

Three Premises of Christian Engagement

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Premise 1: God is Everywhere in the University.

At the University of Chicago Dr. Vinoth Ramachandra was asked – how do we bring God into the university?

- Dr. Ramachandra replied . . . Christ is already on campus – at research frontiers, in the seminar rooms, in the labs, in the library – wherever truth is discovered, wherever justice is being advanced, wherever beauty is being created
- Do you remember Paul in Athens? On Mars Hill? People were worshipping an unknown God – Paul named that God.
 - we see God’s workings in the university, and name them, and multiply them.
- Through God the creator, sustainer, He is
 - Working thru general revelation – (Psa 1)
 - Working thru common grace – Calvin -- a specific grace to the believer – and a grace to all persons as *imago dei*.
- God created all, cares about all, seeks to redeem all – so every conversation, every research frontier potentially has a Godly dimension, if we can but see it
- Everything exciting going on in the university relates ultimately to God, reveals the living, working engagement of the creator God through minds, imaginations, etc.

Wherever there is truth and beauty and justice – we find our source in a triune God.

Premise 2: God Has Given Us a Rare Calling to Work with Him in the University

A tiny fraction of people in most countries get advanced degrees

- Talents, gifts – ours are special, singular – our call is distinctive.
- The university is a unique site, not identical to any other form of ministry
 - a generator of knowledge
 - a critical center
 - a transmitter of learning
 - an inculcator of thinking (and moral/ethical?) skills
 - a protected space in many societies where conversation, activities, activism permitted where it is not permitted anywhere else
- The university is integral to most every society – its leadership, policy directions, moral fabric

Teachings of the Gospels are key here:

- Parable of the Talents – God expects us to multiply our gifts, not bury them
- Metaphor of light – we are not to hide our light—the light of Christ—under a bushel
 - shining in darkness, in dim places (“see thru a glass darkly”)
- Metaphor of salt – we are to give the university an enhanced flavor

Premise 3: We Are to bring Christian Meaning to the University

Recall Jesus on the Emmaus Rd. Note some key features of that walk and talk.

- The two men had seen the events leading up to the crucifixion (i.e., everything going on around them)
- They knew their Bible
- They didn't know how to attribute biblical meaning to the events
- So, Jesus opens to them a two-way "dialog"
 - The events require a new and fresh re-reading of Scripture – that is what He does
 - Jesus reveals the layers of meaning – its challenges of interpretation – of "rightly dividing the word of truth" – of reading it theologically, holistically. i.e., events cause a re-reading of Scripture

When we put these three together – Christ in the university, our distinctive calling, a theological understanding – then *engaging the university through dialog* becomes a high calling for individually and for us collectively.

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