

Serving Christ in Academia

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The most important symbol

- The most important symbol in what follows is:

?

- I make suggestions to get the ball rolling
- I want each to apply the Bible for him/herself
- Application of the Bible's teaching is important
- Application will vary on personal circumstance

The three parts of academic life

- Teaching
 - Undergraduates
 - Postgraduates
- Research
- Administration
 - Admissions, Progression, T&L, Assessment, Research
 - Committees (Dep't, School, Faculty, University)
 - Research Exercises; Teaching Assessments
 - Health & Safety, Library, IT, Disability, Careers

The relevance of faith to academia

- The motive for one's doing what one does
- The manner in which one does one's job
- The content of what one does
- The choice of what to do

The motive for service I

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3: 22–24 (NIV))

The motive for service II

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does (Eph. 6: 5–8 (NIV))

Motive for service III

So whether you eat or drink **or whatever you do**, do it all for the glory of God.

(1 Corinthians 10: 31 (NIV))

Motive for service IV

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in any thing,
To do it as for thee

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgerie divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

(George Herbert, 'The Elixir', *The Temple* (1633))

Motive for service V

‘you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away’

([Matthew 25:27-29 ESV](#))

Motive for service: Comparison

Conway made what he called “The Vow”:

“Thou shalt stop worrying and feeling guilty;
thou shalt do whatever thou pleasest.”

He no longer worried that he was eroding his mathematical soul when he indulged his curiosity and followed wherever it went, whether towards recreation or research, or [...] his longing to learn the etymology of words.” <http://tinyurl.com/qjjgaat>

Manner (admin)

- One should work cheerfully and graciously
- Most academics moan and bitch about admin
- One should work competently and punctually
- Most academics do a slapdash job at the last minute for admin
- One should be honest and reliable
- Most academics regard promises concerning admin as breakable.

Manner (teaching)

- One should take teaching seriously—take the initiative in recruiting Christian grad students
- Most academics think teaching unimportant
- One should mark efficiently and carefully
- Most academics just glance at the scripts
- One should be punctual and reliable
- Most academics are happy to turn up late and cancel class at the drop of a hat.

Manner (research)

- One should be gracious in one's discussion
- Some academics rejoice in humbling others
- One should not devote oneself to the negative
- Some academics mostly write critical replies
- One should give praise where it is due
- Some academics give just the criticism
- One should be prepared to admit one's errors
- Some academics change the discussion topic

Content (admin)

- This is largely determined by one's superiors
- Some ethical decisions, e.g:
 - Do I work on Results Sunday processing offers?
 - Interviewing: how do I make it less scary?
 - Honesty in references
 - Avoiding boasting in one's job applications
- Pastoral aspect (personal/moral tutor)
 - Great opportunity for the Christian to show care

Content (teaching)

- Obviously, the truth, but not indoctrination
- Should one quote the Bible?
- Presenting false views fairly
- Presenting the Christian approach
 - But how bold should one be? If not tenured?
- Not following academic fashion slavishly
 - Postmodernism
 - Social Darwinism
 - Materialism

Content (research)

- Obviously, the truth, but also valid arguments
- Presented clearly and accessibly
 - Not trying to seem clever/profound by obscurity
 - If possible so that lay Christians can benefit
- Presenting the Christian view
 - But again, how bold can one be? If not tenured?
- Should one try to write for Christian journals?
- Wary of how what one says can be abused

Choice (admin)

- Choose tasks where one's faith might matter
 - Will others dangerously skimp on health & safety?
 - Being an external interviewer for Theology?
 - Giving school talks—more liberty than teachers?
 - Making sure equal-opportunity directives don't enforce compromise?
 - Making sure prospectus doesn't exaggerate?
 - Ethics committees (for experiments etc.)?
 - Exercising mercy/grace in cases of progression?

Choice (teaching)

- Choose papers where one's faith might matter
 - English literature and its contexts, 1500–1700?
 - History and theory of literary criticism?
 - Foundations of social anthropology II: politics and religion?
 - Advanced Social Anthropology I: Thought, belief, and ethics?
 - Dante and the culture of his age?
 - Martin Luther and the making of the German Reformation
 - Religious conversion and colonialism ?
 - Introduction to Early Sacred Music, c.1400–c.1600?

Choice (teaching)

- Papers where faith might be threatened?
 - Paper X2: Sexual ethics in Greco-Roman Antiquity?
 - Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* (TOPIC 2 Dramatic Women)?
 - Alciphron, *Letters of Prostitutes* (TOPIC 3 The Second Sophistic)?
 - Humans in an evolutionary paradigm?
 - Queer Theory (European Literature and Culture)?
 - The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar (Screen Media)?
 - Marxist literary criticism (English)?

Choice (research)

- Intrinsically immoral research areas
 - Unmentionables ('it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret' ([Eph 5:12](#)))
 - Animal experimentation?
- Things God has chosen to keep secret
 - The time of the second coming ([Matthew 24:36](#))
 - The nature of the Trinity & Incarnation?
 - God's reason for electing those he does
 - Why God allows suffering?
 - The nature of the union between body and soul?

Choice (research)

- Research areas intrinsically tempting *for some*
 - History of pornography/erotica
 - The Art of the nude?
 - Arguments against the faith?
- Research areas extrinsically tempting *for some* (in field work)
 - S. Levitt 'An Empirical Analysis of Street-Level Prostitution'
 - D. Calvey (MMU) 'Bouncers and Bouncing in Manchester'
 - Sudhir Venkatesh *Gang Leader for a Day* (Chicago)
 - Rachela Colosi (Teeside), 'Lap-dancing: Leisure or Sex Encounter?'
 - Jacki Willson (Loughborough), *The Happy Stripper*
 - R. Cassidy (Goldsmiths) 'An anthropologist in the bookies'
 - M. Kohn (Sussex) *Dope Girls: The Birth of the British Drug Underground*
 - B. Winder (Nott. Trent) 'Last Orders for Alcohol Related Violence'

Choice (research)

- 'Jail for London Metropolitan lecturer who turned 'gangster's moll' and helped her boyfriend after he 'executed' a rival'
- 'Kenehan, 35, who studied criminology, first met Lewis while he was in custody at Ashfield Young Offenders prison on November 2010, as part of her [...] PhD.'
- http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/11002964.Lecturer_hoped_to_have_child_with_murderer_accused/

Choice (research)

- Research areas intrinsically unhelpful *for some*
 - The writings of Aleister Crowley?
 - Gerd Bayer (Erlangen) *Heavy Metal Music in Britain?*
 - The art of Egon Schiele?
 - History of coarse joking ([Ephesians 5:4](#) & [Philippians 4:8](#))
- Research areas extrinsically unhelpful *for some* (in field work)
 - Work far away from a church (e.g. archaeological digs; anthropology on remote tribes)
 - Work that requires work on Sundays (e.g. sociology of football matches)

Choice (research)

- Research areas unworthy of study
 - 1995 U/G Dissertation at Portsmouth on Klingon
 - L. Krauss (Arizona State) *The Physics of Star Trek*
 - B. Gettelfinger, E. L. Cussler, ‘Will humans swim faster or slower in syrup?’ *American Institute of Chemical Engineers Journal* [50: 11](#), 2646 - 2647
 - B. Witcombe, D. Meyer, “Sword Swallowing and Its Side Effects”, *BMJ* 2006;333:1285-1287 (23/12)
 - A. Eerland, T. Guadalupe and R. Zwaan, "Leaning to the Left Makes the Eiffel Tower Seem Smaller" *Psychological Science*, 22: 12 (2011: 1511-14).

Choice (research)

- Research areas based on false presuppositions
 - Strong AI?
 - Presupposes that human intelligence is totally physical
 - Strong social Darwinism?
 - Presupposes that all aspects of human behaviour are ultimately determined by evolution
 - Multiverse theory?
 - Based on need to explain the universe's fine-tuning
 - Multi-faith Programmes?
 - Based on assumption all faiths equally valid?

Choice (research)

- Research areas involving immorality
 - Invasion (Spying)
 - Work Town in Bolton (Mass Observation with anthropologist Tom Harrisson)?
 - Editing intimate correspondence of historical figures?
 - Deceit
 - Colding-Jorgensen 'No to Demolition of Stork Fountain'
 - Pushing people beyond their limits
 - Stanford Prison Experiment?

Choice (not deserving publicity)

- Why bother refuting unworthy literature?
 - John Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*
 - Kenneth Humphreys, *Jesus never existed*
 - David Irving, *Hitler's War* (2nd edition)
 - Anscombe 'if someone really thinks, *in advance*, that it is open to question whether such an action as procuring the judicial execution of the innocent should be quite excluded from consideration—I do not want to argue with him; he shows a corrupt mind' 'Modern Moral Philosophy'

Choice (research)

- Don't introduce unnecessary dissension
 - Amillennialism, premillennialism, postmillennialism?
 - Supralapsarianism, infralapsarianism?
- Don't reinforce stereotypes of the ivory tower
- Work on stuff that could be popularized
- Stuff that could open other doors
 - Doors to work in schools (ethics and comp. rel.)
 - Doors to work in churches (historical stuff)

Choice (research)

- Don't pick a fight unless you have to
- Don't pick a fight unless you can win
 - Attacking Darwinism?
- Don't engage in the futile
 - Disproving Gödel's theorems
- Don't risk your job chances early on
 - Taking on the leading atheists in the profession
 - E.g. Attacking Simon Blackburn's *Lust* (OUP, 2004)

Choice (research)

- Don't cause the weak to stumble (Rom 14:13)
 - Arguing Jesus not born on Christmas Day?
 - Arguing that assisted suicide should be legal?
 - Work on the church's support of the slave trade?
 - Work on the horrors of the inquisition?
 - Attacking arguments for the existence of God?
 - Attacking the dictation theory of inspiration?
 - Lynn, Harvey, Nyborg 'Average intelligence predicts atheism rates across 137 nations', *Intelligence* 37 (2009)

Choice (research—positive)

- Work on areas that might benefit the church
 - Christian literature (why did God let this work be written?)
 - Christian history (why did God let this occur? Cf J. Edwards)
 - Literary theory that will help read the Bible
 - K. Vanhoozer (Wheaton), *Is There a Meaning in this Text?*
 - Christian anthropology (relation to Creation & Fall)
 - Historical examples of Christians doing good
 - Wilberforce & the abolition of the slave trade
 - Sociological examples of Christians doing good
 - M. Regnerus, C. Smith, and D. Sikkink. 1998. “Who Gives to the Poor?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37(3): 481-93.
 - Historical examples of Christians relevant to the present
 - Conscientious objection & engagement with the state

Choice (research—positive)

- Work on areas that might benefit you
 - 3 years is a long time to work on one area
 - Make sure that you balance the analytic aspects with an engaged and lively church membership
 - Make sure that you have friends from outside academia or do street evangelism or similar
 - Keep up contact with others in the discipline and other Christian graduate students
- And, of course, pray about what you do

Thanks for listening!

- Comments to Daniel Hill
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- Over to you!