

An initial attempt to grapple with what it means that the university is a 'community of scholars.' I apologize for its length. I pray that you can follow its direction.

Proposal: the community of scholars which comprise a research university give glory to God (even if unintentionally and/or counter to their intentions) by their exploration, application, and articulation of their findings regarding the people, ideas, and structures of the creation. Through this endeavor, there is the opportunity to glimpse the coherence of the creation, to responsibly steward the creation, and to find meaning, satisfaction, and wholeness in the hope of what is yet to come through Christ Jesus. InterVarsity desires to draw a community of Christian scholars together to give glory to God, encourage them in their work, arrange mentoring relationships with younger members of the university community, and provide an opportunity/framework for conversation which wrestles with 'All truth being God's truth.'

1. Question of Work: John Stott has defined work as "... the expenditure of energy (manual or mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community and glory to God." This stems from an understanding of God as a worker, creator, and sustainer who gave human beings responsibility for one-another and the creation. As stewards and gardeners, Adam and Eve failed, but nonetheless, even in our broken/fallen world "as those created in the image of God," we offer our work to God as an act of worship which honors Him and anticipates Christ's return alongside the establishment of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

InterVarsity desires not only to bring the Word of God in order to call people to salvation and to proclaim the Gospel in evangelistic and missionary endeavors, but also we long to be a part of the process of encouraging members of the University community to make wise decisions regarding the gifts that they have been given in order to give worship to God, responsibly explore the goodness of creation, "instruct the ignorant," and serve our neighbor.

As we move in this direction, we enter the territory of Vocation in which we, by the grace of God, lead lives of commitment in a complex and sometimes painful/hurtful world. The Scriptures, mentors, rooting our identity in Christ and the Body of Christ, understanding our place (the university or for those that pass through the university, the professional world), critical habits of the mind, responsible imagination, encountering our frailty/fallen-ness are all key ingredients of this process of understanding. InterVarsity seeks to be a helpful voice to those that have ears to hear a message counter to "The heart is in the work."

2. Question of the University:

According to C. Anderson in "Prescribing the Life of the Mind," the University is expected to enculturate (i.e., pass on a tradition), citizen-ize (i.e., make students Americans, introduce living, working, moving in society), prepare (for career, social mobility, "place" in economy/society, character-ize (i.e., instill "Qualities of soul"). According to Robert Maynard Hutchins in "The Higher Learning of America," the mission of the university is primarily dedicated to scholarship, professional education, the training of the mind (7) . . . single-minded pursuit of the intellectual virtues. As scholarship it is the single-minded devotion to the advancement of knowledge (32) and the pursuit of truth (33). The aim of education is to connect man with man, to connect the present with the past, and to advance the thinking of the race (71). Now this is focused on the undergraduate student population. The challenge is to shape young people for our culture and society. InterVarsity, alongside an engaged community of Christian Scholars and local congregations rooted in the historic faith, desires to be part of the developing college students and their perspective on the creation and their role in it.

The German Research Model which we touched on pursues "creating" new knowledge, uncovering new ideas and ways to understand them. There is a desire not to corrupt research by making it practical and vocational, although the American version has sought a high degree of profitability and professional application. Elements of this include: wissenschaaft, love of

learning as an end in itself; lehrfreihert, pursuit of the truth wherever it might lead unencumbered; economic facilitation for business, industry, manufacturing, Agriculture, etc.; security, defense and weaponry; medical, cures for disease; and research parks on campus with relationships between business and the university. Now this is focused on the graduate and faculty population, particularly at research schools. The challenge is to produce results to "save and advance the world." InterVarsity, alongside an engaged community of Christian Scholars and local congregations rooted in the historic faith, desires to speak into and inside this milieu so that the Christian voice and way of life is not relegated to the margins or pushed out entirely.

Jaroslav Pelikan in "The Idea of the University: A Re-examination" proposes four, maybe five, legs of the university table: advancement of knowledge through research, the transmission of knowledge through teaching, the preservation of knowledge through scholarly collections (the embalming of dead genius), the diffusion of knowledge through publishing (p.16); p.76 training that involves both knowledge and professional skill in the university [i.e., the field of education: capacity to bring revolutionize (radically change the way things currently are, change the system – whole chapter dedicated to this topic)]. The university at its best should have all of these legs in play, all are vitally important to have the proper impact. InterVarsity, alongside an engaged community of Christian Scholars and local congregations rooted in the historic faith, has much to contribute in these areas.

3. Question of Common Grace: God created the heavens and the earth and they shout out to him in praise. The creation, although affected by the fall, is explorable/understandable and human beings, although broken and fallen, are in the image of God granting them the ability to explore and understand the creation, even if at times via a darkened and limited lens.

As Richard Mouw has titled a book on this topic, "God shines in all that is fair." Praise be to Him! We cannot help but bump against Him and His unfolding work in the world. The Research University varies in the ethical nature of its work, but nonetheless, the creation and that which is informed by truth, even if only shards of the human mind, cries out. For as Justin Martyr is often quoted, "All truth is God's truth."

I believe that InterVarsity can not only point to common grace, but also can assert that the community of scholars which compose the university need one-another. The university has become a multiversity. As an interdenominational, multiethnic, campus-wide, cross-campus movement which embraces the historic Christian faith we have many resources to provide space for conversation across the university world and bring together communities of scholars across religious/faith perspectives not only to propose a central reference point upon which to build a coherent perspective, but also raise issues regarding appropriate uses of research in order to bless one's neighbor, give testimony to God's glory in creation in one's field and across fields, push one-another to an excellence which does not become all consuming, draw attention to the perspectives and histories which inform our thought, back off the panacea of progressivism, create a rich environment of thinking and challenge us with possibilities for future direction. AND most difficult of all, moving toward living Christianity with accountability in the real world and not just our vain imaginations.

For as a community of Christian scholars in the university we are not solely about vocation or making money, but exploring and testifying to how the Creator and our role as those created in His image and charged with the care of a fallen creation until He returns brings coherence and wholeness to education. For it is in the Gospel that all things cohere and from which things flow out of including the capacity for wisdom and discernment regarding the proper application of knowledge and experience.

It is through institutions such as the university that we see thru a glass darkly the God's ordering of people and structures and that we find meaning, satisfaction, and wholeness in the hope of what is yet to come through Christ Jesus. Yes, there is sin in our midst, but there is also grace dispensed as lives are transformed, the creation glimpsed in its glory, and good applications of

knowledge are chosen over evil. It is a place and a time of life, for some an entire life, where one seeks to understand what it means to think, live, relate in the world. That which was created good and intended for good can be taken the wrong direction, as when education takes on the messianic model instead of taking its proper place in the Messiah's work, but one must remember that this is a parasitic relationship of that which is evil attaching itself to and taking the good in an improper direction. This is neither the way it is intended to be, nor the direction it will inherently head when the servants of God, by His grace, serve as salt and light in its structure. Sola Dei Gloria. Tom