and the background behind it are described in Chris Lowney's book *Heroic Leadership*<sup>6</sup>. (It is mentioned here because Associated Christian Schools has developed a relationship with Chris Lowney, one that emerged first with school leaders at Citipointe Christian College Brisbane). The role of Loyola as a formator is the issue explored.

A second might be found with the late (2018) F Washington (Tony) Jarvis, former principal of Roxbury Latin School, Boston, America's oldest continuing boys' school. Jarvis's book *With Love and Prayers A Headmaster Speaks to the Next generation*<sup>7</sup> reveals in an anecdotal way just how seriously he took his role as a formator. Associated Christian Schools has previously recommended Jarvis' work to its membership, and the 2019 ACS study tour may visit Roxbury Latin, as his work there was the inspiration for a number of fellow staff members to now serve as leaders in other Christian schools.

## CONCLUDING...

The rate of pace of change in the modern world bears no resemblance to the longer change timeframes of earlier generations. In such a world, the eternal values

of Christianity faithfully practised may adopt aspects of style from the prevailing culture, but not its substance. In Christianity, Orthodox and Catholic traditions have their heroes of the faith – the saints, the church fathers, the popes, and their liturgical and devotional life may include or even centre on them. These liturgical traditions are also shaped by adhering to the Christian calendar, with its celebration of various holy seasons. Evangelicalism has its heroes, but usually a much less systemised liturgical or devotional life that sustains it in quite the same way as Orthodoxy or Catholicism.

However, at the centre of evangelicalism is a respect for the authority of the Scriptures (Bible) and the work of the Holy Spirit in making this a living word in each believer. In the modern world there is a very great risk of this inheritance being lost, and with it, the underpinnings of culture. An evangelical Christian college should develop formative practices that counter this. In avoiding formalism evangelical churches have struggled to do this well, but Christian schools and colleges would do well to retain or restore elements of historic practice that demonstrate the profound respect for and centrality of the Scriptures that is so central to evangelicalism.

Why? It is the Scriptures that provide us with the essential three interwoven processes (mentioned in the opening paragraph) as vital for formation:

- Right-thinking about Christ and the Christian faith (orthodoxy)
- Right-action/piety and devotional living (orthopraxy)
- Right-feeling toward God, self, and others (orthopathy)

The missionary founder of Tokyo's Joshi Gakuin School, in explaining to her students that the school would have very few rules said by way of explanation, you have the Bible; you know how to behave. A brave statement perhaps, but there is wisdom in that generalisation. And when you think about it, an evangelical Christian school or college has a special responsibility to consistently focus on what truly matters in building a culture of virtue, as the alumni of those institutions in time could become the nation's cultural leaders.

Surely it is for this purpose that God has shaped the Christian education sector?

<sup>5</sup> The typical definition of formator is a person who trains novices or seminarians <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/formator>

<sup>6</sup> Loyola University Press, reprint edition (2005); <http://www.tomorrowtodayglobal.com/2011/03/03/heroic-leadership-a-summary/> provides a helpful summary

<sup>7</sup> David R Godine, paperback edition (2010)

## **In Summary...**

### **HOLISTIC FORMATION**

1. pursues greater levels of integration of faith, learning, earning and practice
2. will not result without the thoughtful formative practices that nourish formation
3. is of eternal value for individual students and for the institutions that are seeking their formation
4. is seriously a new frontier in Christian schooling



CHAPTER TWO

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

**Both truly Christian, and  
truly an excellent education**

# GENERIC AUSTRALIAN IMAGE - SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE OR PARLIMENT HOUSE

## PART 1

### **An egalitarian meritocracy - could this be a quintessentially Australian achievement of Christian schooling?**

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Rupert Murdoch in 2013 gave the tenth anniversary lecture to the Lowy Institute for International Policy, founded by Frank Lowy of Westfield fame.

His opening words were arresting: I have come a long way to deliver a short message: The 21st century is Australia's for the taking.

Statements like this wouldn't attract serious attention, were it not for the reputation of the man who spoke them. Murdoch is the founder of News Corporation, arguably one of the most powerful agencies in the world, which brought us Sky, Fox News and The Australian. He's tough and he's informed.

Taking this statement: The 21st century is Australia's for the taking, I want to focus on what that could mean for Christian schooling.

This autumn, Associated Christian Schools' USA Study Tour was a landmark experience, focusing as it did on quality schooling and Christian education.

On the issue of quality, I was powerfully struck by the divergence between what produces mediocre and what produces quality outcomes. It was impossible to miss. This exact message is powerfully expressed in what should be a Christian school's marketing message: a school that combines high-quality education with a genuine Christian perspective, and how we do that establishes a world of

difference. It's not easy, and it's not cheap.

Thinking about quality, what's often missing in educational debate in Australia is a focus on merit. In his address, Rupert Murdoch said: We want people to strive, to make the most of their talent and not to be content with their lot. That is the essence of an egalitarian meritocracy. An egalitarian meritocracy!

The more one thinks about that, the more one should like it. An egalitarian meritocracy would be a quintessentially Australian achievement, combining an Australian value, egalitarianism, with merit-based on effort.

More is expected (and should be) of a Christian school student than may be the case elsewhere. We shouldn't believe in rewarding mediocre effort. We're gifted differently, and can't all come first; that isn't the point. Without effort, there can be no pride in what results, and that's true at all intellectual levels. The notion of personal bests becomes very relevant here.

Australia's immigrant people know the virtue of hard work and thrift, as did Protestant Reformers 500 years ago. Christian school students should know and practice those virtues too, so they don't over develop an attitude about "rights" rather than "responsibilities". This is the Christian attitude to work.

Australia's multicultural character means we've inherited a terrific enrichment of ideas from those who've had the courage to relocate to the world's most remote, environmentally harsh continent. We're a creative nation because we've had to be.

Such diversity is an asset worth recognising and nurturing. Disturbingly, we've heard overseas of Christian schools that focused primarily on the soul but to the detriment of high-quality education. Parents supporting these schools may primarily want to separate their children from society's ills or diversity. We all get that. However, separate-ness isn't the answer. There needs to be an engagement of students in lateral or divergent thinking. If that's not happening, the risk for a Christian school is in creating narrow fundamentalism.

Christian school students may be inclined to naivety so they should be encouraged to become more global, more reflective, more willing to deepen and broaden their thinking.

Associated Christian Schools has created biennial study tours for school leaders. Frequently, these include meetings with eminent Christian thinkers, now our good friends. We have unique stories of how the Lord individually led us to them.

Chris Lowney, whose award-winning book *Heroic Leadership*<sup>1</sup> ought to be widely read, was instrumental in gaining us access to Boston College High, where there was much to glean. There are close parallels between the goals of Jesuit education and those of contemporary Christian schooling.

James K A Smith<sup>2</sup>, Christian thinker and academic, has spoken significantly to ACS on the value of cultural liturgies and the virtue of celebrating our traditions. Such thoughts provide the philosophical underpinning for the development of formative practices in Christian schools.

Cherie Harder, President of Trinity Forum<sup>3</sup> in Washington, has spoken to us about cultural change. Trinity Forum publishes digests of Christian texts that help its readers to engage culture without compromising the faith.



*ACS 2015 US study tour members met with Cherie Harder, President of the Trinity Forum, Washington DC*

James Davison Hunter's landmark research on cultural change<sup>4</sup> was developed from research that challenges conventional Christian thinking on how cultural change is achieved.

We have learned to respect these eminent thinkers not because they think like us, but because they do not. This seriously challenges our thinking conventions, while giving us signposts in forging a way forward.

Christian schools must encourage themselves to innovate, focusing on divergent rather than conventional programs. Unusual opportunities are noticed when we've opened our minds to doing things differently. I think Jesus, and Rupert Murdoch, would express their pleasure at this, and encourage us: go further.

Above all, Jesus is our hero and our example; He wasn't afraid to challenge the status quo and frequently coaxed the extraordinary out of quite ordinary folk. This is our hope for students of Christian schooling.

<sup>1</sup> *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World* (Loyola Press 2009)

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_K.\\_A.\\_Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_K._A._Smith)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ttf.org>

<sup>4</sup> *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford University Press 2010)

## PART 2

# The legacy of Christian schools as we move into the future – insights and lessons

The Christian school movement is just a name that we give to that group of Christian schools that have emerged since the funding decision taken around 1974 by the Australian Government to provide assistance directly to non-government schools.

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The historical reality is that the churches were active right from colonial days in providing schools, when the colonial government did not. Around the 1870s, three denominations (Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian) ceded their schools to the colonial government in NSW in exchange for a “free, compulsory and secular education for all”, in return for which the government promised access by the clergy to children of their denomination for up to one hour per week. The tradition of Scripture or Religious Education or Religious Instruction in state schools lingers to this day.

A Sydney Anglican researcher has proposed that (NSW) state schools were essentially infused with Protestant values, and there is some basis for that assertion. However, most parents would have downplayed the more spiritual aspects of that, while wanting the civic values that the Protestant Christian worldview might have offered. Not a lot has changed.

Independent church schools however retained their special identities and generally speaking now form that cluster of higher-fee, faith-based schools to be found in metropolitan areas or larger regional cities. Typically,

these are single-gender with boarding facilities, occupying extensive grounds in well-to-do suburbs or areas. There are also some in outer country areas, providing boarding facilities for rural students.

The Catholic sector always remained separate. Catholic families in the colony were generally poor not wealthy, but their schools ensured that their children received a Catholic education, not the kind provided by state schools – which were for Protestants and other non-Catholics. As a result, parochial primary schools were to be found wherever there was a Catholic parish. A number of independent (non-systemic) Catholic secondary schools were established by religious orders, typically single gender with boarding facilities. These are today's leading Catholic schools.

Only in recent times have parochial schools come under systemic (diocesan) authorities like Brisbane Catholic Education. These systems also administer low-fee co-educational secondary schools which generally are post-1980s.

From this historical overview, one can see that religious faith has played a significant role in education right from colonial days to the present and continues to do so.

### GROWTH OF THE RECENT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL MOVEMENT

Now to the Christian school movement that emerged post-1974. This was not a single-faceted entity by any means.

It included schools in the Reformed (Dutch) tradition, schools established by churches of various denominations, schools established by interested Christian groups that were not churches, and so on.

There have been various attempts to create a single Christian school organisation, but the diversity of the sector has made that quest somewhat problematic. It seems the motivation for such an organisation is for purposes of political lobbying, seeking as much government financial support as can be wrung out of the government of the day.

Why did Christian schools experience growth post-1974? Factors that may have contributed might include the spiritual awakening of the churches associated with the Billy Graham crusades, the charismatic movement, which was a Pentecostal renewal movement within churches of mainstream denominations, and the election of a left leaning federal government that quickened fears that politics might foster more strident secularism in state schools. Later, the then treasurer (Paul Keating) floated the Australian dollar, inducing a recession, which forced Australian farms and industries to become internationally competitive. In time, this initiated an extended era of prosperity in Australia which allowed a large section of working-class families to move to a more middle-class lifestyle – including (for some) shifting their children from state schools to these new low fee Christian schools.

### CREATING A GENUINE LEGACY BY THINKING BIBLICALLY

The day may have arrived for some more serious thinking about the legacy of this Christian schooling movement, and the opportunities that may exist when thinking about its future.

I would like to suggest (at least to ACS schools) that we intentionally foster the notion that Christian education is an education for the common good. The Biblical basis of this can be found in a parallel in Jeremiah 29. After a thus says the Lord, the prophet suggests to Israel that the nation will go into Babylonian captivity, and that while they are in captivity, (verse 7) they are to seek the peace of the city and to pray for it– ie those holding them captive. It is an astonishing instruction.

The writer to the Hebrews might have had this text in mind when he penned these words in Hebrews 13:13-14, 13 Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. 14 For here we have no continuing city, but

we seek the one to come.

Christians are not advised by Scripture to isolate themselves from the surrounding culture, but to engage with it even if it is hostile. The gift that Christian schools have to offer a secular, sometimes hostile culture is a Christian education for the common good. It is the contribution of alumni of Christian schools to their society, then, that is the real legacy of Christian schools. All schools leave a legacy of some kind. What kind of legacy will Christian schools create in 21st century Australia?

In our rapidly secularising era, the influence of and respect for the churches is diminishing, so Christian schooling may have a responsibility to make up what is lacking. With that thought comes a caution. Our voice should not be a strident, fundamentalist, or antagonistic one. It should be a voice of moderation, yet one that stresses that what we do we do distinctively, with due regard to historic Christian values which are not self-seeking, but an education for the common good of all of society.



*ACS 2015 North America study tour members met with Cardus Foundation leaders in Hamilton, Canada*

The 2015 ACS study tour to the US included a visit to the Cardus Foundation in Canada, where a couple of speakers powerfully reminded us of this. The recent 2017 ACS study tour to the UK underscored the thought again, at least in the minds of the four of us from Citipointe.

Some of our schools are nearly forty years old. They have graduated thousands of alumni. If we could track the progress of these alumni, the research question one might propose could sound like this:

*Can evidence be found of the ongoing contribution of the alumni of Australian Christian schools that substantiates the notion that a Christian education is an education for the common good?*

Whether such research could be conducted under the supervision of the Cardus Foundation is worth considering, or if that proves difficult, could Australia’s McCrindle Research be engaged to carry out that work?

**A CAUTIONARY TALE**  
 Recently, an AHISA Headnet email advised of the closure at the end of 2017 of a school in Western Australia. When I checked out the data about this school I found this:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Average loss per annum
Enrolments	534	499	480	405	324	237	183	146	
Enrolment loss		35	18	75	81	87	54	37	55

There are twenty other schools within 7.6km of this school, and in 2008 before the enrolment decline, their self-description read:

*"The college has modern facilities set on spacious grounds and the master plan encompasses the construction of further buildings as it continues to grow. The college has strong links with the wider community and its 5 hectares of sports fields are regularly used by the public. "*

Yet in May 2017, only nine years later, their Board chairman had to write to the community:

*"It is with much sadness and regret that I write to inform you that the College will close at the end of 2017. This is a distressing and unavoidable decision. It is the intention of the College Board ... to sell the site, ideally to an education provider. Students will be told first thing tomorrow morning. If, however, you prefer or feel that it is appropriate for you to tell them first, please proceed to discuss this letter with your children."*

No-one would want this to happen to one of our schools. But if it did, the school's legacy could not be described in terms of modern facilities set on spacious grounds. But if the legacy was the contribution their alumni continued to make to the wider community, some sense of self-worth and pride could be maintained.

## SOME CHALLENGES FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. The value of a school's legacy is as stark as that just described. Legacies have to be stated in human terms, not in terms of buildings or grounds. Let's do some serious thinking on what God has purposed for Christian schooling.

For that reason, I have suggested that we build towards some proper research into the contribution that alumni of Christian schools are making towards the common good. This suggestion is to future-proof the Christian school movement should the climate become more hostile.

The applications of the findings of such research could be numerous, but the research would need to be approached, not in a primitive way, but in a professional way, or the conclusions might be doubted.

2. The last four decades have done for Christian schooling what they have done for Catholic schooling – wedded our schools to government funding. There is nothing wrong with that, as all parents pay taxes and are entitled to share in the benefits of their tax money as spent on education.

Not only that, but both sides of politics derive their support for school diversity from a United Nations charter on the rights of the child – this suggests that parents should have the right to choose the kind of school they want for their child. The mix of schools to be found in Australia thus differs from other countries, and this fact attracts both admirers and critics. The strength of the Catholic sector has been the protecting umbrella under which Christian schools have flourished.

The downside of this dependence on government funding, which has allowed fees to remain comparatively low, is that it has built a sector-wide culture of dependence. This mirrors the Catholic rather than the Independent sector, where relatively wealthy schools developed their wealth without much government funding, by developing more of a culture of independence and a reliance on parental and other fund-raising.

If this observation is valid and accepted, it should lead to increasing interest from Christian schools in philanthropy. This in itself is also a value to inculcate in alumni of Christian schools as they move on into their professions. Christian education should not produce self-centredness but a sense of service of others, including philanthropy. We've heard this specifically referred to at The Stony Brook School (ACS US study tour 2015) and at Emmanuel College Gateshead (ACS UK study tour 2017).

3. My final thought is that the next field of advancement should be support for the more difficult arena of Christian higher education. This is something Christian Heritage College champions in Queensland.

Sadly, the Christian school movement has not been any more unified in this task than in that of Christian schooling. The task, while being approached in different ways in different states, remains fraught with difficulties.

Bible Colleges have buckled under their confinement by and large, to the arena of vocational education. But the real battleground is in higher education. The champions of it are few, and the resources being allocated to the task are meagre. Plus, there is spiritual resistance. There is evidence to suggest that these spiritual forces have been very active in our public universities. Universities like to advance the virtue of their secular status, but I suggest we should not be duped by this.

Australia would greatly benefit from further diversification of the higher education sector. Even the Catholics are experimenting with smaller, different institutions like Campion and Notre Dame, in contrast to the multi-campus ACU. And Bond University is - so far as I know - the only independent non-faith-based institution, and interestingly is located in Queensland.

My hope is, in Christian education, that we might give CHC and others increased support, and perhaps look to the US or the UK for inspiration in championing the cause of Christian higher education.

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## PART 3

### **Pushing Boundaries Rather than a Barrow: A contribution to a discussion we need to be having on the purpose of Christian Education**

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#### **PREFACE**

Mediocrity is so enticing. It requires expenditure of no great effort. It results in no greater demands. It's like an invitation to enjoy the good life without having to contribute much in any responsible way to building the greater good. It is essentially narcissistic, in a lazy kind of way, certainly not about the common good. Which is why mediocrity in Christian schooling, or in anything really, needs to be challenged. But where to start?

As we'll see, if the common good is served well by entrepreneurs with extraordinary global achievements, culture-shaping innovation, and stretching of boundaries, any mediocrity in Christian schooling risks retarding students of excellence who could make a positive impact for the common good and for God's glory.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Christian schooling in Australia began in colonial days. Churches started the colonies' first schools and retain an interest in schooling to the present day. While much is now said about the secular nature of government schools, historically it is not accurate. When governments established schools, colonial authorities saw some limited religious instruction by the clergy as a way of promoting moral behaviour in students, which was probably good thinking given the kind of persons initially populating the colonies.

Government schooling dates from the 1870s. Today, all three sectors of schooling - government, Catholic and Independent - contribute to the mosaic that is modern Australia.

After a full century, federal government funding decisions (as was the intent) salvaged a decaying Catholic parochial school sector and triggered a growth boom in the independent sector (where the majority of schools are faith-based). Sector growth hinged on the guarantee of government funding, and the independent sector has well and truly benefited from it.

Catholic and independent sectors are now solidly welded onto this "guarantee" (though in political life, Australians have learned to be wary of political "guarantees" and so should Christian schools). A recent thought has been expressed that so far as market share is concerned, the current sector-share ratios may not vary greatly into the future.

In Higher Education where the dollar stakes are higher and government funding meagre, the picture could not be more different.

#### **AFTER GROWTH, WHAT'S NEXT?**

Christian schools established after 1974 were often characterised by Christian fervour about a whole range

of issues. The thought that Christian schooling could be different from government schooling was novel; government schools were becoming more secular, occasionally hostile to religious faith, and immigration patterns continued to bring change, especially in the capital cities. Faith is still important in Australia, but no longer limited to Christian faith. The almost-everything social revolution that began in the 1960s has yet to run out of steam.

A paradox is that while “being different” was appealing, the staffing needs of Christian schools were met out of the same pool of teachers as other sectors. Given the sectoral growth, it is logical to wonder why growth in Christian Higher Education has not matched growth in Christian schooling.

### **A SECOND PHASE?**

Teachers in Christian schools are still largely trained in public universities – hardly safe havens for thoughtful development of a Christian worldview, for those preparing to enter teaching. As noted, Christian Higher Education which might have prepared them (should they choose to teach in a Christian school) has lagged and seriously lagged. The few Higher Education institutions that were founded pretty much limited their courses to professional development for practicing teachers.

In contrast, Christian Heritage College (Brisbane Queensland) is an early example of a Higher Education institution (1986) that offered undergraduate courses primarily to aspiring teachers. CHC and private institutions like it, exist with little or no government funding. Compounding this difficulty, matriculants even from Christian schools, by their choices may demonstrate little interest in the limited offerings in Christian Higher Education. Those most ardent about Christian schooling may well have been the parents, not their children.

### **PUSHING BOUNDARIES RATHER THAN A BARROW ...**

The more established Christian schools now find themselves grappling with issues quite different from their founding days. The fervour that characterised their early years may have moderated, and a pioneering generation has largely been supplanted by the next generation of school leaders.

Some Christian schools, especially smaller ones, have made

a virtue out of “small = caring”. Other schools have grown larger, especially those that were market-driven and didn't have to work too hard for enrolments. The sector, in fact, is now characterised by a diversity that is shared with all sectors.

What does a Christian school do, when pushing the ideological barrow of religious faith is not as appealing as it was in earlier times?

Courageous Christian schools must push their boundaries rather than their barrow. This is not an invitation towards mission drift, rather, a plea for Christian schooling not to settle for mediocrity in any area, and especially in the application of faith values.

Learning from history, what today we regard as the nation's great church schools were those that focused on standards of excellence. While some have succumbed to mission drift, the theme “Christian + excellent” should now prevail if it hasn't before. In a truly Christian school, this must be for all its students, not just a few.

Christian schooling in Australia is extraordinarily positioned (Christians should add, “by God”) to see their alumni in the longer term contributing to the common good of Australian society. Indeed, good stewardship would propel them in this direction, as to whom much is given, from them much is required.

Looking to the horizon ... and asking, “what is the greater purpose”?

Two well-known, extraordinary entrepreneurs are Mark Zuckerberg (co-founder of Facebook) and Elon Musk (founder of SpaceX, Tesla and Neuralink). They don't have similar backgrounds, nor are they known to be Christians, but both have achieved the remarkable and done so early in their careers. Both are characterised by intelligence, and entrepreneurship; they are innovators, and (in societal terms) disrupters.

It's hard to say whether future leaders like these will emerge in significant numbers from Christian schools. But purposeful intent would certainly create the environments where it could happen.

As case-studies, these two entrepreneurs are worth a closer look because they are recognisable to almost everybody. No matter what we think of their personal achievements,

no one could argue that they represent mediocrity. Their contributions have been culture-shaping, as was the case with Bill Gates or Steve Jobs before them.

Looking to the horizon, and asking the question, for what greater purpose do we exist, Christian schools should build within their very fabric the climate, the culture, the spark, and the drive to lift students winsomely from mediocrity towards excellence.

Christian schools should reflect the values of the kingdom of God. But they also serve the kingdom of Man. Their students (and for the most Christian of reasons, it should be

stressed, all students not just the top) need to foster within themselves a resolution that through their excellence of effort, as an act of worship, they will one day contribute to the common good.

This is an invitation to thoughtfulness for Christian school leaders and teachers, some of whom may need to root out mediocrity of their own, and for others a reminder of the greater sense of purpose for which Christian schooling in this country has been so evidently prepared.

3242 (2015)

#### PART 4

## Meritocracy or mediocrity – what's it to be? A question for Australian Christian Schooling

### SOME BACKGROUND...

Egalitarianism is deeply ingrained in the Australian psyche. It is far less ingrained in the psyche of recent immigrants, who tend to try and make the most of the opportunities they perceive a new (to them) country offers. They are especially zealous for their second-generation children to do well, become prosperous, and look after them as they age.

As a result, the children of recent immigrant families tend to be the ones whose names appear in honours lists on school awards nights or at medal ceremonies for academic competitions.

With Australians of longer standing generationally, lifestyle considerations often temper academic aspiration. As well, among young Australians it has been traditionally acceptable to cut any “tall poppies” down to size, usually by sarcasm, this being justified by the thought that “no one should stand out above the crowd”. Egalitarianism, but at a cost, and equally fascinating, this “rule” does not seem to apply in any way to sport.

### BY WAY OF CONTRAST... SINGAPORE, UNITED STATES...

The catchy title of Lee Kwan Yew's book on the

development of Singapore is *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story*<sup>1</sup>. Lee was virtually the creator of this modern city-state, using his law studies in England to inform his later prime ministership of Singapore. The book is his reflections on what it took to drive an imperiled state (after being let loose from Malaysia) to the world's 3rd most competitive economy<sup>2</sup>.

Singapore, a fascinating multicultural society, is predominantly but not exclusively ethnically Chinese. The worldview of Straits Chinese may contrast to that of Malays or Indians, two important Singaporean minorities. Faced with the task of uniting a nation with disparate worldviews, Lee's steering hand was predicated on the principle that if affirmative action was needed temporarily to reduce discriminatory imbalances, at the end of the day Singapore needed to become a society based on meritocracy<sup>3</sup>.

Factors such as sexuality, race, gender, or wealth are politically debated at length particularly in western societies, where affirmative action for minorities including the offended, frequently overrides other considerations. This certainly seems to be the case with politically left-of-centre thinking.

<sup>1</sup> Harper, 1st edition (2000)

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_rankings\\_of\\_Singapore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_rankings_of_Singapore)

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meritocracy>

*Meritocracy .... is a political philosophy which holds that certain things, such as economic goods or power, should be vested in individuals on the basis of talent, effort, and achievement, rather than factors such as sexuality, race, gender, or wealth.*

The US remains the leading world economy, with acknowledged superiority in technology, innovation and creativity. Where did this come from and how did it develop in a largely immigrant society with significant and frequently disadvantaged minorities (eg Hispanic, and African American)? Like Australia, the US is an immigrant society characterised by great diversity. This appears to be an enriching mix from which meritocracy can emerge.

One thing the US has achieved is a spillover of its economic entrepreneurial success into education. Critics of US education sometimes cite OECD PISA<sup>4</sup> statistics to deride American schooling, and yet the US has produced some of the finest schools and especially universities in the world. The connection between higher education and innovation, entrepreneurship and capitalism is deeply entrenched and productive. Yet along with this apparent outstanding success there are some warning lights flashing: what is true for some is not true for all – there are winners and losers.

#### IS THERE A WAY AHEAD FOR OUR SCHOOLS...?

Rupert Murdoch's call for an egalitarian meritocracy if achieved would be a quintessentially Australian achievement, given Australia's cultural disposition towards egalitarianism. The question then for Australian Christian schooling is, can Christian schools develop themselves and their culture to achieve such a goal?

Reference has been made to the notion that each of the three societies cited, Australia, Singapore and the US, are ethnically diverse, a repeated phenomenon in many western societies. Each has successful educational outcomes.

Yet they are not the same. Singaporean schooling may be notable for the high expectation placed on students by their families and society. There is a strong emphasis on testing though there is also remarkable flexibility, witnessed by Singapore's efforts to improve continually. As a result, Singaporean students are noted for their willingness to spend many hours studying and their keenness to make their way to the top. High-end students expect they will do well. This is what a meritocracy produces. It seems to work in what is essentially a city-state with a comparatively small population.



US schooling is diverse, reflecting differences between sectors of society. For the purposes of this paper, what is notable is the attention given to the most academically able students. Magnet school programs, eg, help ensure talent is developed, such schools sometimes funded by substantial grants from foundations associated with large and prosperous companies, no doubt keen to ensure they have an ample supply of future well-trained employees. Yet disadvantaged groups may be less likely to figure highly in such places of advantage, leading to social resentment. A meritocracy may produce winners but may also inadvertently produce losers if the disadvantage is too great and with a large population, these differences may be visible.

Australian society may be more egalitarian than either Singapore or the US. Its population is relatively small though its economic ranking<sup>5</sup> suggests otherwise (13th in world). Talk of meritocracy is culturally not all that acceptable. Evidence of this is politically (for some), it is equality of outcomes rather than opportunity that seems to be the goal. This is something of a nonsense because not all students are gifted equally either academically or in any

<sup>4</sup> Program for International Student Assessment <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.investopedia.com/insights/worlds-top-economies/>

*In March 2013, the then newly appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland (UQ), Professor Peter Høj, addressing a gathering of principals, shared his thoughts on why he sees education and teachers as being central to “a socially-cohesive democracy”, and how UQ aims to be “elite but not elitist”.*

*Professor Høj grew up in Denmark, where his mother was a nurse and his father had left school in Year 9.*

*He became the first in his family to complete high school, but first he had to overcome challenges created by a speech impediment that held him back from starting primary school. He received the assistance he needed, thanks to a speech therapist provided by the Danish system.*

*Professor Høj stressed that although his family was not rich, he “never felt educational disadvantage”.*

*“The Danish education system was not elitist, but it was elite,” Professor Høj said. “That is a very important cultural distinction. At UQ we don’t want to be elitist, but we want to be elite.”*

*UQ encourages students to extend themselves beyond academic achievement, by having experiences that will help them make lifelong contributions to society <sup>1</sup>*

*1 Information supplied originally by Ms Fiona Kennedy, Office of the Vice-Chancellor & President, The University of Qld*

other area. A central issue is whether Australian schools are willing to cater adequately for diverse giftings.

In Australia, any agenda to be resisted is one that would perpetuate mediocrity <sup>6</sup>. The great challenge for Australian schooling is to more fully embrace Rupert Murdoch’s call to an egalitarian meritocracy, a call echoed at a tertiary level by Professor Høj for The University of Queensland.

### **BUT HOW, FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLING...?**

Christian schools should embrace Rupert Murdoch’s challenge. In the parable of the talents, Jesus acclaimed as trustworthy those who used their talents and increased them (Matthew 25:14-30), and held accountable those to whom talents had been given (Luke 12:48) as from them, much is required.

Australian teachers perhaps rightly tend to obsess about students with learning difficulties. As a result, diverse programs have been developed to cater for their needs, and schools have become much more adept in recent times at recognising those who would benefit from an intervention.

What is not as certain is whether schools are prepared to expend revenue to ensure their academically able

students, those commonly referred to as gifted and talented, enjoy similar attention. Gifted & Talented programs do exist in many schools and some schools are even designated selective. A real issue is whether there is a will to cater for all. Governments may be prepared to fund disadvantage, but there is not the same political will to fund high-end academic programs, that decision being left at the discretion of individual schools.

As with the disadvantaged, identification of the gifted and talented is not always easy or simple. In fact, it is counterproductive to be too definitive or else risk not identifying as talented those who may simply be demotivated. These are not identifiable by something as simple as a test battery, but alert teachers who know their students well will probably have no trouble identifying academically able but at-risk students.

It is the intent of this paper to suggest adopting as a goal for Christian schooling the notion of an egalitarian meritocracy.

### **A FOOTNOTE...**

For those who may like further definitions, the following may be helpful:

<sup>6</sup> <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/mediocrity>

*Mediocrity... the condition of being mediocre; having only an average degree of quality, skills etc.; no better than standard.*

Acceleration: Progression beyond peer cohort

Compaction: Progression quicker than peer cohort (the net effect: to create time for “other things”)

Enrichment: Additional programs, particularly where based on potential

Extension: Greater breadth at year level standard within a subject area

Assistance: Learning support in any field of learning (for diagnosed or not diagnosed; English as an Additional Language: EAL or ESL)

Honours: An enrichment program additional to peer activities

Talent Development: A preferred term for enrichment programs (rather than gifted and talented) <sup>7</sup>

## CONCLUSION...

Christian schooling in Australia has benefited from levels of government financial support perhaps unrivalled elsewhere, and has developed into a size-significant sector within independent schooling. If the sector is to heed the words of Jesus, with this blessing comes responsibility (Luke 12:48, previously cited).

This paper suggests that the responsibility for each school and for the sector is to contribute to the creation of an egalitarian meritocracy, where people strive, to make the most of their talent and not to be content with their lot as suggested by Rupert Murdoch.

If achieved, Christian schooling’s legacy would be a significant contribution to the common good of our diverse Australian society.

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<sup>7</sup> As identified by Citipointe Christian College Brisbane

# USE ACS BOARD IMAGE

## PART 5

### Christian Education for the Common Good: A Short Paper Prepared for Associated Christian Schools

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#### BACKGROUND

In 2018 ACS Directors approved ACS Aspirational Intent 2019-2022. The first of these is:  
Move purposefully “onto the front foot”, by reimagining ACS as both a learning-and-researching association, and an association of independent Christian schools collaborating for the common good.

The phrase for the common good was chosen purposefully, and has been incorporated as a tagline into the ACS logo. This paper explores what ACS means by that phrase.

#### BIBLICAL ORIGIN

Jeremiah’s Letter to the Captives (Jeremiah 29:1-9) notes

.....  
**"Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon."**

.....  
**"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. 6 Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. 7 And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace. 8 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. 9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the Lord."**

This surprising passage astonishes for two reasons:

1. Israel’s false prophets and diviners are condemned by Jeremiah because their reassurance concerning Israel’s deliverance was not the word of the Lord. Jeremiah writes bluntly, 9b I have not sent them, says the Lord.

2. Jeremiah then gives very specific instructions to the captives, 7 And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.

Some have suggested that this is a parallel to how Christians should view their time in this life, as the writer to the Hebrews notes, 13 14 For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

While this is not our permanent home, Christians have a responsibility while here to respond to Jesus' admonition as Matthew records, in this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

### **SUMMARY**

Although God allowed Israel to suffer generations of bondage in Babylon, He tasked them with praying for

the peace of the city. In like manner, since this is not our permanent home, while here on earth Christians are to pray for God's will to be done on earth, as it is in (our future home) heaven.

This is what ACS means by for the common good.

Christian schools have value for their own school communities. But they also have value for the common good of society. There are myriad ways, which individual schools might find to give expression to this. The important thing is to remember there is a greater purpose, the common good of society.

Any failure to recognise and respond to this would be to risk marginalisation. We are not here just for our own good, but for the common good.



3

C H A P T E R T H R E E

# WORLDVIEW THINKING

Where does that lead us?

# 4 KING EDWARDS - 29.JPG

## PART 1

### Nation building AND Kingdom building

Rupert Murdoch recently delivered the first of the 2008 Boyer Lectures, addressing the theme of globalism.

In this new century, Australia is wedded to the world - mostly for richer, very occasionally for poorer, certainly for better, and only rarely for worse. And I fear that many Australians will learn the hard way what it means to be unprepared for the challenges that a global economy can bring.

By most measures - the rule of law, economic performance and the quality of life - Australians today live in one of the most ideal societies on earth. Indeed, when The Economist listed the world's 10 most liveable cities, Australia had four of them. That is a tremendous achievement, and an advantage in a world competing ferociously for talent and capital.

Adding to this thought, just last month, the Legatum Institute published a prosperity index for nations, built from 11 criteria relating to economic competitiveness and 15 criteria relating to comparative liveability. Overall, Australia ranked number 1.

Murdoch continues: Here's my worry. While Australia generally does well in international rankings, those rankings can blind us to a larger truth: Australia will not succeed in the future if it aims to be just a bit better than average (end quote).

Interestingly, New Zealand's (then) new Prime Minister in his election platform and victory speech made a similar comment to his countrymen:

.....  
**"New Zealand can do better. Specifically, I believe that we need to revive the sense of Australia as a frontier country, and to cultivate Australia as a great centre of excellence. Unlike our parents and grandparents, this new frontier has little to do with the bush or the outback. Today the frontier that needs sorting is the wider world, and complacency is our chief enemy."**

We must heed this message: in a global age, complacency - just a bit better than average - is a chief enemy.

Why is excellence a hard concept to grasp? Christians certainly believe the world can be better. Jesus built this theme into the Lord's Prayer when he taught us to pray: "Our Father ...Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". We pray this way because Jesus asked us to, and because we ourselves want to be involved in the answer to this prayer.

We live two millennia away from the day that Jesus taught that prayer to His disciples. Does this great time length indicate a failure on our part to achieve what He desires? While I don't know what causes His return to delay, suffice to say that His delay affords us further "action" time.

Thinking about this theme, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done", I recently re-read William Dalrymple's book

"From the Holy Mountain"<sup>1</sup>. This Scottish archaeological historian wrote his book purposefully drawing attention to the plight of middle-Eastern Christians, caught historically between the ancient Byzantine Empire and the now homeland of Islam. I love this book, which I have read many times.

Re-reading it made me reflect on the task contemporary Christians have bridging the modern world and historic forms of Christianity. The early Church Fathers had a concept for this: "one holy universal and apostolic church"; or, God's church throughout all time recognising true expressions of Christian faith wherever they are found.

In a further book I read this year, *The Twilight of Atheism*<sup>2</sup>, author Alistair McGrath picks up an unusual trend – the demise of rational unbelief. McGrath identifies four renewing forms of Christianity: Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical and Charismatic/Pentecostal. The first three all have wonderful traditions of excellence in scholarship, so perhaps the more contemporary fourth can learn much from the historic three.



*Members of the ACS 2011 UK study tour met with Alistair McGrath at Magdalen College, Oxford*

Will future Christianity look different from today's? Why would we risk clinging to a past that will not return, rather than contributing to a future to be created? Is this not the awful dilemma of Islam?

When we pray "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" are we not imagining/building the future, spiritually? Had the early Christians clung to Temple tradition, Christianity could not have survived the fall of Jerusalem in AD70. The

Kingdom must come in each generation as Jesus invites us to pray for it to come.

What is the role of the Christian school in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth? Well, Christian schools ought to be great centres of scholarship and learning, as they have historically been.

And Christians have dual motivation: to be nation builders, hopefully at frontiers of excellence in an age of globalism along the lines that Rupert Murdoch envisages, and Kingdom-builders along the lines of how Jesus taught us to pray and live for in the Lord's Prayer.

In this sense, Christian schools are bridges: connecting students with God; connecting contemporary with historic forms of Christianity; connecting knowledge with wisdom; motivating their students towards excellence of effort for Jesus' sake.

<sup>1</sup> *Holt Paperbacks, 1999*

<sup>2</sup> *Waterbrook, 2006*

5105 (2009)

## PART 2

### War of Worldviews - it was the best of times, it was the worst of times

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A Tale of Two Cities (1859) is a novel by Charles Dickens, set in London and Paris before and during the French Revolution. It depicts the plight of the French peasantry under the oppression of the French aristocracy in the years leading up to the revolution, the corresponding brutality demonstrated by the revolutionaries toward the former aristocrats, and a number of unflattering social parallels with life in London during the same time period (hence the work's title):

*"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times;  
it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness;  
it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity;  
it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness;  
it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair;  
we had everything before us, we had nothing before us;  
we were all going directly to Heaven, we were all going the other way  
- in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities  
insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.."*

Charles Dickens English novelist (1812 - 1870) A Tale of Two Cities.

Dickens' words remind us of the Christian notion of paradox.

In the middle of this year, I joined a group of Queensland colleagues on a study tour to the UK which included a week in Queens College Oxford for the Ravi Zacharias Trust Conference, with its theme War of the Worldviews. It was hugely satisfying to be able to reflect on the war of worldviews in Oxford. This is the Oxford that burned the Anglican bishop martyrs Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer, yet educated the evangelist John Wesley, credited with saving England from the same kind of social upheaval as the French Revolution.

Two different worldviews, both producing social revolutions: one leading many away from God through a justified loss of confidence in the organised church; the other leading many to God in a spiritual revival which had social implications.

In war of worldviews, the choices are stark. The site in Oxford marking the martyrdom of the Oxford bishop martyrs

To have choice at all is a gift, and with the gift comes the responsibility of making the choice a wise one. In a Christian school, we must perpetually focus our students towards wise choices. Left to our own devices, or without the guidance of the Scriptures, their choices and ours may not always be wise.

The modern era is such an interesting time. In September, I listened to Baroness Susan Greenfield, an Oxford professor of neuropharmacology, reflect on the impact of the digital age on human brain development. Pondering the close association between brain and mind I remembered what the Bible teaches about the difference between knowledge and wisdom. It struck me that at a time when the sheer quantity of new knowledge seems tsunami-like how strikingly relevant the Bible is, eg in Proverbs 2:

*My son, if you receive my words,  
And treasure my commands within you,  
So that you incline your ear to wisdom,  
And apply your heart to understanding;  
Yes, if you cry out for discernment,  
And lift up your voice for understanding,  
If you seek her as silver,  
And search for her as for hidden treasures;  
Then you will understand the fear of the LORD,  
And find the knowledge of God.  
For the LORD gives wisdom;  
From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;  
He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;  
He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;  
He guards the paths of justice,  
And preserves the way of His saints.*

In the simple words of Dr Won Sul Lee, our late friend & patron of our International College, Bible people are wise. It seems that in the digital age, wisdom is what we need most. My point is that in order to be wise, and make wise choices, we need a spiritual guide – the one God has already provided; the Bible.

I appreciated this when I visited Joshi Gakuen High School in Tokyo a few years ago. The founding missionary and the Principal decided that they would not write a long list of school rules. In fact, what rules there were could be numbered on one hand. But on the issue of student behaviour, which is what school rules are usually about, they had this one thing to say: You have the Bible; you know how to behave...

Is it really that simple? Actually, I think it is. Our problem is not that we do not have available what we need for wisdom, but that we do not pay it sufficient heed.

The Australian Government has embarked on a major program - the Digital Education Revolution. Some have pointed out this is actually more program than revolution. At the same time as schools are being asked to embrace this digital age, the community as a whole will benefit from the rollout of a new National Broadband Network. The goal of all this is access by Australians to immense amounts of knowledge stored digitally and so to position Australia at the forefront of developed nations.

*It was the best of times,  
it was the age of wisdom,  
it was the epoch of belief,  
it was the season of Light,  
it was the spring of hope,  
we had everything before us,  
we were all going directly to Heaven.*

1066 (2011)

### PART 3

## The Invigorating Sap of Christian Faith

Professor Roger Scruton, distinguished British writer, philosopher and public commentator, in his book, *Culture Counts*:

.....  
**Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged, identifies culture as a source of knowledge emotional knowledge, concerning what to do and what to feel. We transmit this knowledge through ideals and examples, images, narratives and symbols, the forms and rhythms of music, the orders and patterns of our built environment. Such cultural expressions come about as a response to the perceived fragility of human life, and embody a collective recognition that we depend on things outside our control. Every culture therefore has its root in religion, and from this root the sap of moral knowledge spreads through all the branches of speculation and art.**

Tonight I will present a case for an authentically Christian education that preserves the good, the true and the beautiful, which Plato thought were so intertwined as to be inseparable.

There was a time in our schools and universities when Christian faith formed the bedrock for learning. Sadly today, as Professor Scruton notes: our civilisation has been uprooted. But when a tree is uprooted it does not always die. Sap may find its way to the branches, which break into leaf each spring with the perennial hope of living things.

Thoughtful parents looking for Christian education in 21st century Australia must go private and pay for it, as it is scarcely to be found in our public institutions. And despite this perception of Australia as secular, since the 1970s parents by the droves have voted with their feet, put their hands deep into their pockets, and moved their children to private schools, where 84% have a religious faith connection.

Many parents, it seems, are not so easily beguiled by sections of a prevailing educational elite which would have us believe that Christian faith belongs with the fairy tales of less evolved generations. Professor Scruton has elsewhere commented about prominent atheist Richard Dawkins and his followers, who have recycled the theory of evolution not as a biological theory but as a theory of everything – of what the human being is, what human communities are, what our problems are and how they're not really our problems, but the problems of our genes: we're simply answers that our genes have come up with, and it's rather awful to be the answer to someone else's question, especially when that thing is not a person at all. Nevertheless, people swallow that.

Recently, I attended a public meeting where an eminent educator from a prestigious university was critiquing the Review of the Australian curriculum. Though the professor made some attempt to be fair and factual, it was evident that he willingly self-identified with "the educational left" – the prevailing elite I referred to earlier. His beliefs coloured his remarks.

But I remember an earlier time and a different type of education: an education grounded on fairly solid religious underpinnings. This has ultimately given way to “modern” education, a result of the social revolution of the 1960s. Its secular legacy resides primarily in our public education systems, and the damage is not just to learning, but also to our culture.

I’m not against modernising but I challenge the right of the prevailing educational elite to sever education from its bedrock, its moorings, which is our western Judaeo-Christian tradition. Uninvited, they have imposed on us their culture of repudiation, determined to remove or marginalise every vestige of religious faith from our institutions of learning.

Providing a further example of the destructive nature of this, Professor Scruton writes: to those who doubt this, I point to the example of Islam, contrasting what it was when it had a genuine culture, with what it is today, when that culture is remembered only by powerless scholars, and belligerent ignorance is without the voices that might have corrected it.

Is our culture heading in that direction?

Citipointe seeks to develop the kind of education where (using Professor Scruton’s metaphor): sap (of moral knowledge) may find its way to the branches, which break into leaf each spring with the perennial hope of living things.

It’s hard enough to have private Christian schools, helpful though that is in providing thoughtful parents with a schooling alternative to a more vacuous secular education. Christian Heritage College deserves every support as it builds on the legacy of its Founder, Emeritus Professor Brian Millis OAM (Citipointe’s third headmaster). It is imperative that the invigorating sap of Christian faith flourish again in the higher education sector, where authentically Christian universities could provide a faithful witness.

Not that Christian schools and universities alone will repair our culture, but they will play a part. Invigorating an educated, faithful Christian presence will help counter the cultural damage that has regrettably occurred. We need to respect our cultural heritage and resist those determined to create on a quite different base an uncertain Australian future.

I’ve used Professor Scruton’s thoughts on culture to present a strong case for your support of private Christian education. I’ve previously acknowledged that this is not easy and it’s not cheap. Recognising that, I honour and thank those who have committed to that burden and have sought to provide their children with a morally and culturally sound education that should robustly prepare them for their future.



## PART 4

### Anchored by Hope

Set in 500 acres of stunningly beautiful Sussex countryside, and within easy reach of London, is Worth Abbey School. Their combination of excellence in all things, serious academic intent, and a peaceful, serene environment away from some of the distractions of modernity, is very impressive.

Undergirding their distinctive is adherence to a modern version of an ancient monastic tradition derived from Benedict, a 5th century Christian monk who established several religious communities near Rome. His most remembered achievement is the development of his Rule of Saint Benedict – a set of precepts by which his followers order their lives.

In contemporary life, characterised as it is by uncertainty and technological disruption, some have reached back to earlier periods of history in a quest to find an anchor, something solid to cling to when modern life seems so fractured, transient or difficult.



#### The Benedict Option

1 *The Benedict Option: A Strategy of Christians in a Post-Christian Nation Sentinel*, 2017. 272 pp.

Worth Abbey School anchors itself to a modern version of Benedict's Rule, which seems to be serving them well. Explaining their school's ethos, the Lower Master (in the absence of the Head Master), referred us to Rod Dreher's book, *The Benedict Option*<sup>1</sup>, a New York Times bestseller published in March of this year. I read it in order to better understand what it is that undergirds this exceptional school.

Dreher suggests that Christians in a hostile age might need to withdraw somewhat from the turbulent mainstream of modern life to the more ordered rhythms of the contemplative life that gave Benedict and his communities their strength. Conditioned by those practices, he suggests, Christians would then be better placed to offer their way of life to others in the mainstream of life who are searching.

Dreher's book has been surprisingly popular. In the modern age, is this the way to anchor ourselves to hope, or is there another?

One of our friends is well-known North American Christian thinker and writer, James KA Smith, who suggests that indeed there is another way. Also drawing from the 5th century, he invites us to consider the alternative example of Augustine of Hippo, a North African bishop, who had lived a quite unruly life until the ardent prayers of his mother Monica, a fervent Christian, secured his conversion.

Because he knew both sides of life, Augustine seems to

have had particular insights into human nature, and why humanity seems so restless. This is summarised in his wellknown insight: *You (God) have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.* Augustine suggests that we are primarily motivated by what we love, so much of our restlessness or trouble in life comes from simply loving the wrong things.

Augustine was not an advocate for the kind of drawing apart from society that Dreher, drawing on Benedict, is suggesting. In his essay *The Benedict Option or the Augustinian Call?*<sup>2</sup> Jamie Smith writes: *...my hope is that (instead) we'll answer an Augustinian call: centering ourselves in the life-giving practices of the body of Christ, but from there leaning out boldly and hopefully into the world for the sake of our neighbours.*

This is an opt-in, not an opt-out approach, and exactly how a Christian school should consistently believe and act.

The words of the American civil rights movement leader Martin Luther King Jr. also lean in this direction. He said: *"We have before us the glorious opportunity to inject a new dimension of love into the veins of our civilisation. There is still a voice crying out in terms that echo across the generations, saying: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that spitefully use you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven."*<sup>3</sup>

Outward-looking indeed, yet anchored to a powerful reminder from Jesus that what we love determines what we do and how we act.

Not far from Worth Abbey School and also in Sussex, is King Edward's School Witley.

Their marketing statement reads:

*"Traditional values, beautiful surroundings, excellent facilities and wide ranging-academic, cultural and sporting opportunities are all important. But what matters most is the quality of relationships which exist in a happy, secure and caring community, where staff are dedicated to bringing out the very best in those for whom they are responsible, whatever their background or ability. In other words, an education - in the true, broadest sense of the word - that gives pupils the academic qualifications to enable choice later in life, together with a set of skills, attributes and interests that*

*will sustain them in the future. King Edward's history and long experience of co-education reflect what parents and pupils seek. Founded in 1553, the school has a unique place in the story of British education. Christian vision, a Tudor palace and a boy King (Edward VI) each feature in the creation of our distinctive school."*<sup>4</sup>

The young King Edward VI heard the Bishop of London (Nicholas Ridley) preach a sermon on Matthew 25/37-39: 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' and – as was the sermon's whole intent - felt convicted to do something. He ordered Bridewell Palace to be given to the City of London for charitable purposes and so King Edward's School, the descendant and beneficiary of that Foundation, to this day maintains a sense of being "a place for Christ to lodge in".

In an age where everything seems to be changing except the need, King Edward's School has anchored itself to that hope.

### ***Two schools, two different approaches.***

Actually, both have something to say to an Australian Christian school or college. A Christian College should always hold out to its students and their families the invitation to enter into the life of the Spirit as well as the life of learning. The late Canadian educator Dr Harro van Brummellen first wrote those words in his Preface to the 20th anniversary history of our school, *In Gods' Hands*. As a distinguished Christian educator, he believed that Christian schools should be actively reaching out to their own and the wider community.

Like Worth Abbey School and King Edward's School, Christian schools need to be anchored to hope. I have many times reminded that we must remain anchored to historic Christianity. Why? Because across two millennia this mooring has been found tried and true. Australian society may be weakening its attachment to historic Christian faith; Australian Christian schools should not, are not, and must not.

Further, our understanding of God's will for us as

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/5039/the-benedict-option-or-the-augustinian-call/>

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5:44-45

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.kesw.org/Why-choose-King-Edwards>

Christians is that we are to reach out actively to a needy world. A Christian school is in some ways, a world apart, a world of difference – like Worth Abbey School - but its strong mandate – like King Edward's School - is to educate for discipleship and involvement in the wider world. We take our place proudly as independent Christian schools and we do so with a strong sense of calling, to prepare our students for a lifetime of engagement with the broader

Australian society. Our dream is that our alumni will be known for their contribution to the common good. Our hope is that they will remain anchored to hope; hope in God and Jesus' vision for the world, and hope then offered to the communities they serve.

*We must accept nothing less.*



C H A P T E R F O U R

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR A PLURALIST SOCIETY



## PART 1

# Why we should Teach our Students Purposefully about Christianity

Much of what is done in schools of different kinds is actually quite similar. But in one critical aspect, this is not so. Christian schools hold out to their students a very different invitation, such as the one found in Philippians: 2: 14-16a (NJKV):

*Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...*

The Christian life begins with an invitation experience the new birth, as spoken of by Jesus to Nicodemus:

John 3:3-7 (The Voice)

Nicodemus was one of the Pharisees, a man with some clout among his people. He came to Jesus under the cloak of darkness to question Him.

Nicodemus: Teacher, some of us have been talking. You are obviously a teacher who has come from God. The signs You are doing are proof that God is with You.

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Jesus: I tell you the truth, if someone does not experience water and Spirit birth, there's no chance he will make it into God's kingdom. Like from like. Whatever is born from flesh is flesh; whatever is born from Spirit is spirit. Don't be

shocked by My words, but I tell you the truth. Even you, an educated and respected man among your people, must be reborn by the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God.

Let's look at some social analysis data from McCrindle Research in their report Faith Belief and Churchgoing in Australia (24 March 2016):<sup>1</sup>

- The 2011 Census shows the majority of Australians (61.1%) identify their religion as Christianity
- The most common non-Christian religions were Buddhism (2.5%), Islam (2.2%) and Hinduism (1.3%)
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- The biggest growth in total numbers has been the rise in no religion from 18.7% in 2006 to 22.3% in 2011, which represents an increase in more than 1 million people over this time from 3.7 million to 4.8 million.
- Sydney is Australia's most religious capital city, with those selecting no religion (17.6%) significantly lower than is found in Brisbane (22.8%), the city of churches – Adelaide (28.1%), Canberra (28.9%) and Hobart, Australia's least religious capital, (29.4%).
- More than half (55%) of the population believes in God, as defined as the Creator of the universe, the Supreme Being.
- When respondents were asked who they think Jesus was, the vast majority (86%) believe he existed in some

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mccrindle.com.au/blog/2016/03/FaithBeliefandAttitudesTowardsGod-McCrindleResearch.pdf>

capacity. More specifically, a third (34%) believe He was 'The son of God and the Saviour of the World'. A further third of Australians (34%) think he was an ordinary person, with 11% thinking he was an ordinary person but with divine powers.

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Some might interpret these statistics as evidence of a very significant decline in Australian Christianity. However, as Ecclesiastes 1:9 (The Voice) reminds us, nothing is new under the sun; the future only repeats the past.

Christian schools have an unprecedented opportunity, during the enrolment lifetime of a young person, to hold out to them an invitation to experience the kind of life that Paul writes about in Philippians, to "*shine as lights in the world*".

## PART 2

**The Power of a Distinctive**

From foundation to the present day, the essential core values of a Christian school should remain unchanged. In contrast, we live in an age of disruption and rapid change, and uncertainty often accompanies a rapid change in society.

A Christian college should hold out to its students an invitation to live the kind of life Paul describes in Philippians: 2: 14-16a:

*Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the universe, holding fast the word of life...*

This is an invitation to a life based on a distinctive worldview, informed by the Bible and in particular, the teachings of Jesus. This is not an invitation to a selfish life. As Paul counsels in Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of others. Christian education is an education for the common good, for human flourishing.

So, enduring Christian values should shape the Christian school distinctive, yet unnervingly around us, society seems to be constantly and rapidly changing. How can a Christian school confidently maintain its Christian distinctive in the light of such change?

In their book *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme*<sup>1</sup>, David Kinnaman

& Gabe Lyons have commented about societal change this way: *"Western democracies are becoming more diverse not less. As the trend continues, many leaders see that traditional secularism, which insists that religion has no place in the public square, is dead. In the West, secularism separated church and state, ultimately becoming the referee that decides when and where faith can play a role in public life. And taken to an extreme, it ultimately leads to fake tolerance."*

*This, they write, pays lip-service to diversity but has (only) narrow bandwidth for real differences. It prefers the melting pot metaphor for civil society, where our differences melt away and we all become the same. Anything not the same, in the name of tolerance is skimmed off the top and thrown out. In this climate, those who dissent are (thought) evil and must be neutralised."*

The time has come, they conclude, for secularism to step aside in favour of 'confident pluralism'. Christian schools should take their place in a pluralist society without compromising deeply held values.

Christian schools should also plan for a more globalised future. An ethnically diverse campus, as I was reminded recently, is in itself a foretaste of heaven's diversity.

How does an institution maintain its values in the light of diversity? Here, Christianity is on home territory for right from the time of the apostles, Christianity distinguished itself, from the Jewish tradition out of which it arose, by its ability to accommodate cultural diversity yet remain

<sup>1</sup> *Baker Books, 2016*

faithful.

Kinnaman & Lyons, in calling us to confident pluralism, provide us with a charter for navigating the modern world in an ethical way, while remaining anchored to historic Christianity. They continue,

*"Confident, or principled pluralists, as some prefer, like to think of civil society not as a melting pot but as a 'potluck': everyone brings their best dish to share and nobody goes home hungry. No one is forced to eat tuna casserole or green bean salad, but neither are those dishes taken off the buffet to appease those who don't like them.*

*In a confidently pluralist society, people of good faith do not insist that those who don't share our values be legally compelled to live by them – to eat our green bean salad. That's fake tolerance. But neither should we be compelled by force of law to eat someone else's tuna casserole."*

In an increasingly pluralist society, Christian schools must maintain their Christian distinctive, holding out to its students an invitation to enter into the good life, not out of selfish ambition, but also in the interest of others (Philippians 2:4).

Kinnaman & Lyons caution us that If we believe that Christians have a right to extend such an invitation, confident pluralism also requires that good faith Christians concern themselves with defending everyone's liberty. Pluralism, and more importantly Christ's command to love our neighbours, obliges us to defend the rights of all citizens to live by their conscience – in and out of the public square.

John Inazu, Associate Professor of Law and Political Science at Washington University in St Louis, and a visiting fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Virginia, has commented like this: finding common ground between people of varying backgrounds does not require bridging ideological distance through compromise or change, but on lessening relational distance through civility, trust and friendship that emerges through shared experiences.

It is this approach we should encourage our students to embrace.

Our answer to Why is this important lies in the observation that the opportunities of the future as generally predicted,

will be global not just local. Those students who have learned how to bridge cultural differences through civility, trust and friendship forged through shared experiences will be the ones poised to take advantage of those global opportunities. This is just what we desire for our alumni.

Confident pluralism, John Inazu argues, does not mean changing what we believe, just allowing that others need the same right to act out of their own beliefs and commitments. By focusing on faith development for the common good, not out of selfish ambition, but also in the interest of others (Philippians 2:4), Christian schools' alumni will have been well prepared to contribute meaningfully and ethically to a pluralist society yet remain anchored to historic Christianity.

For Christians, the proper object of our communal confidence is always in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this confidence, we can engage with those who may not initially share our beliefs, and we can do so with a grace that flows out of our confidence in the gospel.

This is thoughtful Christian witness.

Paul's advice to the Philippians and also to our students is (Philippians: 2: 4; 14-16a),

.....  
**"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the universe, holding fast the word of life..."**

## PART 3

## Institutional Evangelism: A new frontier for 21st Century Christians sharing the Faith

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### PREFACE

from Month 2 Day 10 of Boa, Kenneth D. Face to Face: Praying the Scriptures for Intimate Worship (Face to Face / Intimate Worship) (p. 143). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

### INTERCESSION

*As You, Father, sent Your Son into the world, Your Son also has sent us into the world. And He has prayed for those who will believe in Him through our message. (John 17:18, 20)*

Take a few moments to intercede on behalf of local, national and world missions. Pray that the Great Commission would be fulfilled and for any special concerns you may have for missions.

### AFFIRMATION

*Like Jesus, dear Father, my food is to do Your will and to accomplish Your work. (John 4:34) This is love: that I walk in obedience to Your commandments, O God. And this is the commandment that I have heard from the beginning: I should walk in love. (2 John 6)*

Pause to reflect on these Biblical affirmations.

### THANKSGIVING

*You, Lord God, will swallow up death forever, And You will wipe away the tears from all faces; You will remove the reproach of Your people from all the earth. For You have spoken. And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have*

*trusted in Him. Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."* (Isaiah 25:8 – 9)

### THE CHANGING FACE OF CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS

At first glance, there is nothing remarkable about the above passages of Scripture intended as part of a daily Biblical meditation.

However, when we begin to think about Christian institutions that exist now that pre-1974 did not exist, it is not hard to imagine new evangelism possibilities for a post-Christian world.

These new possibilities have emerged because post-1974 institutions have been established that are distinctively Christian: our nation's Christian schools and Higher Education Colleges. In Queensland alone, 36 schools and one Higher Education College (Christian Heritage College) are members of Associated Christian Schools. Across Australia, by 2017 nearly 1240 000 students were enrolled in schools identifying with 6 different clusters (5 associations and one group of non-associated schools). Andrew Norton<sup>1</sup> identified 127 Non-University Higher Education Providers of which 8 are non-Catholic Christian institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Mapping Australian Higher Education 2016 Grattan Institute August 2016

What is striking about this growth is that it has occurred at a time when successive Australian censuses have shown a decline in the proportion of the general population identifying as Christian <sup>2</sup>. It is almost impossible not to ask the question: how could this be?

However that question might be answered, one further development must also be noted: the institutional decline of the churches. Churches of all denominations have been suffering from a long-term malaise: profoundly affected by the ongoing post-1960s social revolution, and wracked by revelations from the Royal Commission into institutional abuse, the churches no longer occupy the position of authority and reliability that they once did in Australian society. Sadly, the churches have reflected a general malaise in society, rather than the alternative Way proposed by Jesus: *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life...*

Indeed, a rough divide seems to be emerging between those churches striving still to adhere to traditional (historic) Christian views and those that have embraced changes in societal attitude brought by the social revolution. This theme has been addressed in a scholarly way by US writer Ross Douthat in his book *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (2012).

This divide among Christians is quite different to the sectarian divide of earlier centuries, as it is not doctrinal like the Orthodox/Catholic/Protestant/Pentecostal divide was. The charismatic movement crossed that divide, resulting in a more complex ecclesiology than had previously existed. However, the renewal that took place because of the charismatic movement – either pro or con – contributed to the more activist Christian churches or groups establishing new institutions, largely undergirded by federal government funding. Christian schools, including the larger systems (Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran) have added to the complexity and diversity characterising the non-government sector of schooling.

.....

**In Higher Education where growth has been far smaller due to the absence of government funding, Christian Colleges now exist that contribute to diversity in the sector also.**

These institutions (Christian schools and Colleges) now represent a new frontier for evangelism.

## INSTITUTIONAL EVANGELISM

Can Christianity be advanced through its new institutions like Schools and Colleges? <sup>3</sup>

The short answer is yes, though significant thought needs to be given to how this might be achieved. The new rule could well be that the old rules no longer apply. Almost certainly it will focus on holistic formation.

Adding to the complexity is globalism. There have been very significant population movements crossing old boundaries like national borders. This is due to a number of reasons: a general quest for the good life by a more affluent middle class, flight from a more restrictive to less restrictive regimes, and immigration brought about by refugee crises. Ethnic churches now exist that did not, prior to the 1960s social revolution. Growth in non-Christian religions has followed migration patterns everywhere, not just in Australia.

This has, in turn contributed to a more general social disruption which in part is characterised by some mistrust of, yet dependence upon, institutions like schools and churches.

Herein lies an opportunity for thoughtful Christians to contribute much to the common good, and also to the evangelism that Jesus foreshadowed His disciples would undertake on His return to the Father (the Great Commission). For the early Christians, the plan was for them to take the Gospel into all the world. For 21st century Christians, God has also brought the world to our own doorstep. Institutional evangelism will cross cultural divides, as the Gospel always has.

## EVANGELISM, YES, BUT HOW?

A key in how to make the most of the opportunities that now exist might be to consider how to balance the beliefs of historic (traditional) Christianity with more contemporary methodology. Despite the massive impact of social media on almost every facet of 21st century living, there is mounting evidence to suggest that person to person contact is lacking yet still yearned for.

<sup>2</sup> Christians identifying as Pentecostal have been increasing. This could be resulting either from evangelism or transfer growth from people leaving traditional mainline denominations exchanging traditional Christian beliefs for more liberal social beliefs.

<sup>3</sup> eg The Constitution of COC (trading as INC) specifically allows for this kind of evangelism in its Objects, for example

This provides almost the ideal environment for one-to-one evangelism on our institutional campuses.

Institutions should approach this task at two levels: corporate practice really matters in Christianity, so gatherings (assembling, celebration, worship) have a definite place and meet a specific need for humans to interact with each other and with God. James KA Smith has drawn attention to the need for and benefit of habitual practice through Christian rites and ceremonies. The second will happen at an individual level, with one-on-one encounters for sharing the faith. This will need to be

thoughtful and winsome, not brash and confronting, or the message will be rejected by this generation.

Much thought needs to be applied to how to go about institutional evangelism at both levels.

It's all about the Kingdom: *As You, Father, sent Your Son into the world, Your Son also has sent us into the world. And He has prayed for those who will believe in Him through our message.* (John 17:18, 20)

# BRISBANE IMAGE

## PART 4

### Why we should Teach our Students Purposefully about Christianity

Why We Should Teach Our Students Purposefully About Christianity

Pastor Ron Woolley 28 April 2016

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- More than half (55%) of the population believes in God, as defined as the Creator of the universe, the Supreme Being.
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C H A P T E R F I V E

**BUILDING  
A CASE FOR  
PHILANTHROPY  
IN CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOLS**

# US CAPITAL BUILDING

## PART 1

### Public funding: life-giving or life-sapping?

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It seems to be fixed in the minds of those involved in Christian schooling that public funding is a given. However, it was not always so. The following extract (from *Funding And Secondary School Choice In Australia: A Historical Consideration* by Rosemary Cahill, Department of Education, Western Australia & Jan Gray, Edith Cowan University Vol 35, 1, February 2010 124 Australian Journal of Teacher Education <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7335&context=ecuworks>) provides a useful historical summary:

#### PUBLIC FUNDING FOR NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Public funds first began to trickle towards non-government schools in the 1960s through State Aid programs introduced by state governments (Burke & Spaul, 2001; Aulich, 2003; Reid, 2005). This was quickly followed by Commonwealth grants, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, to assist with the development of science blocks in government and non-government schools (Burke & Spaul, 2001; Potts 2005).

Potts (2005) outlines a combination of factors that led to this significant change in government policy at state and Commonwealth levels. In part, it concerned seeking electoral advantage by the governments of the day but it also related to a funding crisis, especially in Catholic schools, which “could no longer rely on bazaars and fetes to fund increasingly costly schooling” (Potts, 2005, para. 16).

According to Potts (2005), by the 1960s, many Catholics schools were in serious danger of closure: the number of

people entering religious orders (and becoming low-cost teachers in Catholic schools) had reduced to a trickle, the baby-boomer generation had reached school age, post-war migrant children (many of whom were middle-European Catholics) required schooling, huge class sizes were no longer acceptable and the cost of bringing aged school buildings up to modern standards had become prohibitive. This crisis came to a head in Goulburn, New South Wales in 1962 when the local Catholic primary school was instructed by health authorities to install three new toilets. The Bishop of Goulburn claimed that the school could not afford to meet this requirement, so he closed the school. This forced all of the school's students to seek enrolment at local government schools, which could not cater for the sudden influx. After a week the Catholic primary re-opened, but the political point had been made. The Prime Minister of the day, Robert Menzies, saw the electoral advantage to be gained over the issue and changed Liberal Party policy to include State Aid for science blocks in non-government schools and Commonwealth scholarships for students in government and non-government schools (Australian Broadcasting Commission [ABC], 1997a).

The story of Goulburn Catholic School was selected for inclusion among the TimeFrame television series produced by the ABC because the producers of the series considered it to be a “turning point in Australian history – moments and events which changed Australia and its people from what they had been to what they would become” (ABC, 1997b, para. 2). Burke and Spaul (2001) indicate that when the first round of State Aid to non-government schools and Commonwealth scholarships to students in

all school sectors was first provided in the 1960s, the very fact that extra funds were finally flowing into schools was greeted with widespread relief by teachers and the wider community. In this context, the fact that the 'no public funds to non-government schools' principle had been breached did not attract much dissent. Burke and Spaul (2001) suggest that a major reason for this was that the amount received by each school was initially modest and was calculated according to a flat per-capita basis.

Not everyone, however, supported this significant (and quickly bi-partisan) shift in education policy. In 1965, opponents of State Aid founded the Council for Defence of Government Schools (DOGS). This group was concerned that public funding of non-government schools would lead to a reduction of funds provided to government schools (ABC, 1997a). They argued that the principle of education provision being "free, compulsory, secular, universal and public" (DOGS, 2007, para. 2) would be compromised by State Aid because public funding of church-affiliated schools would embroil the government in sectarian activities (Potts, 2001) and further, that equity of school provision would be compromised:

*If we are to have a society in which all children get an equal opportunity in education, this can only be done by a free public system, controlled and funded by the taxpayers. (Stella Bath cited in ABC, 1997a, para. 14).*

To test the legality of publicly funding sectarian-based schooling, DOGS mounted High Court action against the Catholic Bishop of Sandhurst in 1978. Potts (2005) reports that the DOGS case was lost by a 6-1 majority verdict, but the furore did lead to the inclusion of the following clause in the Schools Commission Act 1973 (later replaced by the Schools Council) which, according to the Australian Education Union (AEU) "was conveniently lost and forgotten" (AEU, 2001, p. 1) when the Commonwealth government, under the previous Prime Minister, John Howard, abolished the Schools Council in 1999:

*The primary obligation, in relation to education, for governments (is) to provide and maintain government school systems that are of the highest standard and are open, without fees or religious tests, to all children. (Schools Commission Act 1973 cited by AEU, 2001, p. 1).*

The growth of the non-government sector since these funding decisions has been nothing short of dramatic. In her paper, *The Rise of Religious Schools* (<http://www.cis.org.au/product/the-rise-of-religious-schools-in-australia/>)

Jennifer Buckingham makes the following points:

- More than 1.1 million students (out of a total student population of 3.4 million) attend non-government schools in Australia. More than 90% of these students are in religious schools.
- Although the Howard Coalition government (1996–2007) is commonly attributed with responsibility for the unprecedented growth in non-government schools, there were two periods in the last century when the growth rate was higher—the 1950s and the first half of the 1980s.
- The defining change in schooling over the last two decades has been the diversification of religious schools. Before the 1980s, close to 90% of students in the non-government sector attended schools associated with the two major denominations, Catholic and Anglican. In 2006, this proportion dropped to just over 70%, with the remaining students attending schools affiliated with a large array of minority faiths. The most substantive increases in enrolments have been in Islamic schools and new classifications of 'fundamentalist' Christian denominations.
- Previously unpublished Census data show that the distribution of children from religious families across school sectors also changed markedly between 1996 and 2006. Some religious groups—particularly Jewish and Catholic—have had traditionally high rates of enrolment in non-government schools, and this has changed little. However, other religious groups increased their enrolments in the non-government sector significantly, almost entirely in independent schools. In 1996, 9% of Muslim students attended independent schools, increasing to 21% in 2006. In 1996, 28% of fundamentalist Christian students attended independent schools, increasing to 40% in 2006.
- Although religious schools dominate the non-government school sector, numerous parent surveys indicate that religion is usually not the most important factor in choice of school. It is outweighed by discipline, educational quality, and the school's capacity to develop their child's potential.

While the growth in the Christian school movement may now have slowed, it is important that ACS schools pause and reflect, not only on what has been accomplished over the years of public funding but on what would happen if future funding were to be curtailed or stopped altogether. In this regard, it would be prudent for ACS schools to

remember an old term with which we are all familiar: maintenance of private effort, for if there is a point of vulnerability for Christian schools it must surely be public funding.

The Gonski review promised much in terms of a unified model for public funding of all schools. The dramatic haste of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd Government to have this model in place before a change of government could stop the reforms will be remembered as one of the most tumultuous times we have known. While “Gonski-lite” remains, there is no guarantee that present or future governments will leave alone for very long the issue of public funding of schools.

ACS schools should ponder what they would do, were public funding to be curtailed. I think curtailed is far more likely than stopped. No state government in the country could cope with the sudden closure of non-government schools – what was true during the Canberra-Goulburn crisis of 1962 is far truer now that 35% of all students are in non-government schools.

The ACS study tour to USA in April 2013 was instructive relative to this issue of funding, providing glimpses into quite diverse schools in different areas. Christian schools in the USA are truly independent, attracting little by way of public funding. As a result, they educate a small percentage of students, and have to charge high fees to do so. We learned that the Christian church school model

sometimes provided lower cost schooling, but from what we gleaned, were often of indifferent academic standard, and focused on discipleship. The Christian schools visited were not of this type.

From the study tour, certain things stood out:

- To be truly effective, Christian schools needed to achieve and maintain excellent academic standards, and this done without compromise to the Christian character of the school
- To survive, and to be accessible, Christian schools needed to attract large amounts of philanthropic giving – in some of the schools visited, up to one third of students were on fee assistance, up to 30%.

ACS schools would be well advised to think about this sooner rather than later. Our schools need to pay more attention to increasing private effort. Currently, all our schools “have their snouts in the public trough” and are thus vulnerable to funding changes. In fact, some very low fee schools have had a field day, not only attracting high levels of recurrent funding but also maximising capital grants from the public purse to build their schools.

ACS schools should act early in their history to try and create a culture of philanthropy, to provide a hedge against a day, may God forbid, when public funding is curtailed or withdrawn.



## PART 2

# The Power of Philanthropy

When I was a naïve young schoolboy at Kurri High School, Graham Little was my English/History Master. His approach to history and literature opened up to me a world I could not have discovered without him. I loved his classes. He died in 2010, and on reading his obituary learned facts about him unknown to me when a schoolboy.

Graham's early life was hard. When still very young, he was identified as neglected and placed in an orphanage. He had rickets and was still crawling at three because his legs seemingly could not support him. Things changed when the Little family adopted him and restored him to health.

At age 10, he answered a radio station advertisement for a young actor and soon found some roles. Later, he recalled with amusement how he, from a less privileged environment, won the job over privileged boys from private schools. The money earned was an immense help to Graham's later education.

On matriculating from Sydney Technical High School, Graham went to Sydney University on scholarship, graduating with honours in psychology before completing a diploma of education. Surprisingly, he asked to go to Broken Hill High School, regarded as one of the least favourable of postings, as an English/History teacher. Anyone completing three years in the far west was, as far as possible, given preferential postings later, and he secured an English position at selective Fort Street Boys High School Sydney, where he demonstrated he was an outstanding teacher.

Then he became English/History Master at Kurri High School, English Master at selective Sydney Boys High School, finally lecturer at the University of Canberra.

Why tell his story? *It's remarkable what a motivated person can overcome and achieve in life.* With success comes responsibility. Graham received but gave back...and this had a significant impact on me.

In April I revisited The Stony Brook School, Long Island, NY, a famous Christian school, not large, beautiful. The Headmaster astonished us by saying his school had a Foundation of \$13M but believed it needed to be ten times that. Remember, Christian schools in the US are fully private, receiving no government funding, relying on fees & generous philanthropy. Typically, some 30% of their students receive some form of assistance. I met one of Stony Brook's day-students, a delightful young man of Jamaican parentage, who told me he loved the school, but without fee-assistance, there was no way his parents could have afforded it. He was intelligent, grateful, and making very good use of the opportunity given him.

This is the power of philanthropy – it unlocks impossible doors for others to walk through. If the Little family had not adopted the boy who later became my English Master, my life and education would have been the poorer. Their sacrifice impacted me powerfully, though they never met me.

Luke 12:48 strikingly notes: *For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.* As privileged

people, that applies perhaps especially to us.

Giving this year's Menzies Oration at the University of Melbourne, Professor Ian Young, Australian National University's Vice-Chancellor, posed this question: *What should Australia's economy be built on if we want an affluent, egalitarian, socially modern society?* He made the case for basing it on world-leading research. This goal would flounder unless high quality education was also Australia's priority.

This must be the Christian school's goal: to pursue high quality education for the common good, to integrate a progressive, values-rich Christian worldview (just what a young person needs for mental, social and emotional wellbeing) with a strong intellectual base (as true for trades/vocations as for university pathways).

Complementing this, international and language education programs all help to create a student body that is inclusive & diverse, preparing Christian school students for a future where the opportunities will be global, not just local.

High quality education does not come cheaply, but sacrificially. I'm inspired by families choosing Christian private education above lifestyle, and who are as thoughtful for their children's education as their parents were for theirs, or more so. I honour what my parents sacrificed, and I remember with gratitude what my English Master's adoptive family contributed to my education, though they never met me.

The sacrifices we sow today benefit generations to come that may not ever meet us, and *to whom much is given, from them much is required.*





C H A P T E R S I X

# EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL LEADERS

**Engaging with, and  
learning from, Catholics**

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2032

2049

## PART 1

### Evangelicals engaging with conservative Catholics.

We have frequently noted that Christian schools including ACS schools share much in common with conservative Catholics. Historically, Christian schools owe their very existence (to a large part) to a hard-fought funding concession won from the Australian Government by Catholics in the 1970s.

Some years ago in Queensland, the sudden action by the Beattie Government attempting to remove the right of Christian schools to discriminate lawfully when staffing their schools made the Christian school sector very aware that they have few public friends. It was instructive at that time how poorly and slowly many of the churches responded.

That time was something of a watershed in our thinking, as the Christian school sector confronted the relative weakness of their own political strength, yet how strengthened we were on matters where alignment could be found with the numerically strong Catholic sector.

Just as the Protestant world has been weakened by contemporary secular (un)belief and a general lack of adherence to traditionally held Christian values, so the Catholic world has been affected. Unbelief, it seems, knows no denominational boundaries.

In 21st century Australia, traditional Christian values appear diminished in acceptance and sometimes under attack. It seems if ACS wishes to network with like-minded people, it could well look to those who would once have been considered unlikely allies, including (not exclusively)

traditional or conservative Catholics.

This raises certain issues that ought not to be ignored as they are doctrinal, and most Christian schools would have in their charters a clear statement of faith concerning their essential Christian beliefs.

As ACS engages with believing Catholics who hold to a traditional orthodox Christian view, what might be the issues we should consider? While both Protestant and Catholic worldviews have much in common, there are differences, and a more detailed examination of Christian difference, as found in the following table, located at [http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/charts/denominations\\_beliefs.htm](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/charts/denominations_beliefs.htm) where the denominational difference is examined from a North American viewpoint.

Conservative Catholics may see restoration or preservation of Christian values in terms of obedience to the magisterium (the teaching authority of the Catholic Church).

*The magisterium is the authority that lays down what is the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church. For the Catholic Church, that authority is vested uniquely in the pope and the bishops who are in communion with him. Sacred Scripture and Tradition make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church, and the magisterium is not independent of this since all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is derived from this single deposit of faith.* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magisterium>

As Pope St John Paul said in an Address to the Second

International Congress on Moral Theology held to mark the 20th anniversary of Humanae Vitae (12 November 1988) <http://www.cin.org/jp2ency/conviva.html>

One of the great experts of the human heart, St. Augustine, wrote: *"Our freedom consists in our subjection to the truth." Always seek the truth; venerate the truth discovered; obey the truth. There is no joy beyond this search, this veneration and obedience.*

*In this wonderful adventure of your spirit, the Church is not an obstacle to you: on the contrary, she is a help. By departing from the magisterium, you risk the vanity of error and the slavery of opinions: they are seemingly strong but, in reality, fragile because only the truth of the Lord remains forever. "*

The notion of what is authoritative is at the heart of Reformation thinking and thus is worthy of our further reflection. Protestant reformers did not give assent to the magisterium, but to the five solas:

*sola Scriptura* ("by Scripture alone"), *sola fide* ("by faith alone"), *sola gratia* ("by grace alone"), *solo Christ* ("through Christ alone"), *solī Deo gloria* ("glory to God alone") [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_solas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_solas) (with any interpretation, some would say, ultimately resolved by the believer under the agency or influence of the Holy Spirit).

This is different to what the Pope was saying.

### HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER?

It is not essential to agree on every matter of doctrine in order to work harmoniously with other Christians. Since 1054, the Pope and the patriarchs of the eastern churches have not been in communion and in the west since the Reformation, the Catholic Church has not been in communion with Protestants (many Protestants are in churches which do not claim apostolic succession).

That said, in the modern secular age, Christians in all sections of the church must find solace in each other, and work towards common goals for the sake of Christ and His church.

We find sufficient common ground in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds about the Triune God Who has revealed Himself for cooperation (without arguing over other points of doctrinal difference).

### IN WHAT TOPICS ARE WE LIKELY TO HAVE STRONG CONNECTION AND INTEREST?

Hopefully, what all conservative Christians work towards are institutions where the essentials of the Christian faith give those institutions a sufficient Christian distinctive through which the Spirit of God may be pleased to work. That includes but is not limited to, schools, colleges and universities.

The Jesuit tradition within the Catholic Church (though there are others) may provide evangelical Christians with good case study material in which to note how Christian culture has been developed for a higher purpose.

- Chris Lowney's book *Heroic Leadership* provides the kind of insight into these areas that evangelicals need, without the complication of much ecclesiology.

### WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO BUILD A PLATFORM OF SHARED INTEREST?

- Respect and tolerance are probably in themselves sufficient.

Taken together, these virtues do not require any shift of opinion in order to work together. These are not lukewarm virtues. We should ensure there is no confusion about *respect* and *tolerance* and *lukewarmness* or *unfaithfulness* to preferred theological positions.

ACS might encourage its membership to open the collective mind to the greater good that can be achieved by cooperation rather than zeal for what separates, through:

- Informed reading of a broader nature
- Noting and taking opportunities for cooperation, as the Holy Spirit opens the way.

However, we should know where others may draw boundary lines and think about how we might respectfully respond to those boundaries. This is important, for example, as ACS further reaches out to schools whose views are essentially Reformed.

2004

## PART 2

# What do Evangelicals believe differently to Catholics?

The three fundamental principles of traditional Protestantism are the following:

### SCRIPTURE ALONE

The belief in the Bible as the supreme source of authority for the church. The early churches of the Reformation believed in a critical, yet serious, reading of scripture and holding the Bible as a source of authority higher than that of church tradition. The many abuses that had occurred in the Western Church prior to the Protestant Reformation led the reformers to reject much of the tradition of the Western Church, though some would maintain tradition has been maintained and reorganized in the liturgy and in the confessions of the Protestant churches of the Reformation. In the early 20th century there developed a less critical reading of the Bible in the United States that has led to a "fundamentalist" reading of scripture.

Christian fundamentalists read the Bible as the "inerrant, infallible" word of God, as do the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican churches, to name a few, but interpret it in a more literal way.

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

"The subjective principle of the Reformation is justification by faith alone, or, rather, by free grace through faith operative in good works. It has reference to the personal appropriation of the Christian salvation and aims to give all glory to Christ by declaring that the sinner is justified before God (i.e., is acquitted of guilt and declared righteous) solely on the ground of the all-sufficient merits of Christ as apprehended by a living faith, in opposition to the theory —

then prevalent and substantially sanctioned by the Council of Trent — which makes faith and good works coordinate sources of justification, laying the chief stress upon works.

Protestantism does not depreciate good works, but it denies their value as sources or conditions of justification and insists on them as the necessary fruits of faith and evidence of justification."

### UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

The universal priesthood of believers implies the right and duty of the Christian laity not only to read the Bible in the vernacular but also to take part in the government and all the public affairs of the Church. It is opposed to the hierarchical system, which puts the essence and authority of the Church in an exclusive priesthood, and makes ordained priests the necessary mediators between God and the people.

### FIVE SOLAE

The Five solae are five Latin phrases (or slogans) that emerged during the Protestant Reformation and summarize the reformers' basic differences in theological beliefs in opposition to the teaching of the Catholic Church of the day. The Latin word *sola* means "alone", "only", or "single".

The use of the phrases as summaries of teaching emerged over time during the reformation, based on the overarching principle of *sola scriptura* (by scripture alone). This idea contains the four main doctrines on the Bible: that its teaching is needed for salvation (necessity); that all

the doctrine necessary for salvation comes from the Bible alone (sufficiency); that everything taught in the Bible is correct (inerrancy); and that, by the Holy Spirit overcoming sin, believers may read and understand truth from the Bible itself, though understanding is difficult, so the means used to guide individual believers to the true teaching is often mutual discussion within the church (clarity).

The necessity and inerrancy were well-established ideas, garnering little criticism, though they later came under debate from outside during the Enlightenment. The most contentious idea at the time though was the notion that anyone could simply pick up the Bible and learn enough to gain salvation. Though the reformers were concerned with ecclesiology (the doctrine of how the church as a body works), they had a different understanding of the process in which truths in scripture were applied to life of believers, compared to the Catholics' idea that certain people within the church, or ideas that were old enough, had a special status in giving understanding of the text.

The second main principle, *sola fide* (*by faith alone*), states that faith in Christ is sufficient alone for eternal salvation. Though argued from scripture, and hence logically consequent to *sola scriptura*, this is the guiding principle of the work of Luther and the later reformers. Because *sola scriptura* placed the Bible as the only source of teaching, *sola fide* epitomises the main thrust of the teaching the reformers wanted to get back to, namely the direct, close, personal connection between Christ and the believer, hence the reformers' contention that their work was Christocentric.

The other solas, as statements, emerged later, but the thinking they represent was also part of the early reformation:

#### **SOLUS CHRISTUS: CHRIST ALONE.**

The Protestants characterise the dogma concerning the Pope as Christ's representative head of the Church on earth, the concept of works made meritorious by Christ, and the Catholic idea of a treasury of the merits of Christ and his saints, as a denial that Christ is the only mediator between God and man. Catholics, on the other hand, maintained the traditional understanding of Judaism on these questions, and appealed to the universal consensus of Christian tradition.

#### **SOLA GRATIA: GRACE ALONE.**

Protestants perceived Roman Catholic salvation to be dependent upon the grace of God and the merits of one's own works. The reformers posited that salvation is a gift of God (i.e., God's act of free grace), dispensed by the Holy Spirit owing to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ alone. Consequently, they argued that a sinner is not accepted by God on account of the change wrought in the believer by God's grace and that the believer is accepted without regard for the merit of his works, for no one deserves salvation.

#### **SOLI DEO GLORIA: GLORY TO GOD ALONE**

All glory is due to God alone since salvation is accomplished solely through his will and action — not only the gift of the all-sufficient atonement of Jesus on the cross but also the gift of faith in that atonement, created in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit. The reformers believed that human beings — even saints canonized by the Catholic Church, the popes, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy — are not worthy of the glory.

WORLD TRADE  
CENTRE  
2011

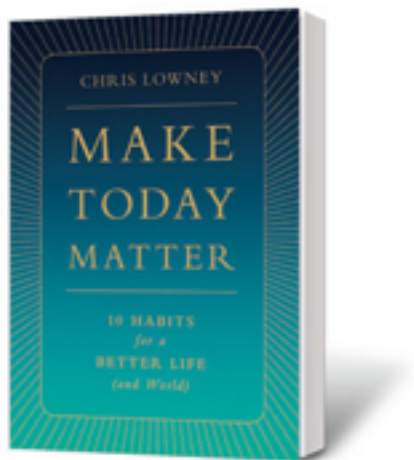
WORLD TRADE  
CENTRE  
2019

### PART 3

## Make Today Matter: Ten Habits for a Better Life and World

### BOOK RECOMMENDATION

From the writer of *Heroic Leadership* (which Associated Christian Schools highly recommends to anyone in or aspiring to leadership), A previous ACS study tour to the US included a group conversation with Chris Lowney.



*Make Today Matter: 10 Habits for a Better Life (and World) by Chris Lowney, (May 2018)*

How can we rise to the occasion every single day of our lives? How can we seize each day as a unique opportunity, and see each day as a gift?

Chris Lowney answers those questions in *Make Today Matter*, winner of a 2018 Independent Press Award as “Distinguished Favourite” in the Inspiration category. Chris introduces readers to ten simple yet powerful habits that will add up to a better life and a better world. Those habits emerge through inspiring stories of ordinary people who are making each day count in extraordinary ways, whether in a high school classroom, a hospital emergency room, one of the planet’s largest garbage dumps, or a sprawling, impoverished shantytown in Venezuela.

Still, it’s one thing to know what matters in life, quite another thing to do what matters, day in and day out, despite the confusing, unpredictable, and frustrating environments in which we all live and work. That’s where “the Wisdom App” (a simplification of the Spiritual Examen of Ignatius Loyola) comes in, a powerful practice that ties the ten habits together, and that anyone could begin implementing tomorrow, a first step along the path to making every day matter.

1. *Step back from the day's chaos and recall that you are in the presence of God*
2. *Pray for enlightenment and wisdom.*
3. *Be grateful! You have so much; don't take it for granted.*
4. *Mentally revisit the past few hours to draw lessons learned from the day so far. Pay attention to what you have been thinking and feeling, not just to what you've been doing. Consider how God may have been present to you in the events and conversations that have unfolded. Rabbi Lawrence Kushner once defined holiness as "being aware that you are in the presence of God." That's not just when you sit in church or temple but wherever you are, whoever you're with, and whatever you are doing.*
5. *Be honest with yourself. If you've not upheld the values you profess, acknowledge that.*
6. *Finish with hopeful resolution for the future. Be thankful for the opportunity to have recollected and reoriented yourself as necessary. Then, put the past behind you and create a better future by living the words of Paul: "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal."*

10 Habits for a Better Life (and World) by Chris Lowney, (May 2018)

