monographs / dealing with issues students face

ENGAGING THE CAMPUS

FAITH AND SERVICE IN THE ACADEMY

SECOND EDITION | REVISED AND EXPANDED

Engaging the Campus:
Faith and Service in the Academy

Second Edition
Revised and Expanded

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Engaging the Campus: Faith and Service in the Academy, Second Edition: Revised and Expanded

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Foreword to the Second Edition

We are humbled and grateful to witness how in the past two years, God has used thousands of copies of this book to edify students and graduates, not only locally in Singapore, but also in many other countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and America.

In this second edition of *Engaging the Campus: Faith and Service in the Academy* there are slight revisions in the first two articles. The third article, on the Singapore context has been updated and expanded whilst the testimony of one student's journey in engaging the campus remains unchanged. Last but not least, we have added a new response from Hong Kong.

May we continue to ingeniously discover and authentically live out many ways of engaging our campus for Christ!

Lisman Komaladi
October 2016

Publisher's Foreword

When we minister among students, we should refrain from merely creating an insulated ghetto for them or keeping them busy with many inward-looking activities. Instead, we should work towards a ministry *among*, as well as *by* students – reaching out to and serving the campus at large.

Even as we seek to do this, many questions remain. What does it mean to engage the whole campus for Christ? Do we have the biblical foundation to this vision? Is engaging the campus an elitist ministry? What are the challenges faced and possible blind spots discovered as we practise our faith and serve in the academy?

May this book, which brings together perspectives on engaging the campus, a response from the Singapore context as well as a story of one student's journey, accompany us in the journey of discovering what *Engaging the Campus* can mean in our own context.

Lisman Komaladi
General Secretary, FES Singapore

Engaging the Whole University for Christ

Terence C. Halliday

—

What would a 21st century vision be for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) if Christ and Christians are *really, actually and to be observably* engaging the ***whole*** university for Christ?

This is a vision that is currently being discussed, developed, refined and adapted on several continents. It is a vision with a global reach, but every country, every continent and every people must give it a character appropriate to their circumstances.

I begin with two stories, which are still alive and continuing.

A while ago I was in an East Asian country meeting with their leading human rights lawyers. Many of them are Christians. They face extreme persecution from their

government, including disappearance, torture and death. I was moved by their courage as they confront their repressive government, which is terrified about the potential impact of Christianity on rule by the current party. I was also impressed by the efforts taken by these brave lawyers to understand what their Christian faith, the Bible and Christian theology have to say about the future of their country – a country where Christians can worship openly and freely express their faith. Simultaneously, these lawyers are trying to think 'Christianly' and 'constitutionally.' They are imagining their future roles in their country not just as lawyers, but also as Christians. However, they are finding this very difficult.

A couple of weeks before, I met with Christian lawyers from this country when I gave a seminar on "Heroic Lawyers" at an elite law school in the U.S. The seminar was organised by a Christian student organisation. This law school is exactly the kind of place where I would expect the best future lawyers of the U.S. and the world would be able to think Christianly about the law, legal institutions, legal practice and the constitutions of countries. However, I found these brilliant law students timid and weak in their ability to link their Christian faith to entire legal systems

or to the constitution of countries or political mobilisation of lawyers. Instead, they had their faith in one pocket and their law in another.

Compare these two stories. In the first story there is a huge *need* for Christian thought to inform and lead a society and a state. In the second story, there is a major *failure* in Christian students to develop the engagement between Christian thought and law, society and politics.

In both cases, in fact, Christian societies in universities have not engaged the great ideas of the university or the great problems of our times in which universities are intimately involved. Put more strongly, in some important ways IFES and its national movements have failed in their ministry to universities. IFES movements worldwide in the 21st century must do much more with "engaging the university," in fact, *"engaging the* ***whole*** *university."*

This may require a very different approach to university Christian ministries – different audiences, different staff and different imaginations. IFES national movements and university groups need to re-invent themselves. If they do not, a vast institution of enormous influence – the

universities of each nation – will be lost for Christ.

What does it mean to engage the ***whole*** university?
It involves undergraduates AND graduate (postgraduate) students, faculty AND research staff, as well as administrators AND workers. It includes everything that the university does: its research and teaching; training in critical thinking; search for truth; as well as its approach to the most difficult and vexing issues in thought and practice, in academic life and in national life.

To engage the ***whole*** university requires the mutual support, the interplay of four models of Christian ministry. We can think of these as four legs of a stool.

- the pietistic
- the evangelistic
- the apologetic
- the dialogic

It is the last of these – the dialogic – where many of us associated with IFES believe that university Christian movements need a new vision.

LEG ONE

The Pietistic 1

- **Focus on the inner Christian life, Bible study, prayer and fellowship**
- **An orientation to undergraduates**
- **Lacks engagement with issues of faith and scholarship**

In the pietistic model the principal orientation of IFES groups is towards the inner Christian life where the foundational activities focus on Bible study, prayer and fellowship. This is vital and essential to campus ministry. The thematic emphasis is on living the personal Christian life.

Yet, on its own, we discover that this leg of the stool has severe limitations.

- Ministry is oriented to *students*, not the faculty – and usually undergraduates, not the more mature students.
- Ministry usually does not engage the *minds* of students, the very reason they are at the university.
- Ministry has a limited engagement with the Christian faculty as *scholars*. No systematic effort is undertaken to list:

a) who are the Christian faculty,
b) how they might be mobilised on behalf of students, and
c) how their own gifts and scholarship might be advanced for the kingdom of God in the university.

- Too often, students study *verses*, but they do not learn the great *theological* themes of the Bible.
- Oftentimes there is lack of engagement with the great debates, struggles and research frontiers of the university.

As a social phenomenon, this ministry too often stays away from the center of the university and exists at its margins. It reproduces inside the university what students should receive from the local church.

The development of the inner life is essential as it is one of the four legs of the Christian stool through which we can engage the ***whole*** university. But it is *not* sufficient – if we are to engage the ***whole*** university for Christ.

LEG TWO

2 The Evangelistic

- **Winning students for Christ**
- **Seeks to reach the whole campus**
- **Personal evangelism**
- **Evangelistic rally**

The evangelistic leg involves proclamation of the gospel of Jesus to the campus. It may be quiet, through personal sharings of faith, or vocal, through large meetings and public events. This is a fulfilment of the Great Commission – go into all the world and preach the gospel – and that includes the university.

Yet this powerful presence on the campus may not touch the heart of what the university does – what it thinks about it, what are its agendas and what it teaches – because the Christians make no connections between following Jesus and the teaching curriculum or the research agendas or the contributions of the university to public debate.

We rightly celebrate those that are *won for Christ*.

Do we mourn all those that are *lost from Christ*? And they are lost often because we have ignored their minds. They may come from a fine Christian family but somehow they lose their faith at university.

> *What are we doing for people like that?*
> *Why do too many students from Christian families think that Christianity is for Sunday School children, not for scholars?*
> *How many bright, smart and intellectually capable students walk away from Christ on our campuses?*
> *How many say the Christian faith has nothing to do with what I study, nothing to do with the university, nothing to do with its teaching and research?*

When we speak of 30 people *won for Christ*, do we think about the 30, 60 or 90 people who have been *lost from Christ* when they came to the university?

Spreading the good news of Jesus is a living, breathing part of our presence on campus. But it is *not* sufficient if we are to engage the ***whole*** university for Christ.

LEG THREE

The Apologetic 3

- **Identifies a source of intellectual threat**
- **Finds persons or books with authority on the threat**
- **Mounts a defense against the threat**

The Apologetic leg recognises that the big issues universities debate can threaten Christians and their faith. The apologetic ministry engages the university where the university seems to threaten the faith.

Programming for apologetics typically proceeds something like this:

- identifying a source of intellectual threat.
- finding *either* faculty members, far or near, who have the authority to understand and appraise the ideas, *or* equipping campus ministry staffworkers with books or materials that convey authoritative defenses.
- inviting faculty to mount a defense against the threat, by showing that the threat is misplaced, or the threat is rightly understood but can be rebutted, and so on.

The apologetic ministry has many merits. An effective apologetics on campus can also be a great encouragement to students, both for those whom the particular attack and defense is salient to their scholarship.

A thoughtful apologetics is integral to the faith. However, I have real concerns about it as it:

- has a defensive and reactive orientation.
- rarely, if ever, addresses issues that students or faculty are confronting at the leading edge of their disciplines.
- does not celebrate the wonder of God's work or the relevance of the biblical revelation to literature and history, to nanotechnology or postcolonialism, ethnomusicology or institutional economics, to comparative religion or optics, to agricultural economics or biochemistry.

Apologetics is vital as it is one of the four legs of the Christian stool through which we can engage the whole university. But it is *not* sufficient if IFES and its national movements are to engage the ***whole*** university for Christ.

LEG FOUR

The Dialogic Model 4

"Engaging the Mind through Conversations in the University"[1]

- **Takes the university seriously on its own terms**
- **Regards the university ministry as a distinctive calling, *not* a reproduction of the local church on a university campus**
- **Engages the *mind* and injects *faith* into all conversations in the university**

A dialogic ministry takes the university seriously on its own terms. It considers a university ministry to be a distinctive ministry in its own right. It does not simply do what the local church does. Rather than *preaching* at the university, it enters into *conversation* with the university.

Dr Daniel Bourdanné, the IFES General Secretary, has put it clearly: *We should have a*

[1] This label is borrowed from Dr Vinoth Ramachandra, the IFES Secretary for Dialogue and Social Engagement.

discipleship of the mind. The calling for this ministry is in the university, not a primary school. It is the place that engages the mind. That is why engaging the university cannot happen if we do not take seriously the discipleship of the mind. This is our ministry field. This is the place where God has put us.

We are called, first, to think Christianly about everything that goes on in the university.

We are called, second, to enter into conversations with all others on the campus – undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff. These are conversations about the issues the university is thinking about and the curriculum the university is teaching. These are conversations – dialogues – that are infused by faith.

In fact, a dialogic engaging of the university seeks to draw every person on campus into some kind of contact, engagement and exposure to Christians, Christian beliefs, Christian ideas, Christian virtues and Christian actions.

There are seven principal features of a Dialogic Model:

1. It is *proactive*: it brings Christ to the great issues of major universities and the great issues to Christ.
2. It is *expansive*: it nurtures Christian students and engages Christian faculty and staff.
3. It is *comprehensive*: it reaches to teaching, to the curriculum, to research, to social and political engagement, to the classroom and all the supporting facets of a university administration. Every corner of the university in action has the light of Christ shone into it.
4. It respects the *intellectual* gifts of the students and faculty who inhabit the universities of every nation.
5. It is *relevant*, insofar as it takes on the big conversations of the day at the very moment they are being formulated and debated.
6. It *listens as well as speaks*, insofar it seeks to carry on respectful conversations with Christians and non-Christians alike.
7. It celebrates *intellectual* community that is characteristic of great universities. This might even bring Christians into cooperation with non-religious or other religious groups on campus.

It is obvious that there are fundamental shifts in orientation from the previous models, the other legs of the stool.

- The Christian *mind* is celebrated as enthusiastically as the Christian soul.
- The ministry moves from the *edge* of the campus into its *heartland*.
- The ideas and issues at the frontiers of learning and the leading edges of debate are celebrated for what they reveal of God and his work in the kingdom.
- The barriers between students and faculty are overcome, in much the same way they are in research laboratories and advanced seminars and major research projects on those campuses and their research institutes.

As Bishop David Oginde[2] has said, "It prepares students (and I would say faculty) for positions of leadership in government, in public service, and the corporate sector ... It prepares people for leadership in the professions, in the market and media, in every sphere of society."

[2] Bishop David Oginde is the Presiding Bishop of Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM), Nairobi, Kenya

Examples of Engaging the Whole University

Across the world, from almost every continent, we have heard wonderful examples of the ways students and faculty have sought to engage the university – in ways far beyond our imaginations. We see and feel the creative work of God's spirit sweeping over the earth and new fruit, new flowers blossoming in one place, then drifting across the internet to another university, another country and another continent.

1. Undergraduates, Graduate Students and Recent Graduates

In India, the North Delhi Evangelical Graduate Fellowship organised an Intensive Summer Study programme where around 40 recent graduates met every day for six weeks, for five hours a day from 2.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. They are expected to read two to five books a week from a mix of readings. Some were Christian books written by theologians and church leaders. Others were absolutely not 'Christian' – but are precisely the kind of things thinking people struggle with in India (and the former British Empire) and issues thinking Christians cannot escape. Some examples are books like *From the Ruins of Empire* by Pankaj Mishra,

Empire by Niall Fergusson, *The Black Economy in India* by Arun Kumar and *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World* by Niall Fergusson.

The topics covered were superb and of great relevance; examples included cloning, black money laundering, international trade negotiations and climate change. Besides heavy reading, there were writing requirements like writing short summaries and journaling. Through brutal self-examination, they ask questions like "Why does the Christian church not produce effective leaders, statesmen, thinkers . . . of the likes of Amartya Sen, Salman Rushdie, Nehru; and what must the church do about it to produce avant-garde leaders and thinkers in the next 100 years?" There were even simulations of international negotiations, all conducted in the context of deep devotional activities.[3]

[3] For further reading, refer to: www.summerstudy2013.wordpress.com; http://issjournals2013.wordpress.com.

2. Advanced Graduate Students and Faculty

Universities at their best are about ideas, research and journeys to the frontiers of discovery. That is what faculty and graduate students, especially doctoral students, should be doing.

Here are two exciting examples:

Stanford University, U.S.

The Graduate Christian Fellowship at Stanford University took it a step further by creating an event called "Student Passion Talks". Last year, students submitted abstracts for a "Passion Talk", which is on thinking Christianly about a short presentation (10–15 minutes) in an area of their research. The topics were varied – artificial intelligence, computer science, psychology and neuroscience.

The campus ministry staffworker shared on this event:
"It's been a fantastic demonstration – student to student – of how integration of our faith and our research might look. And now that they've actually seen it, it's much easier for those students who have struggled with the concept to envision how they themselves might think and talk about their work and faith."

University of Queensland, Australia

Professor Ross McKenzie, a Christian physicist, reported on an event where more than 20 faculty, postdoctoral students, and graduate students met on the topic "Christians Engaging the University". The disciplines included international relations, biochemistry, chemistry, physics, computer science, and law. Ten different people each talked for five to ten minutes about their research field and ways they thought it may be related to the Christian faith. Some examples are:

- A political scientist discussed a recent paper he wrote about the issue of the "Right to Protect" and how views of it have a long history and are shaped by Christian ethics;
- A chemistry postdoctoral student discussed initiatives he was involved in to help chemistry education and research in the developing world.
- A quantum physicist mentioned randomness and issues about the sovereignty of God.
- A law professor spoke on the foundations of legal theory and ideas going back to Aquinas, and the tension between law and grace.

3. The Campus as a whole

Arts Festival for Justice

Isra Ortiz, the campus ministry staffworker for GEU (*Grupo Evangélico Universitario*, the IFES movement in Guatemala) reported that there is a huge discrepancy between problems faced by Guatemala and the failure of evangelicals to confront these. Christians have too often been silent on violence, corruption, inequality and racism. The goal was to show a different face of Christianity to the University of San Carlos campus. As part of a campus-wide arts festival, a Christian student group came up with the idea of an arts festival focused on justice.[4]

As preparation, they read a book on injustice, visited the city dump where the poor lived and joined a May Day march for justice on 1 May. They also created a Facebook account which generated different posts – a student wrote a play about injustice, another student wrote a theme song, and some others created a photo collage and a painting exhibition. Through all these activities, Jesus was celebrated as the model of justice.

[4] For further reading, refer to: http://scriptureengagement.ifesworld.org/2014/06/an-arts-festival-for-justice-communicates-a-word-of-hope/.

At the end of the day, more than 100 people had been on stage (there were 35–40 presentations), inviting students to reflect on justice through the arts. In total, around 600–700 people attended the Festival!

On the whole this effort challenged the stereotype that Christians do not care about justice. It also demonstrated how the arts can be a medium for the message of Jesus.

4. Staff

"Project:Gratitude"

Five undergraduates from Varsity Christian Fellowship at National University of Singapore wanted to mobilise the entire student body to show appreciation for the campus service staff, for example, the canteen and toilet cleaners, bus drivers, and security guards. The intention was to create a culture of gratitude and compassion, that is, to demonstrate the virtues of Jesus. The activities that were carried out included giving a piece of fruit or a cup of coffee to a staff member with a small note of thanks for the work they do. The movement rounded up with a month-long art exhibition that told the stories of these unsung campus heroes.[5] The project received campus-

wide attention, including the student newspaper, and left the impression that Christians are kind, thoughtful, compassionate, and care about those many of us think are beneath our dignity.

The Process of Engaging the Whole University

As I compiled all these wonderful stories, I made an uncomfortable discovery. Many – maybe most – of these wonderful experiments to engage the university come from undergraduates and graduate students.

It reminded me of a learning experience I had too late in life:

> In the Center on Law and Globalization, we have a major programme on systematic violence against women in civil conflicts. We wanted to expand our website, build networks of interested people across the world and take advantage of the social media. I supervised a young woman of about 25 years of age

[5] Editor's Note: Prior to this, there were other attempts made to engage the campus. For instance, the Singapore Institute of Management Students' Christian Fellowship organised a three-day event called "Discover Forgiveness" to help increase awareness of forgiveness and love in our relationships. The event touched the lives of many on campus.

who kept coming to me for permission to attempt as well as explore new ideas and directions. I was either slow to respond, didn't respond, had various objections, asked too many questions or had too many reservations. Eventually she got fed up with me and just went ahead to take charge. She didn't ask my permission for anything – she just gave reports of what she was doing. In other words, she did something first and reported it later!

Very quickly, she got hundreds of people across the world linked together in a network that received our *Violence against Women* e-newsletter. She started a Twitter service and drew us into conversations with other networks worldwide which greatly magnified our impact. She established a Linked-In account – hundreds joined. She created a Facebook page – hundreds more joined. In other words, when I got out of the way, the enterprise took off and thrived. I was the problem. She was the solution.

Look at some of the extraordinary experiments that were mentioned earlier. These ministries thrived when young people, students and local staffworkers, were given the

space and room to innovate and to be creative, as well as imaginative.

Young people do not know that
something cannot be done.
They don't know that
something is impossible.
They invent.
They act.

Conclusion

Where does IFES and its national movements go in the 21st century?

- Will our vision treat the university, as a whole, as our mission field?
- Will it bring Christian insight to intellectual struggles over the great problems of the academic disciplines?
- Will we reach faculty as well as students?
- Will we join the battle over the big ideas that alter imaginations and change the world?
- Will we have an impact on every person on the university campus, from the Vice-Chancellor to the toilet cleaner?

- Will we seek to mould the leaders of science and nations with the power of ideas encapsulated in the Christian gospel?

In the last few months I have spent many hours with great heroes of human rights who are also heroes of faith. Time and again they asked *not only* for the sustenance of worship and Bible study but *also* they plead for the tools to think Christianly about law, politics, markets, and science in their country. They see the future fast approaching. They fear they do not have the tools that will be required of them to meet the future.

Imagine if they had been trained to think Christianly when they were in universities where:

- sophisticated conversations range widely and openly among undergraduates and graduates, faculty and graduate students.
- every big issue that comes up in science, arts and letters, agriculture, medicine, law and engineering had been boldly considered as issues of *faith* as well as issues of *scholarship*.
- every issue in society and government and the market was on the agenda.

Imagine if the university itself had been transformed – by the topics on which scholars did research; by the approaches they took to those topics and by the impact of those topics.

Imagine if we multiplied both of these – *thinking Christianly* and *engaging the university* – across the nations of this continent and across the world.

Imagine, indeed, if Christ *truly* engaged the ***whole*** University!

This is a great and bold and magnificent vision. May we be worthy of it.

The above presentation was given by Terence C. Halliday at the IFES EPSA (English and Portuguese-Speaking Africa) Regional Leadership Consultation held in Ghana in July 2013.

Terence C. Halliday is Co-Director of the Center on Law and Globalization and Research Professor at the American Bar Foundation; Adjunct Professor of Sociology at Northwestern University; and Adjunct Professor, School of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

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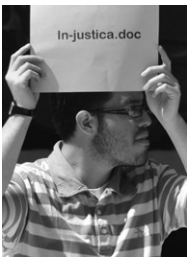
Arts Festival for Justice



Project:Gratitude

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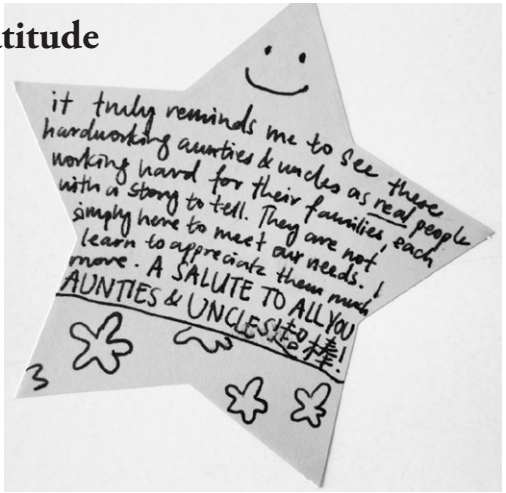

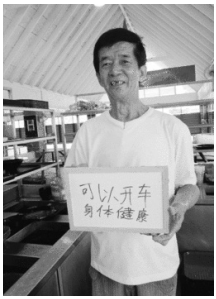

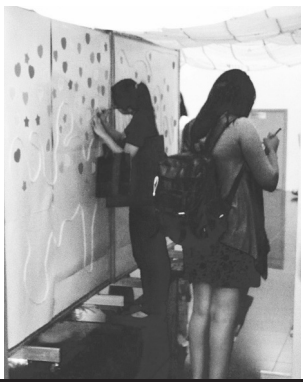

Christ and the University

Vinoth Ramachandra

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The Bible tells the story of God's missionary involvement with the world that he created and loves. It is a story that begins with a picture of a couple cultivating a garden and ends in a multicultural city coming down from heaven to fill the earth (Rev. 21, 22). The latter presents a majestic vision of salvation or *shalom*, of human *flourishing* – the restoration of our relationship with God, with one another and with non-human creation. The gates of the city (the kingdom of God) stand open to receive the 'glory and honour of the nations' (Rev. 21: 24–26). This means that all the cultural and economic wealth of the earth is the fulfilment of the creation mandate given to humankind in Genesis 2:15 to cultivate the earth and care for it. The cultural heritage of all the nations will be redeemed, stripped of all idolatrous accretions and redirected to the worship of God and the Lamb who shares his throne.

Thus John's vision, like Paul's letters, holds out the hope not for the 'junking' of history but for its healing. God promises not to make 'all new things' but, rather, *'all things new'* (Rev. 21:5). Salvation includes a final gathering up into the all-embracing worship of God, all that is truly human in all places and at all times; those human acts that reflect the beauty, love, justice and truth of God. God takes what we do – gardening, innovating, conserving the environment, writing poetry, composing music, designing cities, proclaiming the gospel – and weaves them together to bring about this new creation. This is possible because the evil that has disfigured his creation is defeated through the incarnate life, death and resurrection of God's Word.

The Christian church has always confessed that Jesus Christ is no mere religious sage but the one in whom *all* created reality 'holds together' (Col. 1:17) and through whom *all* created reality came into being and will finally be redeemed (Col. 1:18). He thus has unrestricted primacy over every area of life and thought. We cannot ultimately understand the nature and purpose of the world, and any of the creatures that make up the world, except in relation to him. Believing this gospel therefore commits every Christian to a comprehensive view of the world.

It compels him or her to a missionary engagement with all of reality, actively seeking out novel and alien beliefs, assessing them in light of the gospel narrative, and trying to find a place for them in a Christian vision of the world.

The good news of the in-breaking reign of God in Jesus to heal, renew and recreate his broken world is thus much bigger than a message of individual salvation. It has been my pastoral experience that if students are exposed to a gospel that is reduced to an individualistic message of salvation (e.g. 'being born again', 'Christ died for my sins', 'justification by faith', 'going to heaven', and so on) it is quite difficult to move them to a point where they see how their academic studies, social engagements, political attitudes or economic behaviour have anything at all to do with the gospel.

Many of our movements and IFES staff tend to think of their work as fundamentally a youth ministry; in this case, the youth happen to be undergraduate students. The university as such, and the social, intellectual and political contexts in which they study, are often treated as secondary and even trivial.

However, we are not a ministry *to* students, but a ministry *by* Christian students (undergraduate and postgraduate), as well as lecturers and administrators, to the university *as a whole*. The role of national IFES staff is to help facilitate this ministry by providing and equipping students and faculty with the biblical and theological resources of the global Church. This would involve collectively learning to explore what the lordship of Christ actually means in the different disciplines that are taught in the various academic departments, the research projects undertaken in the university, as well as learning how to speak Christianly into the issues that occupy university life (from violent student protests to debates as to the role of the university itself).

A Christian engagement with the university must begin, as does all cross-cultural missionary engagement, with a patient and discerning study of the changing culture and ethos of the modern university. We should study its dominant worldviews and ideologies, and how these shape the characters, values, priorities and lifestyles of students and teachers (Christians included). We are always sensitive to its changing contexts, fully relational in all that we say and do.

Studying the University

Mass Education. A university education, while still accessed by a fairly small proportion of a nation's population (the U.S. being a notable exception), is no longer the privilege of an affluent class. Universities and other tertiary training institutions have mushroomed all over the post-colonial world. As a result, state universities have become microcosms of the wider society, reflecting the latter's economic, ethnic, and religious diversities and tensions. All the challenges facing the nation are replicated in university life, be it poverty, racism, sexism, violence or xenophobia.

In many poorer nations, the massive rise of student numbers has not been matched by corresponding increases in facilities, whether student residences, academic staff, laboratory facilities, basic textbooks or even classrooms. Over-crowding is commonplace, and in

many departments, learning is still reduced to memorising the lecturers' notes. More and more students around the world are commuters, many of them working to support themselves while they study. For the vast majority of students, including those studying in Western universities, academic study is not undertaken out of a love for learning but as a means to employment, even sheer survival; and jobs in well-paying professions (medicine, engineering and law) are often their first choice. In cities as far-flung as New York and Manila, globally prestigious universities exist side by side with degree-awarding factories. The diversity in facilities, academic calibre and employment prospects among colleges is far greater than, say, fifty years ago.

Moreover, in many parts of the world, university students have been in the forefront of political revolution. Mao Zedong famously noted that 'The whole of the Chinese revolutionary movement found its origin in the action of young students and intellectuals who had been awakened.'[1] Students have succeeded in changing unjust laws and in toppling unpopular regimes around

[1] Cited in Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 207.

the world. They have sacrificed their lives for the sake of human rights and social justice in China, Burma, South Korea, several African and Latin American states and, most recently, in the Middle East. The point to grasp is that students in many parts of the world are involved in social transformation *as students*, and not only after they've graduated; therefore, a university mission cannot isolate itself from the tensions and upheavals of the wider society in which it is embedded.

Commercialisation. Universities are embedded within the power relations of contemporary society. It is not surprising that since scientific research is a big business today, prestigious universities around the world are re-inventing themselves as corporations, and many research scientists enjoy a new status as entrepreneurs. More funds are necessary to secure top professors, build new facilities, and finance scholarships. University administrators feel they have no choice: they have to move away from the education of students to be well-informed and critical citizens and instead, concentrate more on producing people who can contribute to the world of commerce. Commercial undertakings are, in the nature of the case, in it for the money. If they fail to make money, they go

out of business. Their idea of truth is purely instrumental. Knowledge is now one more commodity to be traded.

It is common for the priorities in scientific and technological research to be determined by corporate interests and, especially in the case of the U.S., India or Israel, military interests as well. Outside of science and engineering, schools of law, business and public policy have also come to dominate much of university life. Such schools train the people who go on to work in private corporations and for the state. Their faculty and students are profoundly shaped by the values and interests of these clients.

Universities are ranked globally according to their quantity of research publications and the number of Nobel laureates on their staff, not by the quality of education they provide, the solidarity and well-being reported among its teachers and students, or its success in unifying areas of knowledge relevant to the rest of society. The academic business model that supports most major universities encourages universities to be transient shell corporations filled by researchers attracted by promises of money, grants, and prestigious positions.

The eminent development psychologist, Jerome Kagan, of Harvard University, recently wrote: "erosion in the depth of identification scholars have with their institutions, the unabashed pursuit of celebrity among a smaller number, and the extreme degree of specialisation are three troubling developments in the academy."[2] Kagan continues, "We seem to have cycled back to the fifteenth century when there were no academic institutions and individual scholars wandered between Bologna, Paris, and Oxford announcing their wares to customers willing to pay for their knowledge."[3]

Fragmentation. The fragmentation of academic life has, paradoxically, been promoted by globalisation. The Internet was developed as a powerful tool to enable research scientists to communicate with colleagues in other parts of the world. It has also united many university departments in common research projects, and some universities have put their entire courses online for access by the general public. For those who value the public nature of knowledge, these are welcome developments.

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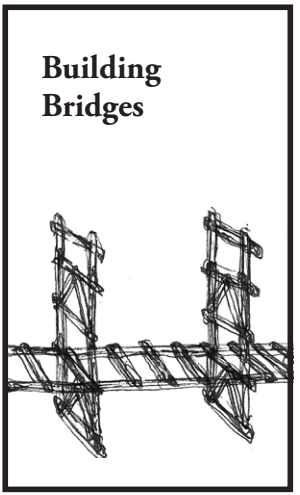
[2] Jerome Kagan, *The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Humanities in the 21st Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 257.
[3] Ibid. p. 258.

However, it could be argued that the new technologies have exacerbated the effects of the over-specialisation of academic disciplines and the lack of communication between colleagues in neighbouring departments on the same university campus. Students in online chat rooms or on their mobile phones are more in touch with like-minded folk at the other end of the world than they are with students in the same corridor of their hall of residence.

Kagan also observed that "[t]he large numbers of younger faculty competing for a professorship feel forced to specialise in narrow areas of their discipline and to publish as many papers as possible during the five to ten years before a tenure decision is made. Unfortunately, most of the facts in these reports have neither practical utility nor theoretical significance; they are tiny stones looking for a place in a cathedral. The majority of "empirical facts" in the social sciences have a half-life of about ten years … Moreover, most scientists feel no embarrassment over their lack of interest in the philosophy or history of their discipline."

Although information and expertise in specialist fields have multiplied exponentially in the past century, we have far less sense than our ancestors did of how one part of our human experience relates to another. Lacking any coherent master-narrative, or central point of reference, education has become a matter of imparting parcels of specialised knowledge to students. However, the latter are not equipped to evaluate the relationship of these parcels of knowledge to other parcels or to weigh their relative importance.[4]



The incarnation of the Son/Word of God in human flesh speaks of identification, dependence, vulnerability, and weakness. It proclaims a Saviour who comes to us where we are, looks through our eyes, speaks with our tongue, wears our clothes, carries our infirmities, and suffers in solidarity with

[4] Jerome Kagan, *The Three Cultures*, p. 260.

us. An ***incarnational*** engagement with the university will challenge us to rethink out conventional models of evangelism. To be incarnational implies that we are fully part of the life of the university (not just dropping in from outside to conduct so-called 'missions' to the university) and committed to its flourishing.

It concerns me deeply that we are not taking this calling to the university with sufficient intellectual seriousness. What is called 'evangelism' is often a special programme or activity that imitates what goes on in our local churches ('Seeker Bible studies', 'Christian Films', 'Alpha Courses', 'Christianity Explored' courses, distributing literature, etc.). The dominant assumption among students and staff is that evangelism is about inviting non-Christians to come to *our* meetings, to listen to *our* views, to learn *our* language, to read *our* Scriptures. We are the majority, and are always in control. I rejoice in the fact that God has used such methods to bring many students to faith in our national movements. But such methods, whether imported from affluent Western churches or locally produced, only reach those on the fringes of the church. Yet the vast majority in the university who are not overtly 'seeking' will never come for such programmes.

A university is a place where conversations of many kinds are taking place, whether in the classrooms, the research labs, the tutorials, the senior common rooms (Faculty Club), the student union or the host of student societies that sprout on campus. That is where Christians should be, humbly yet boldly immersing themselves in those conversations (which, for the most part, they have not initiated) and taking them in a different direction. I believe it is possible to start with any subject, from the most ridiculous to the sublime, and if we ask sufficiently probing questions we descend to the bedrock issues that the gospel addresses: *What does it mean to be human? What is the nature of ultimate reality? What is it that we truly value and why? Whence do we derive our notions of good and evil, reason, beauty or justice?* And so on.

Even if our efforts do not 'win' people to faith-commitment to Christ, they are still witness to God's intention to 'gather up' all human activities, whether in the sciences, business, government and the arts, into Christ. We do not 'take Christ' into the university; it is he who goes ahead of us and leads us there. He is present, even though unacknowledged, in the biochemistry laboratory, the music class, the radio astronomy centre, the student union

debates about global warming or student funding, and all the conversations that make up university life. We are called to discern his presence and activity and articulate it with courage and wisdom.

Such an approach to mission is always ***dialogical***. Indeed, dialogue is the central defining activity of any respectable university. It is what academic freedom is all about: the freedom to think and broadcast even the most outlandish views, provided one is willing to subject those views to rigorous scrutiny and debate by one's peers. Educational institutions that seek to stifle marginal or subversive voices, whether religious or secularist, forfeit their right to be called universities. Christians should be in the forefront of promoting such dialogues all over the university – starting as well as joining ongoing conversations on every topic that is of public interest.

The opposite of rigorous dialogue is a monologue. And, sadly, much of what passes for 'evangelism' in traditional circles are actually monologues. To be dialogical is to be in a two-way conversation: allowing the academic disciplines of the university to speak into our faith and, at the same time, articulating our faith intelligently, humbly,

relevantly and boldly into those academic disciplines. In a dialogue, unlike a monologue, we take risks. We expose ourselves, in all our vulnerability, to the full weight of 'alien' or anti-Christian thought, as well as receiving new truths that enrich our understanding of God and God's world.

When I first began working with students in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s, I remember sitting with Marxist students in the University of Colombo and listening to all the questions they 'fired' at me: What does the Bible say about revolution? What's wrong with using violence to overthrow a despotic regime? Why are Christians colonialists and capitalists? I had not reflected at any depth on these questions during my seven years as an active Christian student in the University of London. Since then, I have constantly sought to listen to the most thoughtful non-Christians (whether atheists, humanists, Buddhists, Muslims, or others), through their writings as well as personal encounters and public dialogues. I have also actively cultivated friendships with Christians from all theological traditions and persuasions. I have found myself challenged, humbled and deepened in my reading of Scripture and my discipleship to Christ through such

experiences. I have had to repent of prejudices, stereotypes, and naiveté.

Whenever the gospel crosses a new frontier, new questions arise and the church is forced to rethink the gospel it proclaims and the nature of her obedience in the world. We see this in Paul's letters, all of which are written in response to a new missionary situation.[5] For instance, the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 8) asked him questions such as: 'When our pagan friends invite us to their homes and serve us meat that has been offered up in temples, are we committing idolatry by partaking it?' This is a question that Paul never had to face until now, because Jews like himself simply never entered pagan homes. It is theology done at the cutting edge of missionary engagement with the world, and the church grows in its understanding of Christ.

Likewise, when the gospel is translated into the various academic disciplines of the university, whether architecture, robotics, cosmology or musical composition,

[5] Andrew Walls, 'Introduction', *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark and New York: Orbis, 1996).

new questions will arise that we have to wrestle with. If we do them with integrity, more of the splendour of Christ will be revealed to the church.

If I may speak again out of my personal experience, whenever I am invited to give public talks in secular universities on topics that are traditionally considered 'religious' (e.g. the problem of suffering, God and science, religious pluralism), what I enjoy most is a public dialogue with non-Christian thinkers, before a mixed audience, on a matter of mutual interest (e.g. human rights, global warming, the 'war on terror'). The value of such conversations is multiple: it attracts a larger audience; it clears away stereotypes and prejudices that we all have of each other; it shows non-Christians that Christians do have something intelligent, relevant and worthwhile to say on the given topic; it shows the Christian students how to argue with humility and respect for the other; and it can reveal what the really important issues are for further conversation, as opposed to what either party thought they were.

A Christian Voice and Sensibility

The various academic disciplines of the university are best thought of as enduring social practices into which students are inducted and to which some of them may contribute if they stay long enough to do research. Christians receive these academic disciplines as gifts from God to humanity, as expressions of common grace. "If we hold the Spirit of God to be the only source of truth", wrote John Calvin in his *Institutes*, "we will neither reject nor despise the truth, wherever it may reveal itself, lest we offend the Spirit of God."[6]

If Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord of the university, Christian professors and students should commit

[6] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (London: SCM, 1960), 2.2.15.

themselves to undergoing a Christian formation and developing a Christian sensibility, immersing themselves in the biblical Christian tradition as well as familiarising themselves with the history of Christian thought that bears on their particular disciplines.

Undergraduate students can sometimes help sharpen Christian professors by inviting them to share what difference being a Christian makes to the way they teach or do research. I remember, from my student days, a physics professor who was highly respected in his field. He belonged to an exclusivist church and used to publish tracts and pamphlets attacking evolution, and defending a literal six-day account of creation (what is called 'creationism'). He wanted us to use his writings in evangelism. We refused. We had to educate him on how *not* to read the Bible! He was theologically illiterate while being brilliant at physics. Such professors are often an embarrassment in the university to the wider Christian community.

Sometimes a Christian voice in social-science research means tackling the big questions within one's discipline rather than addressing those that attract narrow governmental or commercial interests. Often, it involves

interrogating the taken-for-granted assumptions about human nature and human flourishing, and opening up space for alternative voices to be heard. Shouldn't Christian teachers in the social sciences and humanities be opening up multiple perspectives on their subject, questioning the unstated assumptions behind the reigning paradigms, and encouraging their students to read their particular disciplines historically and cross-culturally?

For instance, most economics textbooks continue to assert, as if it were a basic empirical truth rather than an unproven assumption, that consumers make rational economic choices, uninfluenced by the behaviour or economic position of others, which can be captured in formal mathematical models. Moreover, rationality is reduced to self-interest, and it is assumed that we are the best judges of what lies in our interest. The influence of public policies, religious beliefs, cultural norms, and even television advertising in shaping and constraining individuals' choices are discounted. The result is an increasing theoretical abstraction that is out of touch with economic realities on the ground. Once it is recognised that individuals are unaware of some of the forces shaping their choices, it can no longer be argued that they will

successfully maximise their well-being.

Moreover, standard texts in economics do not help students think about what are called 'meta-externalities' – the unintended consequences of economic outcomes for social, political and cultural values and activities. For instance, how do gambling and currency speculation affect the work-ethic and the moral fabric of a society? Adam Smith's famous pin factory example is quoted in introductory textbooks to illustrate the gains that accrue from the division of labour. Students rarely check Smith's original text, for Smith goes on to lament the impact of such labour on the citizenry: "In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of … the great body of people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations … has no occasion to exert his understanding … He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become … His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this matter, to be acquired at the expense of his

intellectual, social and martial virtues."[7]

Thus, a Christian student or professor of economics will seek to re-locate her discipline within a wider Christian understanding of what makes for human *shalom*. This would involve, at least, the following:

- A richer anthropology, one that stresses the complexity of human motivations and the embedding of rationality in historical and social relationships;
- An incarnational commitment to 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' ('one-size-fits-all') solutions to economic problems;
- An ecological sensitivity that situates economic exchanges within the energy flows of the earth;
- A concern for social justice, particularly the rights of the poor, to be brought into the heart of the discipline (e.g. by looking at distributions of costs and benefits, and not being content with merely aggregate indices);
- An exploration of the roles that spiritual and religious capital play in generating economic outcomes.

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[7] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776; New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 734–5.

Often a Christian voice will entail questioning the standard story that is told in undergraduate classes about the historical development of the university and its various disciplines. For example, the standard liberal account of the development of human rights discourse is that it stemmed from the intellectual break with church authority and the assertion of human autonomy that was represented by the 18th century European Enlightenment. Such a narrative, routinely stated in legal and political theory textbooks, has been countered by scholars such as Brian Tierney and a group of gifted legal historians and philosophers at Emory University's Center for the Study of Law and Religion (CSLR). In a series of volumes published by Cambridge University Press, they have demonstrated that the idea of inherent human rights was explicitly conceptualised by the canon lawyers of the twelfth century; and that the recognition of such rights, if not yet the conceptualisation of them, was present in the Bible and among some of the church fathers.

John Witte, Jr., director of CSLR, has also reminded us of the enormous contribution that Calvinist Reformers and their heirs (in England and the Netherlands) made to notions of constitutional government, religious liberty,

freedom of speech and the separation of powers that are taken for granted in most liberal democracies.

Other popular academic orthodoxies that also need to be subverted are conventional accounts of the 'Enlightenment' as a monolithic and anti-religious system of thought; the rise of modern science in the teeth of militant church opposition (Galileo and Darwin are still portrayed as the Titans here); Max Weber's selective use of Puritan writings in his argument for the 'elective affinity' between early capitalism and Protestantism; the European missionary movement as merely an ideological partner to colonial and imperial expansion; and the Christian churches of Africa and Asia being foreign transplants of Western churches and their agents.

Those who are familiar with historical theology and mission studies know that a wealth of Christian literature has emerged in recent decades challenging all these mythologies. But my point is that they seldom penetrate beyond the closed circle of theologians and mission historians. Academic theologians tend to talk only with each other and publish papers for one another to read.

Therein lies the challenge to have conversations across the artificial boundaries set up in the university. We need scholars who can move freely across the boundaries, integrating disciplines and practices that secularist gate-keepers rigidly patrol. Those who cannot do these themselves can organise open seminars where a topic (e.g. food) is addressed from diverse disciplinary perspectives. We also need Christian scholars who can write introductory textbooks in their particular area of study, in addition to doing research that is sensitive to human needs, and relevant to social ills, as well as informs more faithful Christian social practices.

However, speaking with a Christian voice is about knowing *how* to speak as well as what to say. Sometimes, Christian students think that quoting proof-texts from the Bible in a classroom discussion is what Christian witness is all about. The result is only embarrassment and a hardening of the hearts of others towards Christians. Charity, respect for the other, and a use of language that is appropriate in the given context, are indispensable virtues for academic life. The novelist Madeleine L'Engle once told a student who wished to become a 'Christian writer' that 'if she is truly and deeply a Christian, what she writes is going to be

Christian, whether she mentions Jesus or not. And if she is not, in the most profound sense, Christian, then what she writes is not going to be Christian, no matter how many times she invokes the name of the Lord.'[8]

To be 'in the most profound sense, Christian' is surely the challenge we need to be presenting before our students, staff and university teachers.

Universities not only enable creativity and foster love for learning; they also promote isolation and compartmentalisation, prideful ambition, one-upmanship, snobbery, petty jealousies and bitter rivalries. Jesus Christ judges the scholar on the basis of these temptations even more than on the excellence of his or her intellectual achievements. This means that we attend to what is happening to our souls or characters even as we are shaped by the culture of the university, and for this we often need those outside the university, particularly the churches, to address us honestly.

[8] Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art* (Wheaton, Ill: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980), pp. 121–2.

An Australian physics professor, Ross McKenzie, goes out of his way to conduct practical workshops for research students in his university. These are intended to help participants think through how they will face challenges in their research, including working effectively with their supervisor, setting research goals, giving research presentations, writing a thesis, publishing their thesis, managing time, living a balanced life, and protecting their mental health.[9]

Concluding Remarks

A faithful Christian engagement with the university would involve:

1. Forming learning and witnessing Christian communities, comprising students, researchers, faculty and administrators, who engage courageously and dialogically with the diverse academic disciplines and conversations that constitute university life (this entails the crossing of status hierarchies and not replicating in universities what can be done in local churches).

[9] The material presented is available at: http://revelation4-11.blogspot.com/2013/03/workshop-for-postgraduate-students.html.

2. Seeking to influence universities so that they become more human-friendly, just and ecologically-sensitive spaces in which to study and work. This implies that we care about the moral, intellectual and spiritual flourishing of individuals and also of groups and systems.

While I consider a thoughtful apologetics to be indispensable, it certainly does not – and should not – exhaust what I mean by a Christian engagement with the university. Apologetics serves a wider calling by God to discover and celebrate his works as they are revealed through science and history, law or art.

In closing, here are some questions for student leaders, national movement staff and university teachers to ponder:

1. Are we nurturing in our movements artists, musicians, novelists and filmmakers who do not just produce 'church music' or 'religious films', but who explore through their art both the wonder and tragedy of the human condition?

2. Are we encouraging students towards good scholarship, not for personal glory but to serve the kingdom of God?

3. How do staffworkers in our movement understand their role? Does it relate to all that has been stated in this essay? If not, what needs to change?

4. Should we set aside someone to research student life and the changing culture(s) of the university, gathering information on books, websites and local scholars who can help students and staff engage more relevantly with the university world?

5. Are we able to identify and use gifted Christian people in the university and from the wider Church who can participate in public university dialogues on issues of common concern?

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Engaging the Campus:
A Singapore Journey

Yvonne Choo

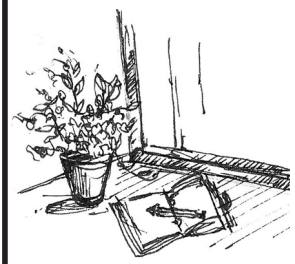
—

Defining Engagement

In the Genesis 11 account of the Tower of Babel, the LORD "confused the language of the whole world" (11:9 NIV) when the world attempted to "make a name for [them] selves" (11:4 NIV). This issue of language in the area of engaging the campus rises to the forefront, particularly in the IFES East Asia region where languages are more varied than countries, with no common language to unite the region. Despite the post-colonial adoption of English as lingua franca in many of these countries, student and graduate conferences have to be translated into multiple languages. How then can the word and concept of "engagement" be translated to the East Asian audience? A simple search on Google suggests a number of definitions for the word "engage" which we can use for our purpose.

To "engage" means to attract someone's interest and attention, be involved with, and establish a meaningful contact or connection with someone. But when translated to East Asian languages, it becomes variously known to be "promise", "interaction or involvement" or "persuade". As these translations do not adequately convey the meaning of engagement, some movements have decided upon the use of the English word instead.

Describing Engagement



Language and epistemology is intricately linked. Wittgenstein asserts that "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."[1] This suggests that language in a way determines the boundaries of what a person knows. It is hard to know something that you don't even have words to describe it. And what one

[1]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Logico-Tractatus Philosophicus*, 5.6. Retrieved from http://www.tractatuslogico-philosophicus.com/#node/n5-

knows determines how one acts. When a language does not even have the words to describe the act of engagement, the understanding of that act in that language is called into question. IFES movements have been called to engage the campus. However, we cannot do what we do not know and cannot describe. Vinoth Ramachandra describes the activity of campus engagement as thinking and acting "Christianly". This term encompasses every single thing that we say, think or do; and rightly so. Unfortunately, it also ends up being too vague.

A Singapore Journey

In Singapore, our student movement operates in three languages and therefore faces several challenges in our journey of engagement. The first and most common issue we face is the understanding of the relationship between engagement and evangelism. We struggle with several erroneous understandings of this. One misconception is equating engagement with evangelism. We see that happening when the Christian

Fellowship (CF) on campus continues with similar activities, and simply labelling their (perhaps slightly less confrontational) evangelistic efforts as "engagement". Little attempt was made in understanding what bringing the lordship of Christ into the campus meant. Another CF becomes so involved in various "engagement" activities that the proclamation of the gospel gets neglected. As long as they "engage", they thought that they have fulfilled their evangelism responsibilities. In both these campuses, the word "engagement" has simply replaced traditional categories of "evangelism".

Another misconception is equating all "engagement" as "pre-evangelism" activities. Instead of being committed to the God-desired "human flourishing"[2] of the campus, the students see these activities as simply means to "soften the ground". Undoubtedly in many instances, our attempts at engagement do result in our message being more attractive to others. And undoubtedly, our commitment to human flourishing must include bringing others to a saving knowledge of Christ. However, the biblical vision of shalom does not limit itself only to personal salvation.

[2] Ramachandra, V., in Christ and the University, p.37

It is working towards right and harmonious relationships with God, with others, with nature, and with oneself.[3] What we have learnt in this journey is that perhaps our students lack the language or conceptual categories to speak of the activities of bringing God's shalom to this world. We have not been exposed much to the language of communicating how we can participate in God's mission to bring God's glory and reign more fully into our campuses. Instead, we lapse into the more familiar terms of "is evangelism", "is not evangelism" and "is pre-evangelism" to describe our activities. We need to expand our conceptual vocabulary beyond these terms.

In the previous chapter, Vinoth describes engagement as participating in the thought world and conversations of the academy. This may include engaging the frontiers of research and academic thought, engaging the administrative systems, engaging the priorities of the pedagogy, engaging the values and lifestyles of the community. It also calls us to address issues of racism, sexism, xenophobia, student welfare, staff welfare, university rankings, or even the

[3] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

culture of internet trolling, among other issues. This poses some difficulty for some of our campuses. Firstly, we sometimes offer these examples of "best practices" with the assumption that the particular local university itself is at the forefront of academic thought and research when frequently, the university's agenda is set by their economic priorities. We also assume that the students themselves have the interest, the capacity, the bandwidth and the maturity to think "Christianly". As we are a transitory ministry, our task can sometimes be impeded by the lack of foundational teaching in this area by the local churches. It takes time for the students to understand this concept of engagement and usually when they finally do understand it, it's time for them to graduate. Perhaps we should be kinder to ourselves and not unconsciously hold any campus to a particular yardstick, as if academic engagement is "better" than social engagement; as if an engagement activity that ends up with the gospel being proclaimed is "better" than an engagement activity that does not. Engagement can start with little things.

Finally, our campus workers oftentimes feel inadequate in encouraging students to engage – perhaps due to a lack of role models, perhaps due to a lack of creative

imagination, and probably due to a lack of knowledge. We need more examples of how students can challenge the ontological, epistemological and ethical assumptions of their disciplines. We need more Christian professors and academicians who are able to integrate both academics and their faith, to work together with the campus staff in this area. We need patience as the staff embark on this journey of learning together with our students.

Both Terry Halliday and Vinoth Ramachandra call for us to be involved with the conversations that are taking place on campus. Unfortunately, not many individuals feel conversant enough with the Christian faith to even converse at that level of engagement. Being dialogic in our engagement can sometimes seem overly daunting.

The journey of engagement first starts with one's calling to be a Christian student, to be salt and light wherever

one is placed. It requires us to share God's vision of the shalom he seeks to bring to earth where salvation plays a part. Having right and harmonious relationships with God, with others, with nature, and with oneself has implications on values, justice and ethics with different communities on campus or even the campus's physical environment. This is what it means to declare the "good news of the in-breaking reign of God"[4]. It also requires us to listen and read the times; to understand our campus and the people in it. It means opening our eyes to look and see the needs around us. We need to be sensitive enough to hear the conversations around us and see the invisible communities on our campuses. We can then seek the shalom of the campus and serve the campus in creative ways.

Engagement can also be done in small ways; through acts of service for the international students in our midst, for the service staff working in canteens and toilets, and even for the campus security personnel. To illustrate, students of GEU (Grupo Evangélico Universitario) in the University San Carlos of Guatemala repainted an important mural in

[4] Ramachandra, V., in Christ and the University, p. 39

their campus as an act of service. This led the university to consider them favourably and set up the opportunity for further conversations with fellow students.

Terry has helpfully outlined for us, the four models of engagement. What it does is to hopefully allow us to see our own blindspots in how the Christian community on campus has been relating to the people around us. Different kinds of students attend our CFs. God willing, the student leaders will see the importance and heed the call to engage their campus. But more often than not, our CFs are populated with students who are simply seeking a support group on campus, or have been reluctantly persuaded by a friend to attend despite their busy schedules, or students who have absolutely no interest in their field of study beyond obtaining a means to get a job. Encouraging the CF or individuals to engage (dialogically or otherwise) becomes an uphill task.

Moreover, it is not enough to simply urge us to engage dialogically on campus. Complications arise when it comes to the "how". Christian campus groups are not monolithic in the way they are regarded by the school administration or community. This in turn restricts and

defines the way which they can engage dialogically as a corporate group. Here, I will briefly outline three types of campus groups and will suggest how engagement can occur in these cases. That is not to say that campus groups fall neatly within these three categories, nor to say that their characteristics are all mutually exclusive.

The Three Kinds of Campuses

Terry's dialogic model works best in an institution where the school administration is aware of the Christian campus group and is able to give official approval for some of their activities. In this case, the campus group gains the ability to engage as a corporate group. The corporate witness of the group can directly affect the reputation of the campus group and can in turn, affect how the campus view Christians and their Christian faith. The advantage this group has is in being able to organise activities and draw their fellow Christians

to join in with them regardless of their inclinations to engagement.

However, there are also institutions where the administration is indifferent to the existence of the Christian campus group as long as they do not cause any trouble. In this case, corporate engagement is constrained. Yet each opportunity to engage corporately gives the group a chance to build their reputation and credibility. Moreover, each individual's engagement can also become a rallying point for other Christian students to do the same.

Finally, we have institutions where the administration is opposed to the student Christian group on campus and may sometimes be hostile towards them. Usually due to the difficulties in publicity or other reasons, the group size is small and has limited resources and impact. The lack of critical mass leads to more urgently competing needs of discipleship and outreach. The range of activities that they can do as a group is severely limited by the fear that they may get into trouble with the campus authorities. Yet, these campuses are those that really need to experience shalom. It calls for us to have creativity and imagination.

To be courageous and cautious; to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

The Ripple Effect

When the campus administration in one institution views the Christian student group favourably, this can set up a ripple effect for other institutions in that locale. When Christian campus groups are viewed favourably by a single nation in this global village, it has the potential to influence campus authorities in other countries as well. This ripple effect reminds us that how we do engagement in a single campus may also have a global effect. We must never underestimate the kind of impact a single group may have for the entire world.

Conclusion

Not all of us can engage with academic scholarship effectively. Not all of us are in universities that are at the forefront of research and development. Not all of us are able to openly declare that we are Christians on campus. Those of us who are able to, have a responsibility to engage our campuses. But every one of us can and should bring Christ's shalom into our campuses. The challenge then is to be bold, creative and relevant in our imagination and in our action. May God's kingdom come on our campuses.

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Engaging the Campus:
A Personal Journey

Zeng Hanyi

—

I was a young student leader from Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF) at National University of Singapore (NUS), and more than a little overawed by the occasion.

It was 2011, at the IFES World Assembly in Krakow. The theme was "Jesus Christ: Lord of the Universe, Lord of the University". Vinoth Ramachandra, Charlie Hadjiev and Terence Halliday had just introduced the Dialogic Model in "Engaging the University" to the IFES family at the plenary. You will be familiar with them from Terry's and Vinoth's contributions in this monograph. What really fascinated me, however, was the smaller follow-up discussion where leaders from all over IFES put their heads and hearts together. It was full of grace and truth.

The question that resonated was: Can these ideas be contextualised to the various universities around the world? Many agreed that IFES must move in such a direction – but what would that look like on Asian campuses? Teaching universities? Campuses in Africa? It was suggested that these ideas were developed largely for the elite Western research universities – what of undergraduates and those not at the cutting edge of research?

I have been exploring these questions for the past three years, and share the evolution of my thoughts here.

A False Start?

Back in Singapore, "True Conversations" was already brewing in NUS. It was an open dialogue session, where a Christian apologist engaged with the Humanist Society's (Singapore) Humanist of the Year on "What is the meaning of life?" Organised by three intrepid Christian students in their personal capacities, it seemed to me the paradigmatic example of what the Dialogic Model can look like.

Only it seemed impossible to duplicate or expand it back in VCF. I was one of the Executive Committee members, but was unable to persuade fellow leaders to organise

more of such dialogues. What if someone says something insensitive and the school clamps down on us upon a student's complain? What if someone gets offended?

The Dialogic Model seemed to flounder when applied to the hard realities of the Singapore campus context within multi-religious Singapore. It is said that we have a precarious and hard-earned religious harmony.

I came to realise that the Dialogic Model embodies not only a paradigm shift in Christian engagement – in moving beyond the other three legs of the Pietistic, Apologetic or Evangelistic model – it is also a paradigm shift for society, in terms of how people of faiths and non-faiths relate. It implicates questions of secularism in a way that biblical authors never had to deal with. The Dialogic Model, thus, has dramatic implications for society, beyond simply transforming Christian community and mission on campus. What should be the just and desirable terms of engagement between people of faiths and non-faiths in society? Or have we become too numbed with fear to imagine an alternative picture of justice and human flourishing in this regard?

A Singaporean-Asian Dialogic Model?

- **Partnership between Christians and non-Christians**
- **Relational rather than confrontational**
- **Integrate word and deed**
- **Create opportunities for dialogue and conversation**

These difficulties and more led me to reconceptualise the Dialogic Model. A group of VCF leaders and I eventually started "Project:Gratitude" as a corporate project for VCF. The idea was to spur the campus students to be showing gratitude and recognising the dignity of the campus support staff.[1]

However, there were two developments there that represent to me evolutions of the Dialogic Model. It is said that Asians are less confrontational and more relational. I also knew from my efforts after "True Conversations" that dialogue in the public sphere is sensitive. First, therefore, we wanted there to be a *partnership* between

[1] See p. 28 of this monograph.

Christians and non-Christians in this effort, rather than an ostensibly confrontational dialogue. VCF members were to invite their fellow students to engage the support staff. Second, we wanted to *integrate* word and deed, and allow the relational to create opportunities for dialogue and conversation. It was imagined such an endeavour for the common good would allow for conversations on the role of faith in society, or on what kind of community we want to create on campus.

Conversations of Hope

- **Engage in "secular" conversations and see how things develop**
- **Christians coming up with a Christian perspective by themselves and add to the dialogue in the public sphere**

It is two years after VCF did "Project:Gratitude", and I was now VCF's chairperson. But I was also a dissatisfied chairperson. "Project: Gratitude" did impact the campus for the better, but the ideas of partnership and integration of word and deed did not take off as much as I

had imagined. How could the Dialogic Model be better contextualised? We were still not really able to bring faith into dialogue with academic spheres on campus, or engage on the national issues of the day among students. I knew there was much more fruit to be gleaned.

This time, God worked not through us having an idea, and then going out to engage the campus. This time, it happened the other way around. Being VCF's chairperson opened me to new worlds of Christian engagement with the school authorities and other campus societies. My fellow leaders and I went out in faith, knowing only that we had to be salt and light wherever we were, and God blessed us with a vision. The Dialogic Model is as much simply *starting* by going out to engage in "secular" conversations and then see how things develop, as it is about Christians coming up with a Christian perspective by themselves to *then* add to the dialogue in the public sphere.

We worked to conceptualise an alliance between the faith and cultural societies in NUS under the Community Engagement Programme Network (CEP Network). In partnership with other faith-based societies in particular, we then planned Conversations of Hope (COH). It was an

event that brought together students of all faiths and non-faiths to sit down in a "safe space" to have conversations. Each student was to write down questions to ask the group, whether of another's personal account of faith or on broader societal issues. The group will then have conversations based on these questions generated from the ground up.

It was dialogue among people of faiths and non-faiths that we wanted to spur in the larger campus population through COH. It was dialogue, in partnership planning for COH, that we wanted to cultivate with the leaders of the other faith and cultural groups. The feedback from those who came for COH was overwhelmingly positive. On our part, we have become firm friends with leaders of the other faith groups, convicted to together dream for the future of Singapore society – that is, with the entirety of our faiths as our inspiration!

I had come to work out the lordship and fragrance of Christ in ways I never before imagined possible.

What is True Dialogue?

- **"Joint exploration"**
- **Anti-elitist, more accessible to undergraduates**
- **Deeper mutal understanding, common endeavour**
- **Avoids suspicions of religious agendas and fears of offensiveness**

In retrospect, it is now a different kind of Dialogic Model. The partnership and integrity of word and deed coalesced into what I now call a "joint exploration". It starts from a position of humility, aims for the common good, and is sustained by infusions of our faiths in dialogue. It is to explore together a common issue. In my case, it was the vision of secularism for Singapore society. "Joint exploration" is different from conventional models of dialogue in one key respect – it does not require that the various parties come to the table already having their own conclusions, and then dialoguing from there. It is to start by saying, "I don't really know – let us explore together with the entirety of our beings, faiths or non-faiths!" The anchors for dialogue are good faith, a common issue, pursuit of truth or the common good as common

residents of a nation, and the certainty of contribution from our faiths or non-faiths.

In hindsight, it worked because it seems to resolve many of the initial objections perceived of the Dialogic Model at the World Assembly. It is anti-elitist, and more accessible to undergraduates, because "joint exploration" does not require solidified positions before parties come to dialogue. Indeed, my experience is that solidified positions are often also ossified positions, such that dialogue really degenerates into talking but not listening, or the talking past of one another. It does not depend on a more "Western" conception of the marketplace of ideas where presumptively autonomous and robust individuals engage in dialogue. Such a model seems to have an inherent dialectical, even antagonistic, relation; alternatively, it drives parties to engage in power politics, coercion or violence, when dialogue fails because everyone is speaking but no one is listening. Instead, "joint exploration" allows for deeper mutual understanding through a common endeavour, and better avoids suspicions of religious agendas and fears of offensiveness that increasingly plagues Christian engagement in Singapore. Perhaps, it also allows the community to more justly decide together what

human flourishing should look like. There is a genuine respect for the other, as well as an acknowledgement of the integrity of the person in the unity of his or her faith and public life.

Friends made through COH continue to explore with me a vision for a pluralistic Singapore. We are pushing our "joint exploration" further. We have had one exploratory "proof of concept" session where Muslims and Christians dialogued on environmental concerns, by jointly exploring the Koran and the Bible. We discovered blindspots, and fruitfully exchanged ideas about *halal* and the biblical Jubilee. I am hopeful that one day Christians and human rights activists will explore the Bible and various humanist texts together in public sphere dialogue with regard to issues of abortion or the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

Dialogue, as such, has allowed me anew to both say and demonstrate what the lordship and love of Christ looks like. How could I have spoken of loving my neighbour before, without really hearing or knowing them?

Dialogue in and through One Body in Christ

- **Students and faculty to brainstorm together**
- **Create a culture of true dialogue**
- **Work out the Lordship of Christ in areas of life on campus**

I now had a strange confidence. Put different people together in a safe setting, set some anchors, and something good will flourish through the dialogue. It was the end of my term as VCF's chairperson, and there was another frontier to discover.

We brought together Christian undergraduates, postgraduate students, faculty and FES staff to watch Vinoth's "Engaging the University" video[2] and respond to it in joint exploration. Some of the ideas we were challenged with in the video can be found in this monograph under the chapter "Christ and the University". What would it look like if Christians go out to engage in all the conversations on campus, discerning the presence of Christ who goes before us? What if Christians from all parts of campus

[2] This video can be viewed at http://vimeo.com/74655010.

come together as a community to dialogically engage the campus? This was precisely the premise of this gathering.

It was not like anything we have experienced before. Classroom ideologies; history; political science; evangelism; hermeneutics; law; architecture; foreign students; mathematics; church – all things were made in and through Christ? Just who is this God we worship?

The professor who was disappointed by the timid imaginations of fellow Christian faculty found himself enthused by unfazed students. The meek student found himself emboldened to examine his own professors' assumptions in class. The FES staff boldly put forth hermeneutics and academics. There was a call to gather Christian students and faculty to brainstorm together. Do we know who are the Christian faculty? How can we create a culture of true dialogue? Ours, together, is a special calling on campus.

From the most inexperienced undergraduate to the most brilliant professor, all are to be one body in Christ, working out the lordship of Christ in areas of life on campus.

Closing Prayer: Blessing to the Nations?

All of the above have been to me as streams of consciousness, driving me through these four years in student ministry. From the genesis of the ideas of the Dialogic Model at World Assembly, to the trembling privilege I feel now of what I was led to see of God and his kingdom come – it has been a renewal of mind, a testing of ideas, a trial of discipleship, and a wondrous blessing to me.

One final thought. If I may, I daresay that perhaps the Dialogic Model itself, properly contextualised, can even be the Christian contribution towards *shalom* in society. It is not simply that the Dialogic Model is the means by which Christian thinking or action is added to society. It is that Christians model the way in which competing or disagreeing groups in society should relate to one another. Now, others may not want to dialogue even if Christians want to. Indeed, that was my initial experience with the CEP Network. To first approach others, seeking true and deep understanding – it is a real show of respect for the other, a vulnerable loving-the-neighbour-as-yourself, which eventually lays the foundations for a true dialogue. Indeed, perhaps the Dialogic Model embodies for

Christians and society how we are to relate in a Christlike manner, in humility, self-sacrificial love, and yet also truth.

Jesus is Lord of our lives. But can we also imagine him as Lord of the university? Can we imagine him as Lord of the nations, of the universe?

I end with my own variation of the Franciscan Benediction that Vinoth first shared at World Assembly 2011 and which has continued to reverberate deep within me since:

May God bless us with discomfort,

May God bless us with an enduring dissatisfaction.

To hunger to know Christ who is Lord of all,

So that we may renew our minds,

To test to discern God's will in all,

What is good, acceptable and perfect.

Amen.

Zeng Hanyi was the Chairperson of VCF at NUS and the inaugural FES National Student Council for the academic year 2013/2014. He currently works as a lawyer in private practice while continuing to serve in the FES Council/Board.

Engaging the Campus:
A Hong Kong Praxis

Kenneth Wong Hoi Kin &
Barry Cheung Man Chung

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In recent years, the word "dialogue" has become a keyword in Hong Kong. Since the Umbrella Movement, serious disagreements about political and public issues have become prevalent within tertiary institutions and even other sectors of society. An adversarial culture has pervaded us, even deeply affecting universities today. Students have become antagonistic towards those with differing viewpoints, not allowing space for dialogue with mutual respect. From the crisis of the disaffiliation of member organisations under the Hong Kong Federation of Students to the founding of the Scholars Alliance for Academic Freedom, university campuses are now filled with varying degrees of tension. Being part of such an era, what is the calling of tertiary Christian Fellowships (CFs) today? Can CFs be detached from the existential values of the universities and survive by themselves? We posit

that 'engaging the campus' and conducting 'dialogues' can be key to shedding some light unto the purpose of our tertiary CFs today. We would also explore different possibilities for 'engaging the campuses.'

From Reflection of Faith to Dialogue

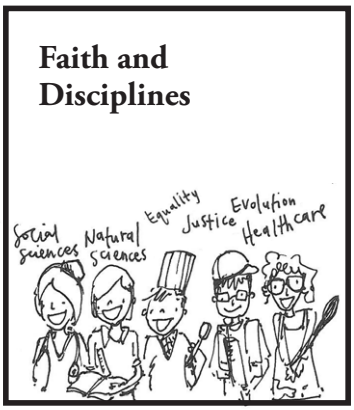
Tertiary CFs often present an image of valuing faith and theological reflections. In order to engage the campus fully however, CFs should take a step further to become avenues for dialogues. Since we hope that people on campus would come into contact with and understand our faith, we have to learn to treat every issue and each individual with respect and humility. We should not see ourselves as the truth, for Truth only resides in God. First, we must ask ourselves whether we are open to listening to different views respectfully. Only then can we invite our school mates to events that can serve

as platforms for dialogue. Our events should be open to Christians and non-Christians alike. Our target audience need not be limited to undergraduates; imagine faculty staff, postgraduate students, university staff joining in discussing varied issues, from constitutional democracy, university education, to wealth disparity. Such discussions are opportunities for us to gain different insights, and together we see how faith responds to different issues and different standpoints. These, then, may be where life transformation takes place.

That being the case, discussions during CF events should not be limited to just 'spiritual' issues. Participants need not compromise their thought habits or be required to use spiritual jargon. On the contrary, everyone should be able to freely share his or her concerns or challenges on campus. Life should no longer be dichotomised into the holy and secular, nor be fragmented. CFs may then finally become a space where holistic and authentic life interact with each other. Effective dialogues begin with listening. Perhaps we are used to giving monologues, hoping that others will pay heed to our opinions. Rarely are we ready to listen to the stories of others. Listening requires humility, an open heart, an admission of our

own shortcomings and limitations, and accepting and learning from the reflections of others. This is the essential foundation for genuine dialogues.

In fact, listening and dialoguing are also the starting points for communicating one's faith. Dialogues can break down barriers between people, and we become more willing to listen to each other's life stories. It is impossible to force our view of faith onto others using power. Faith cannot become an ideology that manipulates people's life. The basic component of human nature is freedom, and accepting the Christian faith is a human act of using his or her noble freedom to saying 'yes' to God.



Another point worth considering is this: if every academic discipline reflects God's creation and his attributes, are we able to construct a set of faith values that integrates life and the disciplines we study? Are we able to explore the significance of the pursuit of

knowledge to Christians, and propose alternate ways for educating and nurturing? Recently, some university students initiated a unique Freshmen Orientation Camp (FOC) by breaking away from its traditional format. They wanted the freshmen to be exposed to a different community experience.[1] To change the prevalent stereotype that all university students care about is enjoying life, the FOC brought the freshmen to the rural areas to experience farming with the villagers. Through activities such as these, the students learned precious lessons from real life experiences and were encouraged to reflect on their identity and responsibility as university students. Such initiatives stimulate us to rethink what university students should pursue today; whether there is a way to conduct ourselves counter-culturally as Christians in tertiary institutions. If we are convinced that God has given us a unique calling as Christians, we should then endeavour to explore and live out this uniqueness, and be courageous enough to imagine an alternative way of life on today's campuses.

Moreover, it is not impossible to strive to meet God in our daily learning. He has allowed us to receive various

[1] For more details, see http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1036781.

forms of education, and through them make us aware of the significance and implication of our faith. For instance, the Social Sciences stimulate discussions on subjects such as justice, equality and humanity, through which we can explore various dimensions of response from the Bible and theological traditions. Through the Natural Sciences, we discover more about creation and the order established by our Lord the Creator. We become involved in debates regarding evolution and the Big Bang theory, as well as related issues on the existence of God. In Healthcare, we become concerned with topics such as the value of life, and helping others to come to terms with death. When we learn to deal with such issues, we soon realise that learning is not detached from our faith. Instead, it helps us to actively pursue the mystery of God's involvement in our world.

In addition, Christ is not only present in the CFs, but throughout the whole campus. This is evident from two dimensions of Christology. Firstly, we live in Christ. In Christ, all things are made new. Every aspect of our lives is related to Christ. The gospel of Christ is not for the benefit of the individual alone, but rather, to renew and transform the world where sinners are. The gospel brings

about redemption and judgement simultaneously. To a Christian, the gospel is not just about a person's actions – it is relevant to and critiques the educational ideology of universities, and their prevalent culture. In Christ, we must question: How is my identity as a student shaped by my university? Is it consistent with my faith? Is the knowledge I obtained from my studies in line with God's truth, justice and glory? When we confess that Christ is the Lord of all, we must then witness his authentic authority in every aspect of our campus life, for the campus is his; it is a part of the world God had created (Col. 1:16–17).

Second, Christ lives in us. As academic disciplines become more specialised, human beings become more isolated, learning increasingly individualistic, and one becomes more devoted to his or her own area. The assumption now would be unless one has sufficient professional knowledge, one is not qualified to speak or raise any questions. We believe that all things are united in Christ, including knowledge. In this world created by God, not only does all knowledge belong to him, they are indivisible from the knowledge of God's attributes. Every perception of the world cannot be independent of, or apart from, the knowledge of God. Christ lives in us, guides us back to

the union of all things which is in him, and enables us to leave our comfort zones with faith and trembling. He leads us to a new realm of dialogue, which is to admit our own ignorance and have the courage to point out fallacies that contradict the Truth. Christ, who is in us, calls us to recognise and engage his presence and wisdom. It is a wonderful mystery that all things (knowledge) are united in him (Eph. 1:9–10).

Conclusion

The four elements raised by Terry Halliday in this book (the Pietistic, the Evangelistic, the Apologetic, the Dialogic) do resonate, to a certain degree, among the tertiary CFs. Nevertheless, if we are to engage the whole campus and witness for Christ in every corner of life, we will need a thorough understanding of people and affairs in tertiary institutions, so as to reflect the voice of God through our dialogues with them. This is pertinent on campuses today where we face various injustices within and without, with a deep sense of powerlessness and fatigue about how society may change, or whether CFs can bring a glimmer of light and hope. The path of promoting dialogues may not be an easy one, since any diverging viewpoints may

invite all sorts of labelling, misunderstandings, or even hurts. However, the revelation of Jesus Christ's 'Word became flesh' leads us into a deeper commitment and vision for our tertiary institutions. While we are yet to bring everyone to Christ, it is our hope that seeds of faith are sown.

The following are a few practical suggestions for engaging the campus and conducting dialogues. They may not be especially insightful; nonetheless, we pray they can be a stimulant for brainstorming new ideas within our tertiary CFs:

1. Utilise social care to facilitate opportunities for dialogues, with regard to various social and campus issues. Alternatively, CFs can consider setting up 'care for campus' groups to respond to campus-related matters, from minor affairs such as meal services, to major issues like academic freedom and college teaching.

2. Devise ways to demonstrate care and concern for fellow students facing study-induced stress or lecturers burdened with the pressure of heavy teaching loads.

3. Encourage tertiary students to organise cell groups with like-minded fellow students in their respective departments. Use gatherings to stimulate engagement with faith through the mutual sharing of learning experiences about the meaning of life.

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What does it mean to engage the whole campus for Christ? Do we have the biblical foundation to this vision? What are the challenges faced and possible blind spots discovered as we practise our faith and serve in the academy? May this book accompany us in the journey of discovering what *Engaging the Campus* can mean in our own context.

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