

“In Utter Dependence”: Melbourne University Christian Union (1930-2005)

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Introduction

During the twenties and thirties, following the Great War, the Christian Church was swept by a tide of extreme liberal theology that acquired the term “Modernism”. The historic Confessions of Faith became obsolete and biblical doctrines such as the atoning death of Christ and the Second Coming were denied. Other doctrines such as the deity of Christ and His bodily resurrection were redefined in qualified terms. A sharp division between modernists and evangelicals cut through the church, and between the two sides an underlying sense of opposition existed. The root cause of this division was of course two contrary views on the critical issues of the inspiration of the Scriptures from which both their final authority and reliability in all matters of faith and conduct were to be judged.¹

These words express the view of Bruce Lumsden, President of Melbourne University Evangelical Union (MUEU) in 1938, but also the potency of the concern aroused by a widespread perception of the state of the church among the founders and members of MUEU in the first decade of its existence.² Three-quarters of a century later, Melbourne University Christian Union (MUCU) still has as an objective, ‘to uphold the fundamental truths of the Christian faith as contained in the Bible.’³ Its evangelical heritage and roots have been preserved, but the history of MUCU has not always been smooth sailing. Each decade has brought changes in university student culture, which have presented new challenges for MUCU, and sometimes threatened to compromise its evangelical identity.

MUCU started and continues as an evangelical group, and this is an important aspect of its identity and the way it fits into a broader historical context. Defining evangelicalism is a notoriously difficult thing to do in a way that is fair to evangelicals and non-evangelicals, but a widely accepted description of evangelicalism is given by D.W. Bebbington:

There are the four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible;

¹ Bruce Lumsden, “A Wartime Perspective” in *Decisive Years: Experiences of Christian University Students*, edited by David Angus (Melbourne: RMIT University PrintServices, 2005), 3

² MUEU changed its name to Melbourne University Christian Union (MUCU) in 1973. EU will be used to refer to the group in periods up until 1973 and CU to refer to it from 1973 to the present day or as an entity over the entire period of its existence.

³ Constitution of the Melbourne University Christian Union, as of May 13 2003.

and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.⁴

Evangelical Christianity is the fastest growing type of Christianity in Australia,⁵ but has often been overlooked or dismissed as anti-intellectual and not worthy of serious academic study. Yet amidst the intellectual rigour of one of the most prestigious universities in the country, an evangelical student group has existed for seventy five years. This thesis will appraise the history of MUCU to explore the question of the tensions and challenges of an evangelical group functioning within the demanding environment of a university, to provide a test case that will serve as a springboard for further research in the history of evangelical groups in general. As a chronology of MUCU does not exist, this thesis will analyse changes in MUCU within a chronological structure. It will place these changes within the broader context of changes in university student life over the decades of MUCU's existence, and, finally, will explore the extent of MUCU's impact upon its members' lives post-University.

Katharine Massam writes in her book on Catholic spirituality in modern Australia, that:

the study of dynamics within religion, and more specifically of spirituality and devotion, has been valuable to historians of other European societies, not as an end in itself but for the insight that analysis of faith offers into the lives of ordinary people. The close study of particular styles of spirituality also reveals the complexity of religious belief and the multifarious meanings of Catholicism.⁶

This thesis will take a similar approach to examine the nature and practice of evangelical Christian spirituality, as encapsulated in MUCU. It will explore dynamics within evangelical religion in Melbourne as highlighted in changes in MUCU over the decades, changes which demonstrate that evangelical Christianity is far from monolithic and static, but rather is characterized by an ongoing tension both with other strands of Christianity and within itself.

⁴ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History From the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-3.

⁵ NCLS Research, "Media Release, 28th February 2004 - NCLS releases latest estimates of church attendance." Available from: <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?docid=2250> [September 26 2005]. Not only was there overall growth in evangelical and Pentecostal denominations, but the only Anglican diocese showing significant growth was the strongly evangelical Sydney diocese.

⁶ Katharine Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1996), 4.

As a social history, this thesis will examine an important aspect of spiritual formation, which historians of the Australian church have often overlooked: the effects of lay, non-institutional groups on their participants' spirituality. More specifically, this is a case study of the evolution of a campus Christian group and the nature of its continuing effects on members post-university. Along the way, I also hope to cast some light on student life at the University of Melbourne between 1930-2005.

Chapter One will examine MUCU's first thirty years, years of consolidation of the young student group. Chapter Two will continue this history from 1960 until the present day, years of change in the more established student group. Some issues that will be raised in these two chapters are what lay evangelical Christian spirituality has looked like in nature and practice in the hotbed of university life, and what problems and tensions have marked student Christian groups such as MUCU in twentieth century Australia. Chapter Three will then examine what, if any, lasting impact MUCU has had on the lives, and especially the spirituality, of its members. In these ways, this history aims to contribute to Australian religious historiography, and to the meagre but growing body of work on evangelical and student Christianity around the world.

The main primary sources for this thesis are questionnaires distributed to ex-members of MUCU.⁷ A total of 48 respondents returned questionnaires spanning the period from 1943 to 2005. I am aware that there are problems with my sample in that respondents are those who have remained Christians post-university and, as such, this thesis cannot claim to represent members of MUCU who have given up the faith since university. That is a much bigger project and remains for a larger work than this; however, these questionnaires have provided rich material for a first exploration of the questions stated above.

⁷ See Appendix A for the questions.

Another valuable source for 1930-1950 is a book of reflections by EU members from the late 1930s and the 1940s.⁸ The Melbourne University student newspaper, *Farrago*, has been a source for information about CU's activities and insight into changing student culture. I have also used minutes, memorabilia, and personal correspondence with ex-MUCU members.

Australian religious history has been a fecund field of research in recent years. It has shifted from being predominantly concerned with the church-state struggle and sectarianism to having increased emphases on gender, Aboriginal missions, and the effect of post-World War Two migration on the Australian religious landscape.⁹ There are still numerous aspects of Australian religious history which remain unexplored or under-explored, however. Susan and William Emilsen argue in their introduction to a book with many essays exploring Australian and New Zealand Christianity, that broad mappings of religion in Australia, and specifically Christianity, have been undertaken by historians Hilary Carey, Ian Breward, and Roger Thompson, and hence what is needed is detailed studies.¹⁰

One of the most surprising gaps in Australian religious historiography is in the area of interdenominational, evangelical, parachurch, and particularly university student-related histories. Parachurch organizations are church-related but not parish-based groups, and are often formed across denominational boundaries within the evangelical church.¹¹ They are a largely overlooked aspect of church history, particularly Australian church history.

Breward's *A History of the Australian Churches* is a scholarly history about the role of churches in Australian society, and the way they have shaped and been shaped by issues,

⁸ David Angus, ed, *Decisive Years*.

⁹ See Hilary M. Carey, Ian Breward, Anne O'Brien, Suzanne D. Rutland, Roger Thompson. "Australian Religion Review, 1980-2000, Part 1: Surveys, Bibliographies and Religions Other Than Christianity." *Journal of Religious History* Vol. 24 No. 3 (October 2000): 296-313. See also Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: A cultural history of religions* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996) for an example of a work with those emphases.

¹⁰ Susan Emilsen and William W. Emilsen, "Introduction: Mapping the Landscape," in *Mapping the Landscape*, 4.

¹¹ "Evangelicalism," Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parachurch#Parachurch_organizations; [June 6 2005].

such as education, secularity, and the relationship between church and state.¹² One result of its wide-ranging subject matter is that Breward seldom details the significance of historical events, or the private spirituality of Australian Christians. Its character as an overview book results in what is more a top-down history than a 'history from below.'

Carey's *Believing in Australia: A cultural history of religions* is a history of beliefs, practices, and changes in various religions in Australia.¹³ She analyses the way in which cultural transformations such as the cultural revolution of the 1960s impacted upon the shape of Australian Christianity. Breward and Carey's overview histories are supplemented by other sociological histories of the Australian church.

The most wide-ranging sociological approach to Australian church history is Roger Thompson's *Religion in Australia: A history*.¹⁴ Thompson draws mainly on secondary sources to analyse the historical effect of religion in Australia on politics and moral order.¹⁵ In a narrower study, Walter Phillips critically discusses churchmen in New South Wales in the 1880s, who sought to defend or construct Australia as a Christian country by fighting *against* secularism, and *for* laws governing moral issues like Sabbath observance, temperance, gambling, and divorce.¹⁶

David Hilliard adopts a focused historiographical approach to the religious crisis of the 1960s.¹⁷ He examines changes in belief and practice in Australian churches in light of social issues and developments like the appearance of radical theology and 'new morality', the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, the decline in church attendance, changing attitudes towards social issues, and the Vietnam War. Hilliard argues that the central

¹² Ian Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

¹³ Carey, *Believing in Australia*.

¹⁴ Roger C. Thompson, *Religion in Australia: A history* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁵ See also Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books, 1987).

¹⁶ Walter Phillips, *Defending "A Christian Country": Churchmen and Society in New South Wales in the 1880s and after* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981).

¹⁷ David Hilliard, "The Religious Crisis of the 1960s: The Experience of the Australian Churches." *Journal of Religious History* Vol. 21 No. 2 (June 1997): 209-227.

debated issues across churches during the 1960s concerned 'the authority and relevance of traditional religious institutions and formulations of belief.'¹⁸ In contending that the 1960s were a watershed in the shape of Australian Christianity, he agrees with Carey's evaluation of the significance of the 1960s for Australian churches.

There exist more scholarly studies of Australian Catholicism than of Australian Protestantism, particularly of the non-Anglican variety.¹⁹ This imbalance has been partially redressed by several recent denominational histories.²⁰ A glaring omission in these histories, however, is their almost complete silence on the effect of university Christian groups on graduates who went on to form and shape various congregations across Australia.

Other approaches to Australian church history, including histories focusing on women in the church and relations between Christians and Aboriginal people have been taken.²¹ Biographies of many Christian leaders have been written, including Darrell Paproth's biography of C.H. Nash.²² His well-documented biography of Nash faithfully portrays a

¹⁸ Ibid., 227.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Patrick O'Farrell's first-rate history of the Australian Catholic church, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia: An Australian History*, rev. 3rd ed. (Kensington, NSW: University of New South Wales Press, 1992).

²⁰ Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in South Australia* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985); Rowland S Ward, *The Bush Still Burns: The Presbyterian and Reformed Faith in Australia 1788-1988* (Brunswick, VIC: Globe Press Pty Ltd, 1989); Richard Moore, ed, *Baptists of Western Australia: the first ninety years 1895-1985* (Perth, WA: Baptist Historical Society of Western Australia, 1991). There is still a need for more scholarly book-length denominational histories other than of the Anglican Church, however. Many Anglican histories exist, including John Davis, *Australian Anglicans and their Constitution* (Canberra: Acorn Press, 1993); Stephen Judd and Kenneth Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese* (Sydney, NSW: Anglican Information Office, 1987); Brian Porter, ed., *Melbourne Anglicans: The Diocese of Melbourne 1847-1997* (Melbourne: Mitre Books, 1997); Colin Holden, ed. *People of the Past? The Culture of Melbourne Anglicanism and Anglicanism in Melbourne's Culture* (Melbourne: Department of History, University of Melbourne, 2000); Bruce Kaye, general ed., Tom Frame, Colin Holden, Geoff Treloar, associate eds, *Anglicanism in Australia: A History* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

²¹ For an example of each, see respectively Janet West, *Daughters of Freedom: A history of women in the Australian church* (NSW: Albatross Books, 1997) and Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose, eds, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies* (Bedford Park, South Australia: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1988).

²² Darrell Paproth, *Failure is Not Final: A Life of C.H. Nash* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1997). Other recent biographical works include Colin Holden, *Ritualist on a tricycle: Frederick Goldsmith, church, nationalism and society in Western Australia, 1880-1920* (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1997), and Michael Orpwood, *Chappo: For the sake of the gospel: John Chapman and the Department of Evangelism* (Russell Lea, NSW: Eagleswift Press, 1995).

significant Australian Christian leader without descending into uncritical hagiography. Paproth also analyses Nash's role in influencing many young Melbourne Christians. In so doing, Paproth shows an awareness of the strategic role of young Melbourne evangelicals in contributing to the strength and shape of evangelicalism in the wider church.²³ His biography is a valuable complement to broader histories of evangelicalism.

The history of Australian evangelicalism is largely scattered and incomplete. Robert Linder argues that this is due largely to a negative attitude towards evangelicals among academic historians and the wider society.²⁴ Whatever the cause, the fact is that while, as mentioned above, evangelical Christianity is the fastest growing type of Christianity in Australia, few historical studies exist of it.²⁵

The most wide-ranging approach to Australian evangelical history is Stuart Piggin's *Evangelical Christianity in Australia*.²⁶ Piggin convincingly argues that evangelicalism has been a minority but highly influential movement within Australian Christianity. His central thesis is that at the heart of evangelicalism is a synthesis of 'Spirit, word, and world' – spiritual passion, the Bible, and engaging with wider society, including evangelism and other forms of social activism. Piggin analyses the history of Australian evangelicalism in the light of these three strands, arguing that when they are held together, evangelicalism is strong and influential in the wider church and society, whereas when one of them is allowed to dominate, evangelicalism is weakened as a movement.²⁷

²³ For example, see his discussion of Nash's influence on young people on 125-130.

²⁴ Robert D. Linder, "The Dry Souls of Christendom: The Challenge of Writing Australian Evangelical History." *Fides et Historia* Vol. 32 No. 2 (2000): 33-50.

²⁵ This might also be because historians of the church have tended to focus on denominational or institutional histories, whereas evangelicalism is notoriously hard to pin down as it tends to cut across denominational boundaries. Parachurch groups such as MUCU hence provide a particularly useful insight into the history of evangelicalism.

²⁶ Stuart Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia: Spirit, word and world* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vii-xiv.

As prominent historians have noted in a review of Australian religious history, Australian church history is mostly approached from within denominational boundaries.²⁸ The relatively recent rise in the historiography of Australian Anglicanism has left remaining gaps in histories by and concerning women, individual laypeople, and the influence of women and laity in Australian Anglican spirituality.²⁹

They also argue that surveying the historiography of non-Anglican Protestantism highlights the need for more studies of this aspect of Australian Christianity,³⁰ including historical studies of theological education, lay spirituality, and the involvement of Australian churches in social work.³¹ I would argue more specifically within this that the historical study of student Christianity, including parachurch student organisations and the private spirituality of lay Christian students, is an area that has had scant scholarly attention.

Piggin's history begins to fill the hole in Australian church historiography of university student spirituality, through the inclusion of the development and effect of evangelical student Christian groups among Australian university students in the twentieth century. However, the overview nature of his work makes it impossible for him to go into details about these groups. Furthermore, as Piggin acknowledges, his emphasis is mainly on Sydney and Anglican evangelicalism.³² Still waiting to be written is a history of the broader evangelical movement in Australia, and its effect and influence on various denominations as well as individual adherents within different denominations.

While I do not expect a twelve thousand word thesis to provide an adequate solution to what the literature—or lack thereof—shows to be a dearth in the historiography of Australian

²⁸ Hilary M. Carey, Ian Breward, Nick Doumanis, Ruth Frappell, David Hilliard, Katharine Massam, Anne O'Brien, Roger Thompson. "Australian Religion Review, 1980-2000, Part 2: Christian Denominations." *Journal of Religious History* Vol. 25 No. 1 (February 2001): 57.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

³² *Ibid.*, xiv.

evangelicalism, this history of MUCU will hopefully be a springboard for further research into Melbourne interdenominational evangelicalism. It will also give evangelical Christian students in Melbourne a place in the histories of student Christianity around the world.

Several such histories exist—fifty years ago, JC Pollock wrote a history of the first eighty years of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU).³³ This has been supplemented by Oliver Barclay and Robert Horn's recent work commemorating CICCU's 175th anniversary and bringing its history up to the present day.³⁴ InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in America has produced a history of the movement.³⁵ A short and useful history of the Australian Inter-Varsity Fellowship was written in 1987, which outlines the birth of and changes within this network of Evangelical Unions.³⁶ However, due to its brevity—the main part of the book is only seventy pages long—and its scale, it is a frustrating source if one hopes to trace the development of a particular student EU.

A book has recently been published by EU members from the late 1930s and the 1940s, reflecting on their university, EU, and life experiences.³⁷ This book is an invaluable source for information about the EU of the time and its impact on the lives of its members then. Where *Decisive Years* looks closely at the experiences of one decade of EUers, this thesis hopes to give a broader picture of both changes and continuity in the experiences of every decade of EU and CUers.³⁸

³³ JC Pollock, *A Cambridge Movement* (London: John Murray, 1953).

³⁴ Oliver Barclay and Robert Horn, *From Cambridge to the World* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

³⁵ Keith and Gladys Hunt, *For Christ and the University* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

³⁶ John and Moyra Prince, *Out of the Tower* (NSW: Anzea, 1987).

³⁷ David Angus, ed, *Decisive Years*.

³⁸ The title of this thesis was chosen accordingly—it is drawn from the title of the recent 75th birthday of MUCU celebration, at which graduates from the 1930s through to students from the present day were present. The title reflects a consistent thread through CU's history and the different generations: the sense that as individuals and as CU, they existed always in utter dependence on God.

Chapter One – Years of Consolidation (1930-1960)

1930-40

The Evangelical Union is based not on deep thought but on a reality; for to its members, Christ, the Saviour, is a reality. And it is this fact which has caused certain members of our University, after much prayer, to form the E.U., which has for its object, not the study of philosophical thought, but something that is of vital importance to students, yes, and to everyone, the proclamation of God's way of salvation, and that way the only way, through the Cross-work of the Lord Jesus Christ.³⁹

So wrote an EU member in the Melbourne University student newspaper, *Farrago*, in response to a vitriolic letter condemning the EU. An irate university student had written in complaining that the EU's ethos went against university ideals and describing the evangelical students involved in EU as 'those men of narrow faith, who even at a University shirk the common human duty of thought on anything that goes deeper than the lesser trappings of a traditional creed.'⁴⁰ Its capacity to inspire such opposition barely a month after its formation is evidence that, right from the start, this student club was born into a university whose intellectual and spiritual climate was not wholly amenable to it.

The Melbourne University Evangelical Union was formed on May 14, 1930, when seventy students gathered in the Old Arts Building and passed the motion "that the MUEU now be formed". Fifty-five of these students then signed the Constitution and Doctrinal Basis and became members of the newly-fledged MUEU.⁴¹ This was the result of the encouragement and support of a recently arrived British Inter-Varsity Fellowship missionary, Howard Guinness, building on two years of periodical prayer meetings on the banks of the Yarra River, led by Medical student Leslie Griffiths, who went on to become EU's first president.⁴²

³⁹ *Farrago*, June 24 1930.

⁴⁰ *Farrago*, June 17 1930.

⁴¹ Harold McCracken, "The Start of the EU," in *Decisive Years*, 3.

⁴² *Ibid*, 2.

Leslie and a few other young Melbournian Christians, particularly within the Medical branch of the existing Christian student group, the Student Christian Movement (SCM)⁴³, had become dissatisfied with SCM because of what they perceived as its modernist approach to theology and its subsequent dismissive view of central tenets of the historical Christian faith, including the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Jesus Christ, and the atoning nature of his death.

These issues had been causing tensions, but perhaps the final straw leading to secession came when the SCM student committee ordered their Medical branch to cease the series of Bible studies C.H. Nash had been giving them on the inspiration and authority of the Bible, because it was “not in keeping with the Movement’s search for truth.”⁴⁴ Unwilling to put up with a “truth” so broad and accepting that it denied what they saw as the fundamentals of Christianity, these evangelical students started a new and firmly evangelical, interdenominational student Christian group, MUEU.

EU was new only in a qualified sense. Stuart Piggin makes the interesting argument that while EU in 1930 started as a new, breakaway group from SCM,

given the strength of evangelical witness in Melbourne in the two generations leading up to the formation of the EU, it could be argued that the EU did not break off from the SCM so much as the SCM departed from its own evangelical Protestant origins and that the EU was a return to the biblical orthodoxy and missionary and evangelistic zeal of the early days of SCM.⁴⁵

In its first decade, the fledgling group’s main activities were twice-weekly prayer meetings,⁴⁶ weekly public meetings at which clergy, Christian business and professional men, missionaries and other Bible teachers were invited to speak, later in the decade a weekly

⁴³ SCM at the time was known as the Christian Union (CU) at Melbourne Uni, though it was part of the Australian Student Christian Movement (ASCM).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Stuart Piggin, “The Challenging but Glorious Heritage, Difficult but Joyful birth, and Troubled but Triumphant Childhood of the Melbourne University Evangelical Union, 1930 to 1940,” Notes of talk given at the Melbourne University Christian Union’s 75th anniversary celebrations on May 14 2005.

⁴⁶ These prayer meetings were memorable for Nathalie Appleby, who describes them in her recollections of EU – “The Early 1930s,” in *Decisive Years*, 7.

missionary prayer meeting,⁴⁷ and weekly Bible studies 'under the leadership of some able scholar.'⁴⁸ To become a member, one had to sign a membership slip which made the declaration 'I declare my faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour, my Lord and my God.'

On the surface of things, this may not seem noteworthy, but this strong insistence on the centrality of Jesus Christ as the one who saves and rules as God set EU apart from the existing student group, SCM. This theological division is highlighted in Bruce Lumsden's reflections on a conversation he had with the SCM President in 1938, when Lumsden was EU President:

Though I did not know him in a personal way, from what I had heard and observed of him I held him in high respect, and believed that our own faith positions would not be far apart. But I saw the division between the two societies in their declared doctrinal stances as unbridgeable and in friendly discussion this soon became clear. When I suggested that the only common ground we shared in our confession of Christian faith was limited to "I believe in God", he somewhat hesitantly replied, "And in Jesus Christ our Lord, surely", I could only look at him and say, "Are you really sure of that?" I think that as we parted we both felt the sadness of the situation.⁴⁹

So from the start EU established itself as a firmly and strongly evangelical group. The EU also held regular house parties, weekends away in a country location, where the students would enjoy talks, Bible studies, sport, and fun times.⁵⁰ In 1933, the first recorded house party was held at Upwey; it attracted many Christians and some non-Christians. This was the start of a Campaign in Melbourne by Howard Guinness. Also part of this campaign were five lunch hour addresses on campus, which between 120-150 students attended.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Lumsden, "A Wartime Perspective," in *Decisive Years*, 11.

⁴⁸ Howard Guinness, writing in F.D. Coggan, *Christ and the Colleges* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions, 1934), 175.

⁴⁹ Lumsden, "Wartime Perspective", 11.

⁵⁰ Figure 1.1 on the next page is an advertisement for a house party - *Farrago*, May 11 1937.

⁵¹ Guinness, in *Christ and the Colleges*, 176-179. See also Appleby, "Early 1930s," 8.

Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Australia
M.U.E.U.
HOUSE-PARTY
"Marna House"
Healesville, May 29—June 5

**THEME: POSITIVE POINTS IN
 EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE**
**SPEAKERS: REV. C. H. NASH,
 M.A., and Others**
 The cost will be 30/-. plus 2/6
 Registration, and applications
 should be in by May 19.
B. C. LUMSDEN, Hon. Sec.

Notwithstanding these impressive mission week talk attendances, the overall response of the university community to the EU was one of indifference, and occasional disparagement, such as in the 1930 letter and a sardonic report of an MUEU talk in *Farrago*, in which the writer commented that 'we trust and suppose there are some people who enjoy listening to those things every child of five or so knows by heart.'⁵²

Fig. 1.1 – House party advertisement

A letter was also written in response to Guinness' 1933 mission week talks; the writer criticized Guinness as presenting an emotional and anti-intellectual Christianity, claiming that his methods 'lead to and work upon a morbid, not a scientific introspection, a self-hypnotism based on early conditioning, not on past experience: a hysteria devoid of any semblance of reason; an unnatural sex psychology based on a presumptuous sin-consciousness.'⁵³

The front page of the next edition of *Farrago*, however, featured two letters written by non-EUers defending Guinness. One student pointed out that the criticism was based on a misquoting and misinterpretation of Guinness, who never said Christianity was not an intellectual matter but a love affair. Rather, he said that it was not a business concern but a love affair, and furthermore depicted sin not fundamentally as sexual wrong-doing or 'moral troubles' but as 'a matter of our attitude towards God—disregard of the wishes of One to Whom we owe everything.'⁵⁴ It appears that EU, in preaching a relational Gospel and not merely an intellectual or social one, was being dismissed as anti-intellectual by some of its

⁵² *Farrago*, May 5 1936.

⁵³ *Farrago*, September 28 1933.

⁵⁴ *Farrago*, October 10 1933.

philosophical opponents, but that these criticisms were challenged even by some who did not entirely agree with its theological stance.⁵⁵

EU's ability to preach and defend evangelical Christianity in a way that held water intellectually is also evidenced by the increasing numbers of students who became members. Through the 30s, EU continued to grow steadily, and this is partially reflected in *Farrago*, which in the early 1930s regularly reported on CU activities, but seldom on EU ones.⁵⁶ This imbalance in reporting⁵⁷ gradually made way for more EU news; in fact, in 1937, EU made an appearance in sixteen editions of *Farrago*, which means they were reported on nearly every week. In mid-1939, the evangelical Archbishop of Sydney, Howard Mowll, was greeted by 'a large audience' at an EU public meeting.⁵⁸ An EU of about sixty members could result in public meetings of a hundred students.⁵⁹ There was every reason to believe that EU would continue to flourish and even grow.

1940-50

Then the Second World War struck, taking with it many university students. EU seemed to have a hard time of it in 1942, in which *Farrago* paid them hardly any attention and it is reported that their AGM drew only fourteen members.⁶⁰ *Farrago* this year had articles on SCM⁶¹ almost every edition: an indication of the small size of EU in this year, perhaps; or

⁵⁵ The writer of the October 10 1933 letter stated near the end of his letter, 'I write as one who disagreed with many of Dr. Guinness's statements. I am not, and have no present intention of becoming a member of the Evangelical Union. But I see no reason why half-baked arguments and mis-statements of facts should be unchallenged.'

⁵⁶ It did on several instances – see *Farrago* of September 16 1930, May 5 1931, July 14 1931, July 5 1932, August 11 1932, March 17 1933, June 14 1933, September 1 1933.

⁵⁷ Which is understandable in terms of the relative size of CU (SCM) and EU at the time – CU was probably at least three to four times the size of EU for much of the early-mid thirties.

⁵⁸ *Farrago*, June 20 1939.

⁵⁹ Prince, *Tower*, 19.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ CU had changed its name to SCM by 1937.

perhaps merely the product of the fact that the SCM secretary for that year, John H Reeves, was for the second half of the year also Chief of Staff for *Farrago*.⁶²

At any rate, EU continued running, though smaller in size. Life went on despite the war, including a Fresher's welcome boating trip in 1943, at which two EUers who were later to marry each other met for the first time.⁶³ EU continued its pre-war activities, with meetings ranging from Biblical discourses on the book of Jonah⁶⁴ to talks on the Jews⁶⁵ to ones at which students shared their testimonies of how Jesus Christ had changed their lives.⁶⁶

During this period prayer came to have even more central a place in EU life. It had always been a feature of EU—after all, EU was birthed in prayer—but about this time EU started having daily prayer meetings in the 'Catacombs', a small basement room in the Law Quadrangle which had been made available by the university for shared use by EU and SCM in the early 1940s.⁶⁷ In 1945, the strong advocacy of the Prayer Secretary also led to the EU producing monthly printed Prayer Bulletins, which were distributed to between 300-400 Prayer Partners in Melbourne churches. Prayer Partners were people who signed up to receive these prayer updates from EU: things to thank and praise God for, and to ask God to act in. Furthermore, the EU Annual Meeting was thrown open to the public, thus raising awareness of EU among the Christian population in Melbourne, not many of whom were university-educated.⁶⁸

⁶² I made this connection by reading two articles in consecutive editions of *Farrago*, September 10 1942 and September 17 1942, where a 'James H Reeves' is called Fidei Defensor for SCM and described as its secretary. An erratum and apology on the front page of the next edition of *Farrago* establishes that it was in fact John H Reeves who had mis-typed his own name, as the end note from the Editor indicates – 'Anyway it was your own fault, you silly cow.'

⁶³ Betty and David Angus, "Betty (Macaulay) and David Angus," *Decisive Years*, 23.

⁶⁴ *Farrago*, July 27 1944.

⁶⁵ *Farrago*, June 27 1944.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ The Law Quadrangle is now the *Old Law Quadrangle*, housing among other things the Philosophy Department; and there is no longer a room set apart for the use of the Christian groups on campus. It is uncertain when this room ceased being available for EU use, but it was probably around the post-war years, when the University faced a severe shortage of space – see *Gazette*, March 22 1946.

⁶⁸ Angus, "Angus," 24-25.

As a result of the end of the war, some gifted leaders, and, as EUers saw it, God's response to the prayers of many,⁶⁹ EU trebled in numbers in 1946, to more than a hundred members.⁷⁰ The returning servicemen benefited the group as they 'brought maturity, experience of a living faith that had worked in difficult and dangerous situations, and leadership.'⁷¹ The highlight of the EU year as far as the University was concerned, however, was undoubtedly the talks by Lieutenant-General Sir William Dobbie, Governor of Malta during its two and half year blitz. Dobbie spoke to an overflowing Union Theatre of hundreds of university students about the siege on Malta, and his conviction that 'if it had not been for God's help we could not have won through.'⁷² Lady Dobbie spoke at a women's meeting organized by MUEU, at which about 250 women were present, of the parallel between safety in the siege—found only in shelters of rock, and true safety and security in our lives—found only by trusting in the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ.⁷³

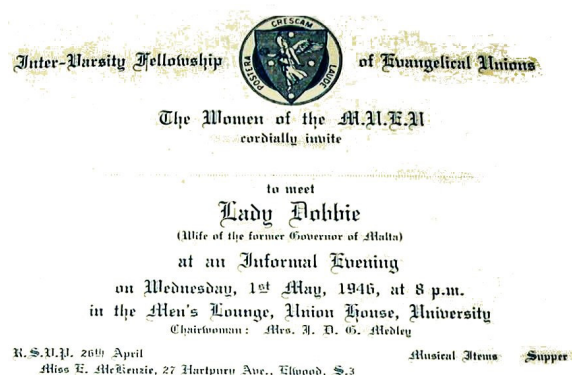
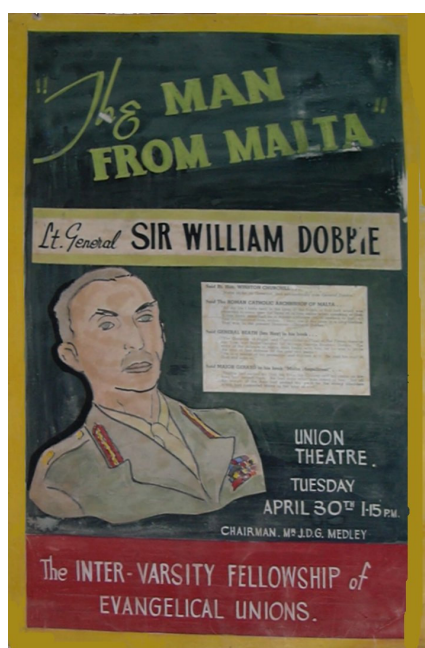


Fig. 1.2 – Poster and Ladies' Invitation for Dobbie mission

⁶⁹ Ibid, 25.

⁷⁰ David Angus (ed), "Dorothy (Angus), Frances (Cowper) and Robin Denholm," *Decisive Years*, 48. All three had died at the time of writing, but David Angus extracted the article from a memoir Robin wrote about his first wife Dorothy after her early death from cancer in 1960, and from (his second wife) Frances' family history.

⁷¹ Stan Kurrle, "Stan Kurrle," *Decisive Years*, 88. Also Alan Cock, Questionnaire, May 15 2005.

⁷² *Farrago*, May 9 1946.

⁷³ Ibid.

These events, as with other MUEU events such as house parties in this period, were advertised by chalking on the university pavements,⁷⁴ notices in *Farrago*, personal invitation cards handed out by EUers to friends, and also eye-catching posters.⁷⁵ These posters were designed by the sister of an EU member, who was a commercial artist.⁷⁶ EU sought to give talks with controversial titles, and in 1947 organized, funded, and ran a Book Exchange as a service to the University,⁷⁷ in addition to holding talks on apologetics and forums such as a 'Cynic's Clinic', a meeting in which members of the audience asked their questions about Christianity and were answered by a panel of three Christians, as reported in *Farrago*.⁷⁸

EU also ran evangelistic missions to the university. In 1948 a visiting American evangelist, Dr. Hyman Appel, packed out Wilson Hall, with an overflow crowd of hundreds, and made *Farrago* front page headlines.⁷⁹ And not by preaching a Gospel-less liberal theology, but with the confronting message of the Gospel, as evident in his statement quoted in that article that 'either Jesus Christ was the most damnable fool and liar this world has ever seen, or He was the Son of God!'⁸⁰

EU members ran a memorable mission to churches in Hamilton in 1948.⁸¹ EU was also concerned with bringing the Gospel of Jesus as crucified and risen rescuer and ruler to the world. This concern led to them running weekly missionary prayer meetings and inviting missionaries to speak at public meetings.⁸² In these ways, EU in the mid-late 1940s not only

⁷⁴ An advertising practice which continues today – the current Melbourne University Christian Union (MUCU), EU's descendant, is hands down the most active chalking group on campus. The cover of this thesis is a recent example.

⁷⁵ Figure 1.2 on previous page is poster advertising Dobbie's talk and invitation card for Lady Dobbie.

⁷⁶ Angus, "Angus," 24.

⁷⁷ *Farrago*, April 2 1947.

⁷⁸ *Farrago*, April 22 1947.

⁷⁹ *Farrago*, April 20 1948.

⁸⁰ Ibid – a statement which obviously made an impact not only on the *Farrago* reporter but also on the hundreds of other students present.

⁸¹ *Farrago*, September 21 1948. Also appears in the recollections of a few EUers of the time – see, for example, Harold Knight, "Harold Knight," 79.

⁸² See, for instance, *Farrago*, May 17 1946. Missionary concern was shared by other Australian EUs – see Prince, *Tower*, 29.

encouraged its members in their personal faith and relationship with God, but also made its presence felt both on the University campus and in the wider church.

1950-60

By the end of the forties, EU had grown into a fellowship of about 300 members,⁸³ in a university that in 1949 had only 9000 students.⁸⁴ A modest mission week in 1949 with talks by Canon Marcus Loane, then Principal of Moore Theological College in Sydney, was perhaps the EU warming up for their huge mission of 1953.

In 1953 Howard Guinness returned to Melbourne for the Melbourne Mission. EUers had been preparing for this event for a year, and had held a prayer retreat for members, as well as conducted widespread publicity in the University through posters and a mission newspaper with the full programme of the meetings and 'articles on the relevance of the Christian Gospel.'⁸⁵ This newspaper was sent out to every University student in the post.⁸⁶

At the six lunch hour addresses by Guinness, consistent crowds of between 500-750 students crowded the Public Lecture Theatre to hear Guinness give talks on topics such as Jesus' birth as "the central fact of history", the death of Christ as ransom for many in "Truth on a Scaffold", the necessity of being born again through trusting in Jesus if one wants ever to attain moral perfection in "The Moral Question" and "The Fight for Character", and the rationality of Christian faith in "The Sanity of Faith".⁸⁷ Numerous students became Christians or renewed their commitment to Christ, and it is reported that EU membership after the mission increased by thirty-seven people.⁸⁸

⁸³ Angus, "Angus," 25, and Prince, *Tower*, 36.

⁸⁴ *Gazette*, July 27 1949.

⁸⁵ Howard Guinness, *Journey Among Students* (Sydney: AIO, 1978), 160.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Farrago*, July 1 1953, and *Farrago*, July 8 1953. Figure 1.3 on the next page is the July 1 article.

⁸⁸ Prince, *Tower*, 32.



Fig. 1.3 – Article on Guinness mission, *Farrago*, July 1 1953

EU in the fifties continued to have a strong focus on prayer, Bible study, evangelism and missions.⁸⁹ This and its large numbers are indications of its success as an evangelical student Christian group. However, EU has never had a perfect existence, and a few tensions and weaknesses marred this otherwise thriving period of the fifties. The tension with SCM which had existed since EU's foundation worsened as SCM became more liberal in its theology.

An article published in *Farrago* in 1952 highlights one area of irreconcilable difference between SCM and EU's theology of the inspiration and authority of Scripture.⁹⁰ SCM regarded the Bible as one would a piece of art, granting it some sort of divine inspiration but believing that it contains mistakes and is not the final authority on Christian doctrine. The church, meanwhile, was to them an open thing, in which all who did God's work were members, whatever their beliefs. Presumably the nature of what qualified as 'God's work' was left to the individual to decide. Their self-titled "'critical" view of religious authority' meant that for SCM, 'the answers to theological questions cannot now be read off from Biblical

⁸⁹ Bill Edwards, Questionnaire, June 2 2005.

⁹⁰ *Farrago*, July 9 1952.

texts' and membership of the Church was 'not a matter of "all or none," but of "more or less."'”⁹¹

EU, on the other hand, believed that:

because the doctrines of the Christian faith have to do with God, and thus with eternal truths which are beyond man's complete comprehension, it is reasonable to believe that they are based on some body of revealed truth which derives its authority originally from God Himself.⁹²

The Bible thus has ultimate authority in theological issues, to be read and studied by people as God's very words, not with the selective attitude of one who knows better than it.

This issue was only one, though perhaps the foundational one, of many theological differences which separated SCM and EU. Other theological tensions concerned the deity of Christ, the atoning nature of his death, and the physicality of his resurrection; these were doctrines which the EU perceived as eternal truth and central to Christianity, but which SCM was less eager to believe and proclaim.⁹³ These differences prevented most cooperative joint ventures, despite the desires of some EUsers⁹⁴ and several meetings between the presidents of the two clubs.⁹⁵ However, this tension fed into an aspect of EU which led to the perception by some that EU was too narrow⁹⁶—and perhaps rightly so.

Possibly the greatest weakness of EU in the fifties was its overly rigid conservatism, which sometimes led to unwitting legalism.⁹⁷ One criticism some students made of EU at the time was that it did not care enough about social issues. In fact, after the 1953 mission, the ALP club on campus ran a meeting asking the question 'was the Mission any use?' *Farrago*

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ As mentioned above, these tensions had existed since the foundation of EU – see Lumsden, "Wartime Perspective", 10.

⁹⁴ See Ruth Redpath, Questionnaire, May 17 2005 and Bill Ramsay, Questionnaire, May 18 2005.

⁹⁵ Redpath, Questionnaire. Also see Lumsden, "Wartime Perspective," 11.

⁹⁶ Redpath, Questionnaire.

⁹⁷ See Ramsay, Questionnaire. Legalism refers to an attitude that you can somehow earn your right standing with God by being good, instead of being made right with God entirely by God's grace, through trusting in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

reported that one of the speakers, Barry Jones, 'whilst commending some aspects of the Mission, said that he felt it had neglected the essential application of the Christian faith in human activities.'⁹⁸ As Bill Edwards, who was at university from 1950-1957 and active in EU throughout that time, commented:

The EU ethos was heavily influenced by the prevailing evangelical attitudes which tended to be very restrictive - a heavy emphasis on separation from the world (no dancing, pictures, etc.). I think we lost some gifted members from the faith because they felt that they could not use their talents or express themselves within these limitations.⁹⁹

The first thirty years of its existence had seen EU consolidate and establish itself as a distinctly evangelical student group but, as the quote from Edwards highlights, if EU was to continue to thrive in the following decades, it would need to change and learn to engage with the culture of the secular world and the university campus without compromising its evangelical heritage and identity.

⁹⁸ *Farrago*, July 8 1953.

⁹⁹ Edwards, Questionnaire.

Chapter Two – Years of Change (1960-2005)

1960-70

It was perhaps too conservative an EU that entered the sixties, an EU that, for all its many strengths, was one in which hindsight led an EUer of the time to comment that ‘theological correctness was not balanced by “how do I (individually) or we (as a group or part of larger body of Christ) apply this teaching (not just for evangelism!) in the way we live.”’¹⁰⁰ This chapter will explore how this tension played out in the next forty-five years of its existence.

There is slight irony in the fact that, while EU had been criticized in the thirties for being unwilling and unable to engage critically with intellectual ideas and criticism of their brand of Christianity, in the sixties, a cerebral and very intellectually grounded approach to Christianity characterized EU, and was both its strength and its weakness. EUers were encouraged to engage their fellow students with the Gospel, through individual friendships and EU-wide activities like EU missions and debates with other clubs.¹⁰¹

But while this focus on the central doctrines of Christianity led to members growing in their confidence in the Gospel and sharing it with others, concentration on helping members to grow in their understanding of and ability to defend basic Christian doctrines meant that EU was less focused on pastoral care of its members and providing emotional support for them.¹⁰² In a largely student-run parachurch organization, however, this level of care would have been hard to achieve. This is one area in which EU’s nature as a parachurch organization is clear; it has always functioned as a supplement to rather than a substitute for the local church. An inadequate substitute, EU was nonetheless a valuable counterpart to

¹⁰⁰ Redpath, Questionnaire.

¹⁰¹ See Bill Brown, Questionnaire, May 19 2005 and David Cox, Questionnaire, May 17 2005.

¹⁰² Harvey Wood, Questionnaire, undated 2005.

local churches, not least by virtue of its presence on campus, at the forefront of the interaction of the Church with the wider university culture.

EU in the 60s made efforts to engage with the social issues and concerns of the day as well as with the university community: for instance, EUers wrote letters to *Farrago*, and served coffee to Vietnam war demonstrators.¹⁰³ However, student culture of the 60s was a difficult one for a theologically conservative group like EU to have a voice in. *Farrago* throughout the sixties reflects the radicalization of student culture and politics in its articles and its tone. The majority of its articles are political commentary, though with significant sections on film.

The only mention of EU in 1961 is a review of their annual mission that criticizes it for setting forth too simple a gospel that 'presupposes the peculiar conception that man is a sinful, frustrated, guilty soul.'¹⁰⁴ EU's proclamation of this fundamental doctrine was not popular with *Farrago's* editors, as is made clear by similar treatment of an EU talk on chastity in 1963. An EUer wrote in to complain about the biased reporting of this talk, pointing out that the Rationalist Society, though numerically much smaller than the EU, had had its lecture on sex printed in full, whereas:

the treatment of Dr Babbage's lecture was an emotional criticism consisting of unsupported comments by Rationalist Winkle, despite a written suggestion to the editor, by the E.U. secretary, that the E.U. lecture be given the same treatment as the Rationalist Society lecture.¹⁰⁵

That *Farrago's* negative attitude towards EU was not necessarily indicative of general student rejection of EU and the brand of Christianity for which it stood is evidenced, however, by the large numbers of EU members in the 60s. There were between 200-300 members, which makes the 60s a high point of EU membership, both numerically and in

¹⁰³ Alan Gijssbers, Questionnaire, May 25 2005.

¹⁰⁴ *Farrago*, June 29 1961.

¹⁰⁵ *Farrago*, July 26 1963. *Farrago's* bias against evangelical Christianity and EU as an evangelical student group is also made clear in the absence of an explanation or apology for its partial reporting and in the misleading and inappropriate title its editors gave to that letter, of 'Farrago and Sex.'

proportion to the number of university students.¹⁰⁶ EU continued to run Bible study groups, prayer meetings, public lectures, house parties, and missions.

Meanwhile, the theological chasm between EU and SCM was widening; over the years of EU's existence, student culture had become increasingly less receptive to absolute and exclusive truth claims, and SCM had accordingly moved further from its evangelical roots and increasingly into liberal theology. This was much more acceptable to *Farrago*, and in 1968 a full page was given to an article by SCM titled "A Political Programme for 1968".¹⁰⁷ The title contains important hints as to the focus of the group, but the starkest and most foundational difference between the theology of SCM and that of EU is made clear in their view of who Jesus Christ was. In their own words:

Not that we all agree as to whether Christ was God, or whether he had a special relationship to a God, or whether he was an actual historical person who did all the things he was said to have done, or even whether, as an historical person, he is unique among the great teachers of mankind such as Mohammed, Confucius, or even Karl Marx. What we all recognise and what the Gospels clearly present is that his teaching above that of all others speaks most clearly to us of those human values such as love, integrity, and courage which we consider important, and for this reason, Christ is for us the most meaningful symbol of true humanity.¹⁰⁸

For SCM, Christ was significant as a symbol of humanity. They rejected his claims in the Gospels to be God in the flesh, come not merely to 'give meaning to the absurdity of life'¹⁰⁹ but to take God's wrath at human rebellion upon himself and 'give his life as a ransom for many,'¹¹⁰ to bring those who trust in him from spiritual death to a restored relationship with God. EU, in contrast, built its theology on these truth-claims; the two letters written in response to SCM's political programme and defending such a view¹¹¹ may or may not have

¹⁰⁶ There were 11000 students in 1961 – *Farrago*, March 24 1961, and an estimated 16,400 in 1969 – John Poynter and Carolyn Rasmussen, *A Place Apart – the University of Melbourne: Decades of Challenge* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 298.

¹⁰⁷ *Farrago*, June 14 1968.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Mark 10:45, *The Holy Bible*, New International Version.

¹¹¹ In *Farrago*, June 28 1968.

been written by EUers, but certainly, EU's activities in the same period reflect clearly their strong focus on Christ's divinity and his atoning death.



Fig. 2.1 – Cover of Good Grief mission leaflet themes including the humanity and divinity of Christ, and his Incarnation, Atonement and Resurrection.¹¹³

1970-80

Entering the 70s was a vibrant, strongly evangelical EU, but with perhaps too much of an intellectual approach to Christianity. This was to change rapidly, however, with the result that the President of the group in 1973-1974 was concerned by the opposite of this, and urged members in the Annual Report to:

firmly resist, both in ourselves and within our group, any trend toward an unbiblical and anti-intellectual super-spirituality, which, as I have said, precludes serious Bible study, denies the need for responsible planning and artificially divides life into sacred and secular compartments.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Good Grief Mission Week leaflet, Evangelical Union 1967. The 1967 date is not actually on the leaflet, but *Farrago* in 1967 had a short and critical review of the Good Grief mission on July 14 1967.

¹¹³ Training Weekends leaflet, Evangelical Union 1967.

¹¹⁴ Christian Union Annual Report 1973/4.

In analysing how and why EU shifted from being possibly too focused on Biblical and doctrinal teaching to being in danger of losing its grounding in the Bible as the source of evangelical truth, it is essential to understand the culture of the sixties and the seventies. One member wrote that 'the times were radical politically and so were the Christians.'¹¹⁵ The sixties and seventies were the age of the sexual liberation movement, student anti-war protests, the introduction of birth control and the rising influence of feminism, and the New Left.¹¹⁶ Well-known Catholic political activist Santamaria sums up this period by writing:

By the end of the 60s, the 'revolution' was thus widely disseminated: the introduction of television in 1956; the release of the Pill in 1960; the radical fall in the Western birthrate beginning in the early 60s; the feminist impulse taking effect between 1963 and 1969; the beginnings of the absorption of millions of mothers into the workforce; the Vietnam/university crisis which culminated in 1968; the challenge to the foundations of the Christian faith and ecclesiastical order accomplished by 1969.¹¹⁷

While several aspects of this 'revolution' were not directly relevant to EU,¹¹⁸ they were symptomatic of the wider cultural backlash against the church in the sixties.¹¹⁹ More specifically, the legacy of the sixties in Melbourne University was unrest and an atmosphere of radicalism especially concerning issues like reform in the universities, 'the Vietnam war, the Third World, imperialism, feminism and the environment.'¹²⁰

Many students of the time were anti-authority and if not antagonistic towards, at least dismissive of, the status quo and anything that encouraged, much less demanded, conservatism in politics, morality, or religion. *Farrago* reflects this shift in student culture from the sixties into the seventies, in the tone and content of its articles and photos. Sexually provocative pictures were prevalent; indeed, the front page of the first issue of *Farrago* in

¹¹⁵ Graham Hepworth, Questionnaire, August 24 2005.

¹¹⁶ As portrayed in numerous books, which examine this period in detail. For instance, Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: the sixties and Australia* (South Yarra: Hyland House, 1991); James Cockington, *Mondo weirdo: Australia in the sixties* (Port Melbourne: Mandarin, 1992).

¹¹⁷ B.A. Santamaria, "1995: baby boomers' 50th birthday: how it began," *News Weekly*, 27 January 1996, p.13.

¹¹⁸ For instance, as an evangelical rather than a Roman Catholic group, EU did not share Santamaria's objections to birth control.

¹¹⁹ See Hilliard, "Religious Crisis."

¹²⁰ Pam Stavropoulos, ed, *Short Circuit: The Melbourne University Assembly 1974-1989* (Parkville, VIC: The Assembly, 1989), 9.

1970 featured the top half of a naked woman, something that would have been unthinkable in the fifties.¹²¹

The sexual liberation movement had students in the throes of what they cherished as a newfound freedom from the restraints of conventional sexual morality, and *Farrago* had countless articles, even issues, on sex. Notable is a 'Sex and Kulture' issue in 1973, which included a tirade against monogamy and the nuclear family, and encouragement of homosexuality, bisexuality, and 'free sex'.¹²² Letters from two CU members in response, putting forth a Christian view of true sexual freedom, were labelled with the headline: 'Jesus Freaks Slam Sexual Liberation'.¹²³

Fig. 2.2 – Letters from CU members in *Farrago*

In a culture intoxicated with such a radical newfound autonomy, EU was in a quandary. Traditionally, evangelical Christianity has authority at its heart; the Bible is regarded as God's Word that has ultimate spiritual authority and Christians are, furthermore, people who have not merely accepted Jesus as the one who reconciles them to God, but also as their Lord, the one who has authority, including moral authority, over them. This was a daunting message to proclaim in the university of the seventies, and for many students



¹²¹ *Farrago*, March 6 1970.

¹²² *Farrago*, July 20 1973.

¹²³ *Farrago*, August 31 1973 - Figure 2.2. The letters were from Mark Garner, who had been CU President in 1970 (there is a letter from him in *Farrago*, March 13 1970), and from Rob Cramb, who wrote an article on behalf of Christian Union in *Farrago*, October 18 1974.

who though Christians were nevertheless in some ways children of their time, a difficult and, for some, undesirable message. This tension resulted in a change in CU's emphases and practices in this period.

CU swung from an emphasis on defending a fundamental doctrinal basis and focusing on systematic Biblical teaching to an increased emphasis on debate, discussion, and thinking through issues more than sitting under the authority of God's Word or trained Christian leaders, whether in Bible studies or through Bible teaching.¹²⁴ A couple of members from that period expressed firm views that the student-run nature of CU was a strength.¹²⁵ As one of them reflected:

I valued greatly the opportunity for exploring faith in an atmosphere which was relatively free. I valued greatly the fact that there were no 'adults' imposing their ways and their thoughts on us and we had the opportunity to explore faith in ways appropriate to us. At the same time, we were able to draw on a variety of people to assist us in our thinking as we saw fit from time to time.¹²⁶

This evident emphasis on the autonomy and freedom of CUers and the increased focus on discussion rather than study in CU cell or Bible study groups is not to say that Bible studies and Bible teaching did not happen. On the contrary, they were still a part of CU's activities, and the president of 1976-1976 was able to report that 'much excellent material has been presented in our teaching meetings on approaches to Bible study, on OT [Old Testament] themes, on the Christian Church, on practical Christian living.'¹²⁷

However, he was also concerned at the low attendance at such meetings, at the generally shallow Bible study in CU cell groups, and at the trend within CU for both serious Bible study and prayer to be neglected 'while "fellowship" becomes the ultimate in Christian

¹²⁴ This is evident from the Annual Reports quoted above and below, and descriptions of what CU was like in the seventies as seen in the questionnaires, for instance, of Graham Hepworth, Philip Hughes, and Rosemary Leslie, Questionnaire, undated 2005.

¹²⁵ Gijsbers, Questionnaire, and Philip Hughes, Questionnaire, September 11 2005.

¹²⁶ Hughes, Questionnaire.

¹²⁷ Tim Day, Melbourne University Christian Union Annual Report – President, 1975-1976.

experience'.¹²⁸ Furthermore, by the late seventies, this antipathy to authority and the ensuing swing away from Word-centred Bible teaching, leadership training and even, to an extent, evangelism led to many Christians leaving CU for Student Life, a new evangelical Christian group on campus.¹²⁹

Yet CU in the seventies is described as 'vibrant' by not a few of the members of the time,¹³⁰ and it certainly was not lacking in life. In Orientation-Week 1976, for instance, CU ran many activities including a pancake breakfast, a "rhino hunt", coffee shops, a barbecue and gospel rally, a film, a fresher's night and a car rally.¹³¹ A frequent topic of discussion at the General Committee—CU's student leadership team¹³²—was CU's effectiveness at reaching out to non-Christians, and the minutes record details of various activities that CU planned and carried out for this purpose of sharing the good news of Jesus with their non-Christian counterparts at university.

These activities included an 'informal tea held for non-Christian friends' by CUers in the Arts faculty,¹³³ an Easter service in the Union Theatre on campus that was open to all students,¹³⁴ specific programmes such as films, speakers, or debates for non-Christian friends of CUers,¹³⁵ lunchtime music group performances,¹³⁶ and five minute performances in public places around university by a street theatre task-group.¹³⁷ Furthermore, CU sought to maintain a presence in the wider university, including serving the university community by

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Peter Leslie, Questionnaire, August 23 2005. Also Minutes of AFES Melbourne Area Executive Meeting, June 21 1983. Student Life has since ceased to function as an affiliated student group.

¹³⁰ Hepworth, Questionnaire, Hughes, Questionnaire, and P Leslie, Questionnaire.

¹³¹ Minutes of MUCU General Committee Meeting (GCM), November 26 1975.

¹³² This student leadership team had always existed, from when CU was founded in 1930 with Leslie Griffiths as its first president. Students were nominated and elected by other members of CU. It is now known as the Leadership Team, but has a similar function of providing leadership for CU.

¹³³ Minutes of GCM, October 1 1975.

¹³⁴ Ibid., Mobilization Camp, February 28-29 1976.

¹³⁵ Ibid., March 17 1976.

¹³⁶ Ibid., April 14 1976.

¹³⁷ Ibid., September 21 1976. Also, Personal Correspondence with Graham Hepworth, September 21 2005.

facilitating first year transition to university,¹³⁸ running coffee shops on Union Nights,¹³⁹ and sponsoring a trike in the Prosh Week trike race.¹⁴⁰ While we do not know the exact numbers of students who attended CU events, it is clear that CU was making an effort to be involved in the wider university community.

On a different level from these events and activities, and running parallel to changes in CU's culture, emphases and identity as an evangelical Christian group, were changes in the structure of its umbrella organization, the national Intervarsity Fellowship (IVF). From 1930-1976, EU had been supported by IVF in the form of travelling staffworkers, men who would occasionally visit, share their expertise, and speak at houseparties.¹⁴¹ In 1973, IVF changed its name to the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES) to reflect the fact that 'by 1972 there were only 15 university EUs among the 64 affiliated student groups and "Varsity" had long been replaced by "Uni" in colloquial use.'¹⁴²

AFES also made the decision in 1976 to decentralize in terms of its staffworkers so that each region would financially support its own staff. In that period, functioning under AFES' auspices looked like CU adhering to the doctrinal basis of AFES,¹⁴³ financially contributing to the support of Victorian AFES staffworkers,¹⁴⁴ sending its student president to AFES committee meetings,¹⁴⁵ attending AFES conferences,¹⁴⁶ and liaising with other Victorian AFES groups for sharing and mutual encouragement.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁸ Ibid., December 2 1976.

¹³⁹ Ibid., June 2 1976.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., July 7 1976. The motion pertaining to CU's involvement in Prosh Week reads: 'That CU be involved in Prosh Week, 26-30 July, taking care that all our activities are honouring to Christ.'

¹⁴¹ IVF started in 1930 with the foundation of MUEU and its counterpart at Sydney University. The work of IVF is described in detail in Prince, *Tower*.

¹⁴² Ibid., 56. Other member groups were institutions, colleges, and the like.

¹⁴³ Minutes of GC Retreat, August 21-23 1975.

¹⁴⁴ Report of the Business Advisory Committee to [national AFES, not MUCU] General Committee, October 7 1975.

¹⁴⁵ For instance, Minutes of GCM, July 21 1976.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., December 2 1976.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., April 14 1976.

IVF became AFES at the same time as EU became CU, in 1973. SCM had changed its name from CU to SCM over thirty years ago by this stage,¹⁴⁸ so changing EU's name to CU would not have led to confusion between the groups. A member involved in this switch from EU to CU explains the name change:

There were a number of us at that time who felt that 'Evangelical' meant very little to most uni students. We were the major Christian group on campus. Several of us were involved in Student Christian Movement as well, but it was hardly alive. We wanted to encompass a greater range of students. We were also concerned that 'Evangelical' was too easily confused with 'evangelistic' ... and we wanted to do much more than evangelism.¹⁴⁹

CU at the end of the seventies may have wanted to do much more than evangelism, but as it entered the eighties, it is questionable how much or how well it even did that.

1980-90

The eighties were troubled years for MUCU and for AFES. A report on Victorian AFES groups circulated by Peter Walker, one of the Victorian staffworkers, at an AFES Melbourne Area Executive¹⁵⁰ Meeting in 1983 identified the widespread and significant problem that:

many, perhaps most, of the members of the groups are only nominally committed to the aims of the groups, and in reality are there more to meet the expectations of friends, parents and churches and because their friends are there than to work at achieving the aims.¹⁵¹

He proposed several suggestions to deal with this situation, including using older teachers more in cell groups so that teaching is not 'the blind leading the blind'¹⁵² and giving students help 'to realise they should look for answers in the scripture (not only as a last resort)'.¹⁵³

However, Walker noted that most of these ideas were things staff had been doing for years,

¹⁴⁸ See footnote 61.

¹⁴⁹ Personal Correspondence with Philip Hughes, September 12 2005.

¹⁵⁰ The AFES Melbourne Area Executive consisted of a group chosen from the Melbourne Area Committee, a product of AFES decentralization. They met monthly to discuss issues concerning the policies and functioning of AFES groups in Victoria. Melbourne Area Committee Terms of Reference, 1983.

¹⁵¹ Minutes of AFES Melbourne Area Executive Meeting, June 21 1983.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

but that staff input into individuals and small groups of students did 'not produce an overall improvement in the character or climate of the groups, since individuals graduate and leave faster than such training can take place.'¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, as has been mentioned previously, the students did not always desire significant staffworker input. CU's student committee of 1983, for instance, had substantial internal debate and reservations concerning a proposal by Peter Leslie, another Victorian staffworker, that CU cell groups work through a series of studies prepared by him for the latter part of a university term.¹⁵⁵ This conflict between staffworker and CU student leadership eventually resulted in Leslie withdrawing his proposal.¹⁵⁶ Conflict between staffworker and students was not unusual in the eighties, and was to climax in 1989, as will be discussed later.

The nominalism Walker identified as a problem within Victorian CUs was certainly a characteristic of MUCU in this period, to the frustration and sorrow of its staffworkers and serious Christians within it. Though CU at this time still provided some of its members with a deeper understanding of faith,¹⁵⁷ the preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of God's Word were not as central to CU. As a student from that era wrote:

I heard about the CU through various church contacts but found it fairly socially based in the early 80s. I joined Navigators and was challenged with the radical claims of discipleship through Navs.

I decided to join CU with a sort of revisionary agenda and in 1984 found myself voted President. My perception is that this was not so much a quest for power as a result of taking initiative and then being nominated to leadership.¹⁵⁸

Mulherin and others like him sought to develop a good Bible teaching program and outreach

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Minutes of MUCU Committee Meetings from February 9 1983 to March 24 1983. This spans five committee meetings.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., March 24 1983.

¹⁵⁷ Rick Weymouth, Questionnaire, September 22 2005.

¹⁵⁸ Chris Mulherin, Questionnaire, August 5 2005. Navigators was a smaller Christian group that 'emphasized primarily personal discipleship (in quite a structured way) and evangelism, but also memorizing bible verses.' Weymouth, Questionnaire.

activities in CU,¹⁵⁹ but perhaps their inability to bring about lasting transformation in CU's culture is a reflection of one of the greatest dangers of a campus group like CU was at the time. Because it was in effect almost entirely student-run, and the high turnover rate of students meant a new batch of CUers every three years on average, it was difficult to develop and maintain godly and trained leadership of CU, as Walker had pointed out. This problem had been latent in earlier years, but the shift in CU toward greater student autonomy and, in some cell groups, discussion more than Bible study, brought it to the fore in the late seventies and eighties.

This led to a decline in MUCU, and not only in MUCU but also in AFES groups around the nation, which a confidential report of 1984 attributed to 'a loss of confidence in the organisation by others, a loss of confidence and direction within it, a loss of evangelistic thrust, missionary vision, biblical stance or a decline in spirituality.'¹⁶⁰ These words are echoed in the reflections of another heavily involved CU leader of the time, who commented that one of CU's weaknesses was a 'lack of leadership vision – we had no idea that we could have had much much greater influence than we did have.'¹⁶¹

This crisis in AFES groups was so severe that the incoming AFES National Director in 1984 reflected that, when he took his position:

I was of the opinion that the AFES had a five to ten year life span if the decline was allowed to continue unabated. I was also inclined to the view that the chances of resurrecting it were very slim indeed. I took on the job thinking that we would either resurrect the movement or close it down and that three or so years would be enough to tell which option was best.¹⁶²

MUCU in the eighties was at its lowest point both as a student club and as an evangelical Christian group. Membership was significantly lower than it had been in preceding decades,

¹⁵⁹ Also from Personal Correspondence with Peter Leslie, September 13 2005.

¹⁶⁰ John and Moyra Prince, Confidential Report to the AFES Executive, November 26 1984, quoted in Andrew Reid, "The Past, Present and Future of the AFES: National Director's Report to the AFES Executive", October 29 1990.

¹⁶¹ John Gibbs, Questionnaire, September 19 2005.

¹⁶² Reid, "National Director's Report".

with approximately 50-80 students at best.¹⁶³ CU also suffered from a lack of adequate and effective leadership training¹⁶⁴ and, as such, was vulnerable to drifting away from its evangelical roots and identity. One of the key objects of EU when it was established was ‘the proclamation of God's way of salvation, and that way the only way, through the Cross-work of the Lord Jesus Christ;’¹⁶⁵ in other words, evangelism.

CU at this time continued running university-wide missions,¹⁶⁶ and it was common to find CUers “caf-sitting” in the basement of Union House chatting to members of other clubs,¹⁶⁷ as caricatured in a *Farrago* cartoon.¹⁶⁸ Several CUers also invited non-Christian friends to the weekly Thursday meeting,¹⁶⁹ but in general, CU struggled to communicate the Gospel message about Jesus to the university community in a way that met them where they were and showed them their need to respond to it.

As a member commented in hindsight, CU’s weakness in evangelism at this time was due to ‘a lack of understanding about how evangelism really works – we thought it was about what we said, whereas it is really about what the listener hears.’¹⁷⁰ Another member also identified the crux of this problem as lying in CU’s tendency to polarize itself and the Gospel as being in opposition to the community around it rather than starting from points of connection and similarity, which resulted in an often confrontational approach to evangelism.¹⁷¹

¹⁶³ Correspondence with Leslie, September 13 2005. Also Allan Bulman, Questionnaire, May 29 2005.

¹⁶⁴ As discussed above. Also Mike Flynn, Questionnaire, July 2 2005.

¹⁶⁵ *Farrago*, June 24 1930.

¹⁶⁶ Gibbs, Questionnaire. Also Minutes of MUCU Committee Meeting, April 7 1983.

¹⁶⁷ Rhys Bezzant, Questionnaire, September 21 2005.

¹⁶⁸ *Farrago*, May 7 1986. Fig. 2.3 on the next page.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of MUCU Committee Meeting, April 21 1983.

¹⁷⁰ Gibbs, Questionnaire.

¹⁷¹ Amanda Radcliffe, Questionnaire, July 1 2005. Note that this is not her real name; the respondent requested pseudonymity.



Fig. 2.3 – Caricature of “caf-sitting” CUers, *Farrago*, 1986

Furthermore, one of CU’s strengths in this period was also a weakness. CU in the eighties had a fairly strong emphasis on community and Christian fellowship.¹⁷² This allowed it to give some Christian students a sense of belonging which strengthened their relationships with God;¹⁷³ and enjoying the company of CUers was a reason why some CUers kept being involved in CU.¹⁷⁴ Negatively, however, as a member insightfully reflected, this ‘focus on community was not adequate as community ends when one graduates ... Universities are transitory places: temporary communities—we should have been more aware of what our role in God’s economy should have been.’¹⁷⁵

Moreover, the CU community was perhaps insufficiently grounded in its founding evangelical ethos of the grace of God, and hence prone to behaving at times more like a social clique than a gathering of broken people cognizant of being loved undeservedly by God and thus responding in love for him, one another and outsiders. One member describes feeling marginalized by the group when she started to experience emotional and psychological

¹⁷² Several members point this out, for instance Mulherin, Questionnaire; Flynn, Questionnaire.

¹⁷³ David Howes, Questionnaire, September 19 2005 and Flynn, Questionnaire.

¹⁷⁴ Radcliffe, Questionnaire; and Gibbs, Questionnaire.

¹⁷⁵ Flynn, Questionnaire.

problems and writes that 'ironically, I would say that it was in the MUCU that I first understood the *concept* of 'grace', but only since leaving the group, that I have actually *experienced* grace in a tangible way.'¹⁷⁶

These internal weaknesses of CU during this period were not its only problems. There was significant tension between Victorian staffworkers and the AFES National Executive and headquarters in Sydney, due to different theological emphases and ministry style.¹⁷⁷ Walker was eventually sacked in 1984, which created even more suspicion and antagonism towards Sydney within the Victorian AFES affiliates.¹⁷⁸

There was also ongoing tension between students and staffworkers at MUCU which, on the surface, was largely over the issue of how much control staffworkers had over the group. This conflict, which had started in the seventies, was exacerbated when AFES adopted the Reid staffworker policy of one senior staffworker for each major campus, rather than having travelling regional staffworkers.¹⁷⁹ While this policy aimed to ameliorate the problems of a lack of consistent systematic Bible teaching and training and of a dearth of clear and confident leadership of CU, MUCU had a hard time figuring out what this model of staff-student partnership looked like.

This staffworker-student tension was more complex than merely the question of who had authority; particularly toward the late eighties it became at least in part also a manifestation of a theological struggle and of tension between different emphases within CU.¹⁸⁰ Social justice was at the heart of this issue; some members of CU were convinced that it was as important as evangelism. In support of their views, these members drew on Old Testament

¹⁷⁶ Radcliffe, Questionnaire.

¹⁷⁷ Personal Correspondence with Peter Leslie, September 19 2005.

¹⁷⁸ Reid, "National Director's Report". Also Garth Coverdale, Questionnaire, June 21 2005.

¹⁷⁹ This happened in 1984, when Reid became AFES General Secretary/National Director.

¹⁸⁰ Personal Correspondence with Monique Lisbon, September 19 2005; Personal Correspondence with Peter Leslie, September 20 2005; Personal Correspondence with Steve Williams, September 22 2005.

prophets and pointed out that Jesus' summary of the law was to love the Lord your God, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, regarding the latter part of this command as best embodied in acts of social justice. Other CUers, represented by MUCU's senior staffworker, Leslie, insisted on the primacy of evangelism.¹⁸¹

Tension grew, the situation became more emotionally charged, and the schism within CU widened as several months did not change the views of Leslie and those he represented. Furthermore, a member of the CU student committee indicated universalistic views in a discussion with Leslie, arguing that evangelism was unnecessary as everyone would be saved anyway.¹⁸² However, his was not the majority view and most of the tension arose from the divergence in ideas about the importance of social justice in Christian spirituality. The struggle brought about by this came to a head in 1989, when several members of the student committee of MUCU resigned and left CU, accompanied by like-minded CUers.¹⁸³

Given the extent of the other problems plaguing CU at this time, it would not have been surprising if CU had folded at this point. However, while the resignations brought CU membership down to about fifty, most first year students were not overly affected, and, with the leadership of the staffworkers, eventually formed a new leadership team and started the process of resuscitating CU, so that by the mid-1990s membership was back up to about 120 and CU was a much more vibrant group.¹⁸⁴

1990-2005

The difference between CU in the nineties and CU in the eighties is striking. Members from this period brim over with excitement and positive comments about what CU was like and

¹⁸¹ Personal Correspondence with Monique Lisbon, September 24 2005.

¹⁸² Correspondence with Leslie, September 19 2005.

¹⁸³ Ibid. Also Correspondence with Lisbon, and Bulman, Questionnaire.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

what impact it has had on them. Yet there are hints that some problems that CU had historically faced have not disappeared entirely.

The relationship between students and staffworkers in the nineties remained an issue, albeit a much smaller and less schismatic one, with disagreement over their roles and how much influence staffworkers had in running and steering CU.¹⁸⁵ However, the leadership provided by senior staffworkers Gordon Cheng and later David Walter had a strengthening and consolidating effect on the group, overall. They helped to unify the group, provide strong leadership, direction and instruction, and restore a focus on Biblical teaching and training.¹⁸⁶

The current staffworker structure is helpful for addressing the problem identified by Walker in the eighties of training students so they could provide strong and godly leadership, within the limits of the average students' three to four year degree. MUCU has at present two male senior staffworkers, one female senior staffworker, three other staffworkers, and five trainee staffworkers, mostly working part-time. This means that more CUers are able to benefit from being mentored, supported, and trained by older and more experienced Christian leaders.¹⁸⁷

This training takes place through a weekly training course that equips students with knowledge and skills to do Christian activities such as leading Bible study groups, evangelizing, understanding and applying the Bible, and mentoring younger Christians, as well as through an annual leadership training camp, weekly training times for small group

¹⁸⁵ See Jane Churchland, Questionnaire, June 29 2005; Fiona Mclean, Questionnaire, June 26 2005; and Paul Humphreys, Questionnaire, August 20 2005.

¹⁸⁶ Natasha Langford, Questionnaire, June 3 2005; Michael Cheung, Questionnaire, June 13 2005.

¹⁸⁷ Having said that, the rationale behind trainee staffworkers is more their benefit and training, than for the benefit of students at CU. As David Walter commented, 'Since the Uni environment is one with much action where things happen very quickly and intensely, it is the ideal context of intensive forms of training. So, Gospel ministry training is offered to select graduates with the interest and seeming capacity to serve God through career Gospel ministry. There are so many opportunities to evangelise, teach, train, etc. that trainees learn and experience ministry at a fast pace. Their output is useful to the group, but their deployment is primarily for their training and benefit rather than as extra staff to benefit the group. There is some necessary balancing between these two issues.' Personal Correspondence with David Walter, September 26 2005.

leaders, and mentoring.¹⁸⁸ This has cultivated stronger student leadership and increased the amount of relational ministry such as role modelling and mentoring within CU.¹⁸⁹

CU in the nineties also regained its evangelistic tone and grew increasingly better at both proclaiming *and* living out the Gospel, rather than focusing on one to the near-exclusion of the other. Several students were invited to CU by friends, then drawn to keep going by what they perceived as a genuinely loving, patient and fun community; they heard the Gospel, saw it lived out at CU, and became Christians.¹⁹⁰

CU activities and membership continued picking up through the nineties, until at present CU runs three weekly public meetings at which a Bible talk is given, numerous small groups, five to six camps a year, training courses on Monday nights, prayer meetings four days a week, an annual mission week,¹⁹¹ a hot cross buns Easter outreach, and many other activities. Its membership has increased, and the recent mid-year week-long MUCU camp, Summit, drew one hundred attendees. In many ways CU is flourishing, but it is still not free from the lines of weakness that run through its history.

Fig. 2.4 – 2005 mission leaflet

While some members felt encouraged and equipped by CU to participate in their local churches,¹⁹² some felt that there were insufficient links between CU and local



¹⁸⁸ Minutes of MUCU Leadership Team, Planning Days, December 15-17 2004.

¹⁸⁹ Christine Cheung (nee Lee), Questionnaire, June 13 2005; Wally Gear, Questionnaire, September 5 2005; Sandy Clarke, Questionnaire, September 11 2005.

¹⁹⁰ Philip Strack, Questionnaire, June 26 2005; Catriona Harris, Questionnaire, May 20 2005; Darrell Yip, Questionnaire, May 17 2005.

¹⁹¹ Fig. 2.4 is the 2005 mission week leaflet. Appendix B lists CU annual missions from 1990-2005.

¹⁹² Churchland, Questionnaire; M. Cheung, Questionnaire; Zoe Hardy, Questionnaire, May 15 2005; Clarke, Questionnaire.

churches, and even that there was an almost anti-church atmosphere in CU in the nineties, such that some CUers were not encouraged to find and build roots in a good local church, and hence struggled with their faith once away from the community, support structures, and Bible teaching of CU.¹⁹³

This tension between CU and the local church arose from a misguided perception of CU's role as a parachurch group, and reflects a broader confusion about the relationship of parachurch organizations to the institutional church. CU was founded to strengthen the wider church by encouraging Christians at university in their faith and their ability to evangelise; more broadly, scholars of evangelical Christianity have argued that parachurch organizations 'flourish alongside of the churches in a complementary and symbiotic relationship.'¹⁹⁴

As such, parachurch groups play a different role in the spiritual formation of their members to local churches; they contribute most to the spiritual development of their individual members and the wider church when they seek to make long term Christians who will continue thriving spiritually even after leaving the group.¹⁹⁵ As a parachurch group in the transitory community of a university, CU opens itself to criticism if it is not intentional about helping members to continue as Christians post-university by encouraging them to find extra-university Christian communities. Conversely, its continued growth and usefulness to the wider church have been increased in recent years as it has better equipped students for the transition from university to working life, and from CU to the wider Church.

On this note, CU's current president also believes that, while CU as a university student group does not have primary responsibility for the support and care of graduates, it could benefit both CU and its graduates to pick up the threads of the 'Grads Fellowship' that used

¹⁹³ Mclean, Questionnaire; Kenny Cheung, Questionnaire, July 13 2005; Wayne Schuller, Questionnaire, June 3 2005; Gear, Questionnaire.

¹⁹⁴ Robert H. Krapohl and Charles H. Lippy, *The Evangelicals: A Historical, Thematic, and Biographical Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 157.

¹⁹⁵ Personal Correspondence with Peter Adam, September 21 2005. Peter Adam is the Principal of Ridley Theological College and has research interests in theology, spirituality, and church history.

to exist, and to work out ways of enabling graduates to continue being aware of, encouraged by, and galvanized to support CU and its work, through prayer, financial support, and various other forms of spiritual input.¹⁹⁶

CU's other main weaknesses in recent years include insufficient emphasis on Christian responses to contemporary issues and social justice,¹⁹⁷ and a general prayerlessness, especially compared to the standards set by its founders. For a group that exists partly 'to encourage Christian students to explore and to demonstrate to the university the relevance of the Christian faith to every area of private life and public concern,'¹⁹⁸ the former is particularly important. And for an evangelical Christian group that functions self-consciously by the grace and enabling of God, the latter is essential.

¹⁹⁶ Personal Correspondence with Daniel Gebert, September 23 2005. Action is stirring on the graduates front with some efforts by Sandy Clarke to get recent graduates connected. However, what is in mind is more contact with graduates not only from recent years, but the many years of MUCU's history.

¹⁹⁷ Harris, Questionnaire; Jereth Kok, Questionnaire, June 19 2005; Jacqui Stok, Questionnaire, August 22 2005. CU has recently started improving in this area, however, through things like various social action awareness and fundraising activities taking place, and the theme of "Ethics" on its latest Summit.

¹⁹⁸ Constitution of MUCU.

Chapter Three – Impact of MUCU

Bruce Lumsden, an EU member in the thirties, wrote that ‘in terms of the formation of my Christian character and the growth of my spiritual life, my active participation in the fellowship and witness of the EU was of incomparable importance in its effect and influence.’¹⁹⁹ Darrell Yip, a recent CU graduate, wrote of CU, ‘well it kind of turned it upside down (life that is.)’²⁰⁰ This chapter will explore some of CU’s impacts and influences on its members’ lives, post-university.

This is a difficult question for a historian to answer; as with any group, there will have been some who passed through and left disaffected, some who left relatively unaffected, and some who moved on profoundly affected. The overwhelming majority of the responses I have received have indicated lives that were deeply, lastingly and positively impacted by CU,²⁰¹ and there are several key aspects of CU’s impact that are mentioned again and again, which this chapter will provide a synthesis of.

The first level of impact CU has had on the lives of those involved has been in providing opportunities for a like-minded community of Christian university students to meet one another, and to grow closer through working together on the common cause of proclaiming and living out the Gospel at university. Many of these friendships were and are valuable because they are ‘at a quite deep level providing great support to life issues;’²⁰² and many continue beyond university, as testified to by members from the forties through to the present day. As Garth Coverdale, a member from the seventies, expressed, CU ‘is almost

¹⁹⁹ Lumsden, “Wartime Perspective,” 11.

²⁰⁰ Yip, Questionnaire.

²⁰¹ As stated in my introduction, this chapter does not claim to speak for every single person who has ever attended CU when writing of the impact CU has had on lives; rather, this chapter highlights the impact CU has had on the spiritual formation of those who have retained a Christian spirituality post-university.

²⁰² Adrian Russell, Questionnaire, July 20 2005.

the only place I developed long-term friendships.’²⁰³ On this note, CU has had a matchmaking impact on the lives of numerous members, who have met spouses there.²⁰⁴

These friendships also had and have a deeper impact on CUers than a merely social or emotional one. CU had a lasting impact on the spirituality of many young Christian students by providing them with older Christian role models to imitate, but also with peers who intentionally encouraged them to grow in their relationship with God. As Zoe Hardy, a member at the turn of the millennium, reflected:

I value most the friends who said hard things to me that I didn’t want to hear. Friends who challenged me about things I was doing or thinking/saying that didn’t match up with my profession to follow Jesus. These were the same friends who constantly reminded me, in words and actions, that God loved me.²⁰⁵

The relational aspect and impact of CU is particularly important in ensuring that many CUers see themselves as graduating from CU not just with a stockpile of abstract theological knowledge about God and the Christian life, but with the experience of having been encouraged by seeing and helping one another to be transformed by living out this knowledge in increasing love for God and others.

CU has also had lasting impact through building solid Christian roots for its members by helping them think hard about Christianity and its intellectual defensibility, as well as to engage with the world from a Biblical perspective, rather than being Christians who check their brains at the door.²⁰⁶ As Jane Churchland, from the early nineties, expressed it, ‘I was

²⁰³ Coverdale, Questionnaire.

²⁰⁴ Some of those who mention this in their questionnaires are David Angus, Questionnaire, June 21 2005; Ramsay, Jenny Davis, Questionnaire, June 20 2005, Gijsbers, Hepworth, P. Leslie, Howes, Steve Williams, Questionnaire, September 29 2005, David Walter, Questionnaire, September 27 2005, M. Cheung, and Hardy.

²⁰⁵ Hardy, Questionnaire.

²⁰⁶ Some of those who mention this in their questionnaires are Wood, Bill James, Questionnaire, June 13 2005, Gijsbers, Hepworth, Coverdale, Hughes, Weymouth, Bulman, Walter, Schuller and Clarke.

most excited about learning to use my brain as a Christian—before CU I had pretty much thought having a brain was a barrier to faith, not an asset.²⁰⁷

CU impacted upon many Christian students by encouraging them to ground their faith in, and continue building their lives on, the unchanging revelation of God in the Bible. Many members testify to having their faith strengthened through having the fundamentals of the Christian faith taught, explained and demonstrated to them, and their relationships with God deepened through coming to know him more by being equipped and encouraged to trust and study the Bible at CU.²⁰⁸ As Dorothy Geyer, a member in the forties, wrote, EU 'strengthened my trust in the Bible and my knowledge and admiration of the Gospel.'²⁰⁹

CU has also affected the wider church, especially in Victoria, in ways which are difficult to assess. Many Christian leaders were trained and equipped for ministry and service at CU; at CU, countless young adults who would go on to both lay and ordained ministry in the church got their first taste of leadership and service.²¹⁰ Most respondents have been actively involved in lay ministry and leadership in their churches, and several are in full-time ministry or ministry training.²¹¹ Leslie is not alone in writing that 'CU gave me an opportunity to serve Christ and explore my gifts in evangelism and teaching.'²¹²

As it has found its feet in balancing teaching truth and expressing love in the Christian life, CU has also increasingly played a pivotal role in training and equipping many Christians for ministry,²¹³ and making them into Christian leaders who are confident and Christ-focused but also caring and compassionate in ministry. More than that, CU has had an impact in firing

²⁰⁷ Churchland, Questionnaire.

²⁰⁸ Some who mention this in their questionnaires are Brown, Cox, Sue Watson, Questionnaire, September 29 2005, Churchland, Russell, Mclean, Walter, Langford, Humphreys, Strack and Harris.

²⁰⁹ Dorothy Geyer, Questionnaire, May 25 2005.

²¹⁰ Some who mention the impact CU had on them in the area of leadership are Angus, Ramsay, Edwards, Cox, Hughes, Weymouth, Gibbs, Mulherin, and Gear.

²¹¹ These include Peter Leslie, Mike Flynn, Steve Williams, Jane Churchland, Andy Prideaux, David Walter, Wayne Schuller, Natasha Langford, Paul Humphreys and Zoe Hardy

²¹² Leslie, Questionnaire.

²¹³ The focus on training is a relatively recent thing, and has only really taken root in the last decade.

many members up about serving God with their lives, whether that is in full-time Christian ministry or through secular jobs.²¹⁴ As Andy Prideaux wrote:

my involvement in CU set my priorities in ministry that were further strengthened at theological college (Ridley): to teach Jesus Christ by teaching His Word—the Bible—all the while seeking to love and serve people even as Christ has served us.²¹⁵

Additionally, CU has had the impact on some of its members of putting overseas missions on the agenda, so that several of them have gone overseas as missionaries, and many more have become people who are excited about supporting missionaries.²¹⁶ It has also encouraged some who were thinking about missionary work to do it; as Alan Gijsbers, a member in the late sixties to early seventies, wrote of himself and his wife, 'our concern for mission was focused by EU and we spent 5 years in India with BMMF/Interserve.'²¹⁷

In these and other ways, MUCU has impacted many lives not just during its members' time at university, but also long after, through giving them a solid foundation for their Christian lives. Charlie Fletcher sums up MUCU's impact on many of its members when he writes that:

MUCU played a formative role in my development as a Christian in several areas: in providing a place to make lasting Christian friendships; in developing an appetite and concern for good Bible teaching; in helping me learn to read and teach the Bible myself; in providing me with early training in evangelism, personal discipleship and leadership; in challenging me to a deeper commitment to evangelism; in pushing me to consider the implications of my Christian faith in different areas of life.

This impact occurred at a general level through public meetings, camps and so on, and in a more personalized way through small groups and individual friendships.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Some who mention this ministry impact in their questionnaires are Louise Brearley Messer, Questionnaire, June 27 2005, Cox, Churchland, Russell, Mclean, Schuller, Langford, M. Cheung, C. Cheung, Hardy, Strack, Harris and Clarke.

²¹⁵ Andy Prideaux, Questionnaire, September 19 2005.

²¹⁶ Some who mention this missions impact in their questionnaires are Geyer, Edwards, Ramsay, K. Cheung, Langford and Kok.

²¹⁷ Gijsbers, Questionnaire. BMMF stands for the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship, a Christian missions agency which is now known as Interserve.

²¹⁸ Charlie Fletcher, Questionnaire, July 4 2005.

Conclusion

Through many changes in the contours of university student life in the last seventy-five years, MUCU has kept functioning, despite times when it seemed like the group was barely clinging on to life, notably in the war years and the eighties. It has not remained static but has evolved over these seven and a half decades, and struggled through issues and tendencies that threatened to compromise its evangelical identity or its effectiveness as an outward-looking Christian community.

MUCU's success or failure can be measured to a degree by the impact it has had on its members, and this thesis has shown that it has been fairly successful in achieving its objectives of preserving a distinctive Christian witness on campus, and in its role as a parachurch body contributing to the flourishing of the wider church through playing a part in the spiritual formation of young Christian students by encouraging and training them for life and ministry as Christians.

Perhaps it is the nature of student Christianity to be prone to fall into extremes of theology and practice; certainly MUCU, it seems, has always lived on the edge of tipping over into various extremes. This thesis has explored how MUCU's history demonstrates some of the complex tensions within evangelical Christianity. MUCU has flirted with the extreme of cold intellectual Christianity and that of passionate but amorphous Christianity; the extreme of too much non-applicational Bible teaching and that of too little systematic and worldview-shaping Bible teaching; the extreme of too much freedom to make Christianity anything its members desired and that of an overly rigid, stifling and narrow conception of Christianity. These extremes reflect tensions within the wider church and not merely within MUCU, though the history of MUCU as a group for Christians within the context of the passionate spiritual and intellectual ferment of a university has been useful as a window into how these tensions have played out within a particular spiritual community.

This history of MUCU has thus cast light on the history of Australian evangelicalism over the last seventy-five years, and particularly on the history and nature of the student parachurch movement within Australia. Much work remains to be done, but this thesis has gone some way towards beginning to fill the gap in the area of Australian evangelical parachurch religious history.

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Appendix A - Questions for MUCU Questionnaire

1. When were you at Melbourne Uni and what degree(s) did you do there?
2. How did you first hear about MUCU (or Evangelical Union, or IVCF, whichever name it had at the time)? What made you decide to go? What made you keep going?
- 3a. When you joined MUCU, were you a Christian? If so, which denomination (if any) would you have identified with at the time?
- 3b. Do you still consider yourself a Christian? If so, which denomination (if any) would you identify with now?
4. How involved were you with MUCU during your uni years? (e.g., what activities did you take part in, how much time and energy were given to MUCU, any leadership roles you played, were you involved in promotion/publicity for MUCU, e.g., chalking, postering, etc.)
5. Have you continued to be involved with MUCU since graduating, and if so, how? (e.g., prayer, financial support, etc.)
6. How would you describe what MUCU was like at the time when you were a student? (e.g., What kind of students were involved in it? Was it vibrant or struggling? What struck you as its main concerns? etc.)
- 7a. What was your impression of how MUCU was perceived by the uni community as a whole while you were a student? (e.g., Did most students know or care about MUCU? Was it socially acceptable to be involved with MUCU? What did your uni friends who weren't MUCU-ers think of it and your involvement in it? etc.)
- 7b. How did this affect or influence your degree of involvement with and attitude towards MUCU, if it did?
- 8a. What was your perception of the dominant intellectual and spiritual atmosphere of uni during your time there? Was this favourable or antagonistic towards Christianity?
- 8b. In your opinion, were there any particular problems/difficulties that faced either MUCU or individual Christians at the time you were at Melbourne Uni?
- 8c. From your perspective, how did MUCU seek to engage with this intellectual and spiritual culture, if it did?
9. What impact, if any, has MUCU had on your life? (e.g., friendships, relationship with family, relationship with God, skills and desire to serve God and His church, memories of uni experience, etc.)
10. What did you value most about MUCU at the time of your involvement? What do you value most about it looking back now?
- 11a. What roles do you or have you played in your local church or parachurch organizations? Would you say that your involvement in MUCU in any way affected this, and, if so, how, and to what extent?
- 11b. How would you describe the relationship between MUCU and local churches at the time of your involvement?
12. What are your favourite MUCU-related memories?
13. In your opinion, what were MUCU's weaknesses at the time of your involvement? Were there areas in which you think it could have been improved, and if so, how and why?
14. Do you still keep in touch with friends from MUCU and are they still a significant part of your social and/or spiritual network?
15. Do you have any other reflections on MUCU, comments, or MUCU-related things you would like to share? Do you have any MUCU-related resources which you would be happy for me (Ms Ting) to access and use? (e.g., photos, newsletters, correspondence, etc.)

Appendix B - MUCU Evangelistic Missions 1990-2005

1990 Nailing God (Phil Jensen)

- Nailing God on His silence
- Nailing God on His intolerance
- Nailing God on His morality
- Nailing God on His cross

1991 God? (Peter Adam)

- Who can heal a sick world?
- Who can feed a starving world?
- Who can raise a dead world?

1992 The Christless Life (Phil Jensen)

- The Cult of a Christless family
- The Failure of a Christless career
- The Virtue of Christless pleasure
- The Desperation of Christless relationships
- The Hell of a Christless religion
- The Fundamentalism Christless intellectuals

1993 Peace with God (Al Stewart)

1994 Does God Matter? (Dave Fuller)

- Does sex satisfy?
- Does Uni deliver?
- Does God matter?

1994 What is a Christian? (Al Stewart)

- The decision you have to make
- What's love got to do with it?
- God's big party
- Being rich - the meaning of life
- He'll be back - The return of Jesus

1995 Reject, Rediscover (Ed Vaughan)

1996 The Truth is Out There (Dave Fuller)

1997 Eternity (Phil Jensen)

1998 No Mission (small group evangelistic dinners instead – faculty based)

1999 No mission

2000 jesus@unimelb (Pete Adlem)

- jesus@collins_st
- jesus@crowne
- jesus@east_timor
- jesus@my_place

2001 The Lies You Hear (Steve Williams)

- The Lies you read on the toilet door
- The Lies your parents told you
- The Lies of religious leaders

2002 Why Bother with God? (Richard Shumack)

- Why Bother With God?
- Which God?
- Worship God?

2003 What? (Ismo Rama)

- What can feed a hungry world?
- What can bring peace to a war-torn world?
- What can bring life to a dying world?

2003 If I were God... (John Dickson)

- If I were God... sex would satisfy
- If I were God... I'd end all the pain
- If I were God... there'd be more to life
- If I were God... I'd make myself clearer
- If I were God... I'd give out free tickets
- If I were God... I'd be more tolerant

2004 What if God...? (Ian Powell)

- What if God exists?
- What if God judges?
- What if God loves?
- What if God changed lives?
- What if God died?

2005 For Christ's Sake... (Tim Bowden)

- For Christ's Sake...what's with Christians?
- For Christ's Sake...stress less!
- For Christ's Sake...does money really satisfy?
- For Christ's Sake...what's with broken relationships?
- For Christ's Sake...why be a Christian?