

# **Growing Amidst the Challenges**

**Trans-European Division  
Quinquennial Education Convention  
Hotel Izvor  
Serbia  
July 26-30, 2023**





# Find Us Faithful

Dr Stephen Currow



I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16

# Conviction

- At the beginning of his introduction to strangers in Rome whom he hopes to enlist in a mission to Spain, Paul asserts:

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL ...

# Conviction

- At the beginning of my introduction to ministerial and theological education through which I hoped to enlist people in a mission beyond the ordinary, Paul challenged me:

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL ...

# Questions

- At the beginning of an Adventist School/College/University's introduction to students we hope to enlist in mission to the world, can we assert ...

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL?

## Questions cont'd

- What does it mean to be an Adventist School/College/University?
- What does it take to be (and continue to be) an Adventist School/College/University?
- What does research share about the journey of faith schools, colleges and universities?

# Context

- **Different contexts – throughout TED**
  - Different religious environments
  - Different popular agendas
  - Different educational frameworks
  - Different educational priorities / curricula
  - Different legislative frameworks
    - Employment law
    - Religious Liberty – protected attributes



# Research & Publications - Schools

- Reflections on some recent research regarding faith schools:
  - INTERNATIONAL
    - Europe (Netherlands)
    - US
    - Australia
  - INTER-DENOMINATIONAL
    - Catholic and
    - Protestant

# Schools

- *How Catholic Schools Lose their Identity* – Peach (USA, 2016)
- In order to fulfill their mission, ...
  - No choice but to balance two goals:
    - Present Catholic intellectual tradition and provide opportunities to foster students faith and virtue
    - Pay all the College's bills
  - CFOs – no margin, no mission
- A Catholic College pays its bills to present Catholic intellectual tradition and provide opportunities to foster student faith and virtue
  - Not just an airline or theatre which fill seats to survive

# Schools

- *Enhancing our Anglican Identity* - Heischman, (USA/Australia, 2018)
- A two-day forum in Melbourne on the Identity and mission of Australian Anglican schools.
- It represents, as well, a distinct opportunity, within worldwide Anglicanism, to say, in proud and confident tones *[without shame]*,
  - 'this is who we are as Anglican schools,
  - this is what we have to offer to our students, their families, our country, our world'

# Schools

- *Beyond the Split between Formal School Identity and Teachers' Personal Worldviews: Towards an Inclusive (Christian) School Identity* - Bertram-Troost, Versteegt, van der Kooij, van Nes and Miedema (Netherlands, 2018)
- How secondary school teachers (try to) relate to the formal Protestant Christian identity of their school, the challenges they experience in relation to their own personal worldview, and the recommendations they have to overcome these challenges.

# Schools

- *Teacher education: What Australian Christian schools need and what higher education delivers* – Buchanan (Australia 2020)
- Employers of religiously affiliated schools desire teachers who are **knowledgeable in their discipline** and are also able to **draw confidently upon Christian beliefs and values in a way that informs their professional work as educators** (Johannessen, 2015). In addition to knowledge transfer, effective learning and teaching for trainee teachers also requires **learning opportunities that enable them to contemplate, reflect and think critically, in ways that permit their religious beliefs and values to inform their professional work as Christian educators** (Cooling et al., 2016).

# Schools

- *Teaching the Unteachable or Why Too Much Good Is Bad - Pollefeyt* (Australia 2021)
- Observation that the Catholic education offered in primary schools does not seem to survive the growing or maturing of children in secondary schools: young children who would seem to be successfully raised in the Christian faith have lost this faith by the end of their education trajectory.

# Schools

- *Christian Schools Should be Thoroughly Christian (and not just for legal reasons): What hath Bostock wrought? – Stonestreet (USA 2021)*
- A Catholic School was not Catholic enough!
  - Secular teachers
    - Discouraged from teaching religious subjects
    - Refrain from teaching Catholic doctrine
    - Do not have to be Catholic or Christian
    - Not asked about religious faith in interview
  - Discrimination: fired a male drama teacher for announcing marrying a male; didn't fire a female English teacher for announcing she was marrying a male!

# Research & Publications – Universities

- Research regarding faith-based Colleges to secular Universities:
  - US - GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE
    - East coast
    - West coast
    - Central/southern Bible belt
  - INTER-DENOMINATIONAL
    - Protestant and
    - Catholic



# Colleges & Universities

## *The Soul of American Universities* – Marsden (1994)

- Under influence of liberal Protestants excluded Christian belief as unworthy of study in the new orthodoxy of secularism.
- Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Michigan, John Hopkins, Chicago

# Colleges & Universities

## *Contending with Modernity* - Gleason (1995)

- Catholic establishment fended off both Modernism and Americanism until 1960s.
- Changes because of lay autonomy, scholarly mediocrity, drive for recognition & acceptance of liberal dogma.

# Colleges & Universities

## *Faith & Knowledge* - Sloan (1994)

- Attempts by liberal Protestants to reunite faith and knowledge severed by the academy
- Theologians appropriating humanities and social sciences as the habitat they imagined proper for their Christian “values” and translating their faith into the language and categories of accepted disciplines

# Colleges & Universities

*Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-first Century* - Hughes & Adrian (1997)

- Although difficult for Christian institutions to develop into highly successful academic institutions while maintaining and nurturing the religious commitments and identity.
- Diverse institutions sampled successfully blended the twin commitments of religious fidelity and academic accomplishment.

# Colleges & Universities

*The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges & Universities from their Christian Churches* - Burtchaell (1998)

- Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Catholics, Evangelicals: Representatives of diverse groups within these traditions
- This book is written in the belief that the ambition to unite “knowledge and vital piety” is a wholesome and hopeful and stubborn one.

# Identity

- Denominational
  - Evangelical
    - Christian
      - Wholesome goals of institution: Doctrinal pre-occupation spoiled religious, devotional & behavioural commonplaces

# Academics

- Bible College
- Theological discourse
- Religious Faith
- Truths of Faith necessary
- Accredited HE programme
- Pressure on curriculum: Christianity not an academic discourse
- Human Knowledge
- Discover and transmit knowledge: gained by experiment and publically verifiable

# Faculty

- College priority

- Academic Career



# Recruitment Questions re faith

- Direct > Assurance
  - Direct > Nonchalance
    - Helpful > Impatience
      - Vague > Affront

# Involvement in Church

- Active
  - Nominal
    - Accept institution's statement of faith
      - Silent tolerance of institution's ill-defined statement of faith

# Responsibility for Spiritual Care

- Everyone
  - Administration
    - Chaplain

# Involvement in Campus Spiritual Activities

- Living on campus and involved
  - Distant from campus and detached

# Finance

- Appropriations & tuition
- To increase tuition income, increase student numbers – irrespective of faith
- Endowments & grants (government)

# Governance

- Denominational
  - Denominational representatives viewed as inept
    - Denominational representatives viewed as intrusive
  - Non-denominational alumni and benefactors

# Churches' role

- Denominations provided relatively little financial support.
- Not enough members of their own denomination were inclined to seek the benefits of higher education, or seek it at an expense that was sufficient to sustain private as opposed to state supported education.
- Denominations, through pastors or institutional leaders, often presented itself as at odds with the educational tasks of the college or the university, such as anti-intellectualism.

# Colleges' role

- Inability to discern when allegiance to the church took priority over either academic culture or popular culture.
- Too much energy was expended on secondary theological distinctives, rather than common Christian beliefs.
- Few Protestant institutions cultivated a vigorous theologically informed culture at their origins.
- Professional competence in one's discipline became the only relevant criterion in faculty hiring.



# BEFORE

- Identity: Denominational
- Academics: Bible College - truths of faith
- Faculty: Prioritise the College
- Faith in Interviews: Direct > assurance
- Church: Active in Church
- Spiritual care: Everyone's responsibility
- Campus activities: Living on campus – involved
- Finance: Appropriations & tuition
- Governance: Denominational

# AFTER

- Identity: Wholesome goals of institution
- Academics: Accredited HE programme
- Faculty: Prioritise their academic career
- Faith in interviews: Vague > affront
- Church: Silent toleration of statement of faith
- Spiritual care: Chaplain
- Campus activities: Distant from campus and detached
- Finance: Endowments, grants (Government)
- Governance: Non-denominational alumni & benefactors

# Conclusion

- It appears that there is an inertia for ...  
faith-based institutions which disciplined  
students through wholistic education  
to drift into becoming  
recognised fee-paying grammar schools or  
universities re-known for their results which  
happen to be operated by a church

# Conclusion

- We need to develop intentional strategies in every context to mitigate the natural inertia of mission drift in Adventist Education?

# Conclusion

- Adventist Education is a financially responsible ministry ...
  - Delivering excellence in education, while
  - Introducing students to a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ and
  - Encouraging them to become active disciples in his Church
- Not about the success of institutions – but the success of the Church

# Commitment

- Wherever you are in your journey as a teacher, chaplain and/or educational administrator, can we assert with Paul in both word and deed ...

I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16

# Find us Faithful

We're pilgrims on the journey of the narrow road,  
And those who've gone before us line the way.  
Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary,  
Their lives a stirring testament to God's sustaining grace.  
O may all who come behind us find us faithful,  
May the fire of our devotion light their way.  
May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe,  
And the lives we live, inspire them to obey.  
O may all who come behind us, find us faithful.

Jon Mohr







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