

# Discovering Virtue: How to be good in Higher Education

Mike Higon

## 1. Jeremiad

It is a truth universally acknowledged that someone who looks like me, standing in a place like this, about to give a lecture with a title like this, must be about to indulge in a jeremiad.

To whom shall I speak and give warning,  
that they may hear?

See, their ears are closed,  
they cannot listen.

But I am full of the wrath of the Lord;  
I am weary of holding it in.

Pour it out on the students in the lecture halls,  
and on the gatherings of young faculty;  
both tenured and adjunct staff shall be taken,  
the emeritus professors and those long overdue for  
retirement.

Their institutions shall be turned over to others,  
their teaching and their research together;  
for I will stretch out my hand

against the inhabitants of the colleges and universities of the world,  
says the Lord.

It's enjoyable stuff, this Jeremiad, once you get into the rhythm (and prophetic denunciation does have a very catchy rhythm).

And as for the substance – well, you can probably guess it all already. At some point, I'm bound to bewail the reduction of the education that we offer to the status of consumer product – telling you that we've become unconvincing venture capitalists, investing resource into our student's personal brands – in the hope that they'll position themselves competitively in the jobs market, win big, and pay us back in donations in years to come. I'll probably say that we're reduced now to offering one of the stranger forms of gratification on the market: students come to us knowing what they need, or rather what they want, and we now scurry around to provide exactly that – the customer, after all, being always right. The learning outcomes are defined in advance, and most of the time the grades are too, as long as the students pull the right levers and pay the right fees. We've become one more low-rent service industry, somewhere between the print shop that will typeset your resumé for you,

and the fraudsters promising to teach you how to make fifty dollars an hour working from home, no questions asked.

My jeremiad won't stop there, though. I'll probably go on to bewail the way we have dismembered these same consumer-students. We've collaborated in a bizarre division of labour by which intellectual achievement is severed from socialising which is severed from voluntary pursuits which is severed from career advice. If it weren't medically a little problematic, we'd separate students into brains and hearts and livers on entry, tend to the brains in our lecture halls, deliver their hearts (or some other organ) to a speed-dating evening, and send their livers to the student bar. And 'holistic'? – well that's a word our students are only likely to hear if they're into alternative medicine.

And then – and this bit of my jeremiad will have got louder in recent weeks – then, I'll probably launch into something about our collective abandonment of truth – or, if I'm really riding the wave, our abandonment of truth, goodness, *and* beauty. I'm afraid it's going to be pretty much impossible for me to resist the temptation to denounce our descent, step by alternatively factual step, into the post-truth quagmire. We're not teaching to transcendental standards any more – our institutions don't recognise that those standards exist, or even if they do that there

could be any procedurally appropriate way of taking them into account. We're governed internally by the arbitrary standards of some quality assurance regime, and externally by – at best – the equally arbitrary dictates of a set of professional associations, and – at worst – by a calculation of which apparent achievements will have most currency in the jobs market when our students leave.

And so my jeremiad could go on, and on, and on.

Or, to save time, I could simply go for the short version, and say, 'We're doomed!' Now, if you were an English audience, of the right kind of age, and I said that again in the right accent – 'We're doomed!' – you'd all immediately form a particular mental picture. Because all of you would have watched a sitcom called *Dad's Army*, back in the 60s and 70s, or in endless re-runs in the 80s. It was a long-running sitcom about the British Home Guard – that is, the groups of men who were not called up for active service during the Second World War (on grounds of age or health), but who were organised for local defence in case of invasion. And when I said 'You're doomed!' you'd be picturing Private Frazer, the Scottish septuagenarian undertaker and professional pessimist portrayed by the actor John Laurie. 'We're doomed' was his catchphrase.

So at this point in my jeremiad about the decline of Higher Education, hearing me say those words, you would suddenly have conjured up in front of you a very particular picture. A group of men (and they were all men) unfit for or exempt from the activity in which the other men of their generation were engaged, faintly ridiculous but also in there way rather admirable. Not uniformly respectable – the group certainly included the odd crook – but together about respectable business. They were a bastion of decency, an outpost of civil society. And these men were the slightly tweedy last-ditch defenders of civilisation against all the forces of unreason.

And even if you've never had the pleasure of seeing this particular British sitcom, that still might not be a million miles from the kind of vision that my Higher Education jeremiad would have conjured up for you. Faintly ridiculous but also in our way rather admirable, slightly tweedy last-ditch defenders of civilisation against all the forces of unreason.

Of course, the parallel only goes so far. Obviously I'm not including the bit where your role as educational defenders of civilisation suddenly seems much more serious because your nearest international neighbour has been taken over by the terrifying shock-troops of irrationality – I don't imagine that element would have any resonance for you at all.

Now, as I say, I could start my lecture with some jeremiad like this – conjuring up a picture of our collective back-to-the-wall defence of civilisation – and I don't think any of you would be all that surprised. But you can hear that kind of thing from all quarters, and you didn't really need to come here this evening – and I certainly didn't need to fly over the Atlantic – simply to replay a message you will have heard so many times before. So, with your permission, I'll forego the temptation, and skip the jeremiad entirely.

But why then am I here?

## 2. Sermon

Well, maybe it's because I'm a theologian. Maybe, instead of simply offering you the jeremiad, I can offer you something more positive instead: a Christian theological account of what it is we're in danger of losing: what it is that this slightly ramshackle and unconvincing collection of the educational Home Guard are defending.

If I went in this more positive direction, my lecture might sound more like a sermon, more homily than jeremiad. I might say that in a Biblical vision, we can't separate out intellectual development from the wider texture of life. Understanding,

insight, the right ordering of the mind, is inseparable from the right order of desire, from the right ordering of action. The proper development of understanding is inseparable from repentance, from holiness, from worship.

I might delve, for instance, into St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, a text in which there is a contrast between darkened understanding and the renewal of the mind – that is, between disordered and reordered intelligence. But my darkened mind is not simply an ignorant mind; it is a corrupted mind. I am yoked to gratification – and so I understand the world, and my possibilities for action in it, only through the filter of selfish desire, thinned down to a blunt calculus of cost and benefit. I become insensitive to anything in my world that does not tip the balance of that calculation. I mentally colonise the world, in preparation for stripping its assets.

To live in this way is to live with a mind almost blind, because it has such a dim light by which to see. True understanding, on the other hand, involves a purification of vision. It demands that I be taken out of myself, enabled somehow to see from a perspective beyond my own gratification – to learn a different kind of love as the light by which to see the world. And it demands the painful stripping away of my old habits of mind; it

requires a form of decolonisation; it requires that I die to my old selfish self and rise to something new.

This is learning that takes place on the way of the cross and of resurrection, on the way of Jesus Christ. It is under his tutelage, according to Ephesians, that Christians are taught to love differently, and so to understand differently.

But learning this kind of understanding – learning understanding beyond gratification, learning to see the world as something other than the arena for my profit and loss – also involves, in this Christian vision, becoming the body of Christ. It requires that multiple people learn to play distinctive roles within a single body. Each person has received a distinctive gift and *becomes* a distinctive gift to the whole – and that includes a gift of understanding. I bring my understanding – what I see from where I am, from *who* I am – as a gift to the body, and I receive in turn the gift of each other member's understanding. And I learn to understand more and so to give more to the body, the more that I receive from others in the body. It's a virtuous cycle of mutually deepening understanding.

And, in the vision set out in Ephesians, the Christ who teaches us this comes to us from the God and Father of *all*. There are no boundaries to the community of those called into this body – into this life of growing understanding, of vision given and



received. We are therefore called – as Paul puts it – to ‘put away from ourselves all bitterness and wrangling and slander’, and grow into renewed understanding as members of a family without limit: a truly universal community of all the children of God. Christian learning is therefore learning against a horizon of hope: hope for the inclusion in this learning community of the whole of God’s family.

So, I have moved on from jeremiad to Christian sermon. I’ve moved, that is, from bewailing the present state of Higher Education, to presenting an idealised Christian vision that – let’s be honest – doesn’t sound like a description of any university you or I have ever encountered. If nothing else, the moment I said that it is a vision in which we have ‘Put away from [ourselves] all bitterness and wrangling and slander ’ you must have been thinking, ‘Oh, okay, he’s not talking about Higher Education any more – not even about the colleges and universities of the Anglican Communion; maybe not even about Trinity College in the University of Toronto. And anyone who thinks differently has clearly never been in a faculty meeting.

But bear with me. I think this sermon does have some application to colleges and universities – and not just to those with an Anglican foundation. And so this is where I turn from

jeremiad and sermon to *apologia* – an apologia for Higher Education.

### 3. Apologia

The first thing to say is that this Christian vision of learning can extend – in fact, it has to extend – to cover all the subjects taught in our universities. The God about whom Ephesians speaks is the One ‘above all and through all and in all’ – the creator of the heavens and the earth, and so Christians are called to live well with their fellow human beings, with the wider circle of non-human animals, as participants in the ecology of all living things, and as parts of God’s material creation. The understanding that can be darkened or enlightened, therefore has to include the understanding of any object whatsoever, if understanding that object can affect how the learner lives in the world as God’s creature.

Having said that, I’d next note that university learning of all these subjects does indeed shape learners’ ways of inhabiting the world, and their ways of living together, and that at least some of the forms of learning pursued in a university or a college allow for the present projects and expectations of learners to be interrupted, complicated, or derailed by what

they learn. After all, the objects we study in our colleges and universities become the foci of on-going exploration in which new possibilities of response are constantly being proposed, tested, refined, abandoned, replaced, and supplemented. We go on examining the patterns of language and practice with which we have surrounded these objects, and we ask what forms of engagement they enable and what forms they obscure. And at least some of the time we do ask whose interests are involved in these patterns of language and practice.

And so, at least some of the time, the learning that takes place in Higher Education will be learning in which it is recognised that the possibilities we have of ‘living with’ and ‘responding to’ the objects of our learning don’t reduce to consumption or exploitation – but can include wonder and perhaps even wisdom. In other words, there is at least a possibility that the learning that goes on in a university can undercut gratification – and so at least resemble the kind of Christian learning depicted in my sermon.

So I think there’s an interesting, complex, partial but real overlap, or proximity, between the Christian vision of learning that I sketched, and the kind of learning that happens in Higher Education. At its best, the learning that takes place in colleges and universities may therefore contribute, in however limited a

way, to the task of learning to live together in the world as Christ's body, regardless of whether or not those involved in it understand their learning in these terms.

Now I say 'At its best', of course, because nothing I have said requires that university learning will automatically lead to holy and righteous possibilities of living. My claim is certainly not that university learning inherently or pervasively makes a positive contribution to dying and rising with Christ. Some of the forms of learning pursued in universities and colleges will promote deeply distorted ways of living with creation, or of relating to others, and there may well be little in the resources of the university itself to help us avoid that possibility. But as a matter of fact even if not as a matter of necessary principle, I think it's possible for eyes being formed by the Christian vision set out in my sermon to see quite a lot of real good in many of our colleges and universities – Anglican foundation or not.

Let me draw your attention to one particular facet of this. In my sermon, I mentioned the line from Ephesians, 'Put away from you all bitterness and wrangling and slander.' I could have gone on to stress that, in the Christian vision, people learn well by becoming those who learn with humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, honesty – the fruit of the Spirit, necessary to life together in the body. And even if references to the fruit of

the Spirit are predictably sparse in most secular discussions of Higher Education policy and practice, you will find plenty of references to ‘virtue’, which – though certainly not identical – covers at least some of the same territory.

At its most neutral, of course, the term ‘virtue’ is simply used to name the internalisation by students and staff of the standards of excellence appropriate to the practices pursued in university: learning, teaching, and research. Quite often, however, in discussions of Higher Education, the language of virtue is given a more decidedly ethical cast: it is used to talk about these internalised standards insofar as they are constituents of a good human life, or insofar as the practices they govern are contributions to the common good. It is not uncommon, then, to see university learning presented as a matter of virtue, and the university itself as a school of virtue, even if the accounts of virtue involved vary widely.

Learning in Higher Education demands *attentiveness* of us; it demands that we be *open to surprise*, with a readiness to notice facets of reality that do not fit our expectations. It involves the *patience* required to allow those facets to emerge. It requires the *honesty* to admit the challenges created by these surprises for our existing thinking, the *integrity* to trace their implications as far as necessary through the whole pattern of our thinking, and

the *clarity* that makes the tracing of those connections possible. It involves the *humility* to admit that changes to our thinking are necessary and to communicate those changes. At times it requires the *courage* to admit that one has been wrong. Yet it also involves *confidence* in what one has learnt, and the *willingness to trust* the findings to which disciplined investigation has led, even when that means contradicting others.

And you also don't have to look far to find accounts of Higher Education that speak of it involving the formation of communities within which these virtues are formed and sustained. University learning inherently involves patterns of relationship within which certain kinds of give and take, certain kinds of mutual affirmation and critique, are enabled and encouraged. Participation in such communities involves taking responsibility for one's contribution, responding to critiques of that contribution, and offering criticism in turn. It involves the maintenance of certain patterns of civility: the maintenance of conventions that permit and facilitate exchange.

So just as there is something like the Christian focus on the fruit of the Spirit in accounts of Higher Education, there's also something like a Christian focus on the formation of the Body of Christ – the formation of a community of exchange, of gifts given

and received, of learning together and from one another. There's an unsystematic proximity or resemblance there – enough, I think, to allow me as a Christian theologian who has worked in a variety of Higher Education settings to value much of what goes on in those settings, to see it as *good*.

No more than that. I don't want to over-claim. The extent to which what goes on in colleges and universities can contribute to the good fight against sin, the world, and the devil – against, that is, selfishness and colonisation, against the myopia of gratification – well, it's limited. Newman, in his *Idea of a University* knew this: 'Quarry the granite rock with razors,' he said, 'or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion and the pride of man' (Newman 1976: p.111).

The good that is possible here is limited and partial. But it can be good, nonetheless.

#### 4. Appeal

So, where have we got to? I started with a jeremiad, bewailing the descent of the Higher Education sector into instrumentalist, gratification-focused fragments. I conjured up a vision in which

I as the deliverer of the jeremiad, and you as its eager hearers (let's at least pretend about that part) were the plucky defenders of civilisation, the Home Guard, faintly ridiculous but also in our way rather admirable, standing proud as the slightly tweedy last-ditch defenders of civilisation against the forces of unreason.

Next, I turned from jeremiad to sermon, and set out a Christian vision of learning. I talked about the transformation of life by which we are weaned away from understanding mired in selfishness. I talked about that learning taking place in the body of Christ, in those who, on the journey of cross and resurrection with Christ, are learning with one another, becoming gifts to one another, and receiving gifts from one other. I talked about the kind of holiness that this life of learning sought and demanded.

And then I turned from jeremiad and sermon to my apologia for the idea of Higher Education. I didn't claim that colleges and universities *were* the Body of Christ, or that the learning that what went on in them simply *was* the learning that I'd set out in my sermon – but I did claim that there are, in practice, interesting if partial resemblances, which are enough to encourage me to value Higher Education, to see it, at its best, as in some sense, in some ways, to some limited degree, good.



The question I want to pose to you now is where my *sermon* (setting out a Christian vision), and my *apologia* (for the idea of Higher Education), leave my *jeremiad* – my opening spiel in which I claimed that ‘We’re all doomed!’ And that’s going to lead me on – after a couple of steps – from *apologia* to *appeal*.

Now, one reason for being dubious about my jeremiad would be because of the attitude to the past that it can encourage. Of course, some things about our colleges and universities were indeed better in the past – or at least some things that we care about tended to be seen more clearly, valued more explicitly, and protected more carefully in the past. But. There’s a real danger of falling into a historically bizarre golden ageism, a glowing vision of what colleges and universities used to be like, back in the day, that would be much harder to sustain had you actually been sober at the time you’re looking back to. The history of Higher Education is complex, fraught, and ambiguous, and we’re not well served by a rhetorical strategy that presents it as the promised land from which we are in process of being exiled.

Or, of course, one could raise the problem of the present. There are, of course, numerous genuinely worrying pressures and tendencies in the present. You don’t have to look far to find bowdlerised curricula, appallingly treated faculty, pernicious

financial arrangements, dispiriting student behaviour, eviscerated libraries, deadening political impositions, obscene economic disparities, overwork, underpay, stress, lies, gloom, despair, and death. But, the danger of indulging in the jeremiad is that it helps one to miss the good that abounds in the present – and to miss the ways in which so much about Higher Education has got better, and is getting better.

But my real worry about the jeremiad relates to the future. The jeremiad critiques the depressing present in the light of the golden past, and faces the future with either despair, or with hope presented only as a matter of preservation and defence. At best, we dream of keeping the flame alive, guarding the sacred deposit, holding fast to the academic faith once delivered to our forefathers.

And – here beginneth the appeal – such visions drastically underestimate the need still to invent, to create the good university. Because even amongst the colleges and universities of the Anglican Communion, and despite what I have said and seriously meant about the good visible in the past and the present of our institutions, there's still a strong sense in which the good university, the virtuous university, *does not yet exist*.

The good university does not yet exist, and we are charged with inventing it.

I want to unravel just one thread of that claim. At the end of my sermon earlier, I said that there are no boundaries to the community of those called into the life of growing understanding, of vision given and received – and that Christian learning is therefore learning against a horizon of hope: hope for the inclusion in this learning community, of the whole of God’s family.

To look at Higher Education in this light, to look at what it means to be good in Higher Education, therefore means to be made restless with the limitations and exclusions that still shape university life. We may have moved a long way from the university as finishing school for a vanishingly small white elite – but the task of inclusion, of opening the community of learning as wide as it can go, is still a very long way from complete – even (I suspect) here in Toronto.

And keep in mind that this is not simply about who is given access to learning. It is not simply about the wider sharing of a good that we, in the university system, already possess – a matter of distributive justice. That’s vitally important, of course – but it is not the end, but only the first step of the journey into wider inclusion that we need to take. The vision I sketched was not simply of a wider community of recipients, but of each person becoming a gift – of learning from each participant in the

community of learning, not simply learning alongside them all. It is not simply a matter of whose presence we admit, but of whose voices we allow and encourage, whose voices we hear and learn from.

If, at its deepest, our learning together in Higher Education has to do with learning to live well together in the world, learning to live wisely together in the world, then, in its deepest and most characteristic forms, Higher Education relies for its integrity, for its power, for its capacity to contribute to the good, on widening the circle of engaged voices. And the penitence, the dying to the old self and rising to the new, the overcoming of gratification that we need as we pursue the good possible in our colleges and universities, involves – on an individual and on an institutional level – a deepening attentiveness to, and a rooting out of, the attitudes, behaviours, and structures that inhibit such learning, and the fostering of patterns of life that encourage it. We have mentally colonised the world, colonised the identities and imaginations of others, and to learn more deeply, see more truly, we must be called out of that myopia.

Now I admit that this is so far a gigantically abstract thing to say. But think of it as a vague term that can be concretely, repeatedly and diversely specified in particular proposals and counter-proposals for patterns of university and college life. We should

think of that life not as a sacred deposit to be preserved, but as a site for ongoing negotiation, ongoing experimentation and invention in relation to inclusion, and therefore as a site for our own ongoing learning. Yes, we already know something of what it means to be open, and to be formed for openness – and my strong sense is that here in Toronto you know rather more about it than any of the places where I have worked – but we do not yet know *all* that inclusion can and should mean: we have virtue yet to discover.

If I look at the universities I know, however, I can see that they are often, today, locations where the openness or inclusivity of learning is a matter of intense and difficult negotiation.

Universities are often depicted in the press and elsewhere as seedbeds of ‘political correctness’, but that normally means no more than that they are sites for the sometimes awkward, sometimes heated attempt to identify the forms of exclusion prevalent in our society and mirrored in our society’s universities, and to track down the roots of those forms of exclusion through all of our practices and all of our language. And such negotiation – genuinely difficult, genuinely contested, and inherently resistant to resolution by simple appeals to a supposed common sense – is not a distraction from the proper business of universities, but an inevitable and proper accompaniment to real learning.

It is a symptom of the ongoing exploration of the nature of real learning.

One could look, therefore, at recent debates about, say, the ‘no platforming’ of controversial speakers (think Milo Yiannopoulos at UC Berkeley, for instance), or debates about the removal from Oxford college facades of statues of infamous figures from Britain’s colonial past, or the furore in a Yale college about cultural appropriation in students’ Halloween costumes, or the rise of the practice of giving trigger warnings before lectures that include disturbing content, or the recent publicity given to the Students Union at SOAS in London and their campaign to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ (falsely reported as a campaign to kick Plato and Kant off the philosophy curriculum for being white). The existence and fierceness of all these debates are not signs of some fundamental breakdown in university life, still less of some easily dismissed immaturity on the part of snowflake students. They are not yet more evidence of the sorry decline lamented in my jeremiad. They are evidence of the ongoing, complex negotiation of the openness of the university learning community. They are new forms of fundamental and perennial questions facing universities, about the kind of learning community that we generate – questions which go right to the heart of the vision of learning that I have been sketching.

And the negotiations are, genuinely, difficult because any answer that sees inclusion merely as a matter of wide open doors leading to an interior decorated in colours of bland neutrality is simply inadequate to the task. Think, for a moment, of what is involved in bringing the voices of former colonisers and those whom they have colonised into the same space, and allowing all voices to be heard and mutual learning to take place. It's the kind of task that requires not simply the publication of a policy on free speech on campus, but the wisdom of a Desmond Tutu and the risky inventiveness of a truth and reconciliation commission. And now think about the ways in which the spaces that our universities and colleges occupy is not shaped by one simply specified gradient of power, but by an overwhelmingly complex intersection of such gradients. Radical inclusion demands fierce creativity, courageous and precarious institutional inventiveness – and a willingness to look again, and again, and again, at the supposedly settled patterns that we have taken for virtue and for community in the past and in the present.

## 5. Peroration

Let me finish with one further thought. If we're asking about forms of exclusion and inclusion, about the ways in which our patterns of institutional life, of practice, of speech, make it more or less possible to gather and learn from a diverse community – a diverse community of living and dead voices – if we're asking about all that, we might want to ask some unsettling questions not just about my jeremiad, but about my sermon.

That sermon was spoken in a Christian voice; it set out a Christian vision. It spoke about inclusion, yes, but the basis for that inclusion was a vision of the Body of Christ, a hope for salvation for all in Christ. And, yes, I turned to the university setting claiming only a partial overlap, a proximity, an echo of that Christian inclusion, and spoke instead more generically about inclusion in a learning community – letting the explicitly Christian language drop into the background.

But if we're on the lookout for subtle and not-so-subtle forms of exclusion, isn't this reliance upon an insistently Christian account something of a problem?

And there is of course a deeper question behind that – about the 'Anglican' identity of the Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion.



It is all very well to argue that the Christian identity of these places should underpin a vision of education which is committed to inclusion, to exploring creatively the difficult territory of what makes for genuine inclusion and exclusion – but might not one of the things that needs to be *given up* in that negotiation be, precisely, that explicitly Christian identity?

Now, rhetorically, you can tell I'm building up to the answer, 'No'. No, don't worry, it's all fine. This is how lectures like this go: you ramp up the difficulties, making it harder and harder to see how our hero is going to extricate himself, and then – at the last minute, and to applause – you turn the narrative corner, and with one bound Jack is free. So in that vein I could say, 'No, no, really – it's fine.' The model I've been suggesting is not a hard secularist one, of (as I said) wide open doors leading to an interior decorated in colours of bland neutrality. We don't include everyone by creating a learning space in which everyone leaves behind particular histories, particular identities, particular commitments (including religious commitments) and searches for reasons that can be equally shared by all.

No, the model I'm after is of what the first lecturer in this series, the one after whom the series is named, has called an 'interactive pluralism' (Williams, 2008). This is a vision in which

multiple distinctive voices are included, multiple identities and histories, in intense, serious, difficult conversation with one another.

And I could draw here on my experience of Scriptural Reasoning, an inter-faith conversational practice gathered around the reading of texts, in order to sketch a picture of a conversational space in which participants are able to participate precisely as inhabitants of their own traditions, precisely as people who are passionately different, people who don't agree about the nature of the texts in front of them, about those text's authority, or even about the purpose of the conversation, but who nevertheless negotiate together an ongoing shared practice, and who learn from one another in the space so negotiated. That's interactive pluralism in action – a space in which a sermon-spouting Christian theologian like me can sit down next to his Jewish and Muslim equivalents, and all of them can read together, and learn together.

But I don't want to leave my lecture with quite that neat an ending. The actual negotiations of inclusion and exclusion around the Scriptural Reasoning table are complex and difficult enough – they have, in ways not necessarily clear from the surrounding literature, involved a constant ongoing creativity in form and process, one that has produced as many failures as

successes. And the negotiations of exclusion and inclusion in a college or a university are a whole order of magnitude more complex.

And so, having heard my jeremiad, my sermon, my apologia, and my appeal, here's my *peroration*. I don't want you to go out of this room this evening having heard either the message that Higher Education is already good, and we simply need to preserve that good against the barbarians, *or* that being a Christian-foundation institution makes perfect sense in the multi-vocal marketplace of contemporary Higher Education, and gives you a head start on the task of inclusion.

I want you instead to have heard the message that we don't yet know how to be as inclusive as we should be; we don't yet know how to be Christian in this space without being exclusive; we don't yet know how to pursue a Christian vision of an expanding and deepening learning community without the very terms in which we do so tripping up the endeavour.

We do know all sorts of things about that; we do have all sorts of resources; there are all sorts of existing experiments, past and present, to examine and to learn from – I'm not saying we are starting at square one. But what it means for us to live more fully and deeply into that vision, to shape our admissions policies, our hiring policies, our curricula, our bibliographies,

our assessment regimes, our learning spaces, our built environment, our online presence, our habits of life, and speech, and thought – what it means to shape all that so as to make deeper mutual learning possible, and to extend the boundaries of who we include in that mutual learning in ways that rightly challenge and disturb us; what it means to see the involvements and experience, the relationships and the histories, of all our students as fuel for the engine of learning, and to be passionately eager to find more such fuel; what it means to look with a cool eye on everything we do to ask where the blockages to that endeavour are – that’s something that we are still learning, and need to go on learning, negotiating and experimenting and failing and trying again, dying to old habits and rising to new.

And my hope – and, yes, my prayer – is that the Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion can be, if not always the first or the most visible explorers of that territory, then at least amongst the most determined.

Newman, John Henry, *The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated*, ed. Ian Ker (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976)

Williams, Rowan, 'Civil and Religious Law in England: A Religious Perspective' (2008); available online at <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1137/archbishops-lecture-civil-and-religious-law-in-england-a-religious-perspective> (accessed 9 March 2017)